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The importance of listening to tales in special needs children's homes for children with intellectual disability

Abstract

In our study, we aim to present the initial steps of a story-telling programme carried out with children with intellectual disability in a specific Hungarian children's home, in order to provide an insight into the operation/ run/everyday life of special care/needs children's homes, as well as to offer an alternative way to other institutes with a similar profile.

To illustrate the present study, we applied a non-traditional way by using a genuine Inuit folktale 'Kagsagsug', whose variation is published at the end of the text.

Keywords: children's home, intellectual disability, storytelling, tale therapy

The importance of listening to tales in special needs children's homes for children with intellectual disability

Homes for children with special needs

"There was once a poor orphan boy, his name was Kagsagsuk."
(Rink, 2014, 93)

The establishment of a theoretical basis is complicated by the fact that very few studies about special children's homes have been published both in Hungary, and in foreign countries so far. Furthermore, the related institutions and the system of concepts seem to differ from country to country.

Act XXXI of 1997 on Child Protection and Custody Administration forced to miss their families either temporarily or permanently. Home provisions offer an all-inclusive care for children and after-care young adults who live in temporary or permanent education, via putting them to foster-parents or children's homes, according to the decision of the Office for Guardianship and Children's Welfare. Within the home-providing services, children under the age of three, furthermore, children and young adults with permanent illnesses or different disabilities are entitled to receive special care and services (1997. XXXI. Törvény a gyermekek védelméről és gyámügyi igazgatásról). As to the management of the special children's homes, there are differences between the homes for children under the age of three and the homes for special needs children, according to the different conditions responsible for the necessity of special care. In a broader interpretation of the definition of the Children's Protection Act, it can be stated that every one child who gets in the Child Protection Supply needs special care because they live with an over-the-average amount of emotional and social drawbacks.

In most instances the children put into childcare spend their whole childhood within the special childcare system (Boytha, 2015). This is especially the case with children with intellectual disability living within the special care system. For them, the reason why they got into such an institution is very often strongly connected to their conditions and is hardly comparable to the majority of other reasons why children get there. The future vision of these children is specific, too, namely the after-care process does not prepare them for an independent adult life. After post-care, an average life-career of children with intellectual disability brought up in special children's homes seems to ultimately result in the need of life-long institutional care.

In children's homes for children with intellectual disability, specific difficulties can be experienced. Compared to the majority of other children's homes, an extended



age distribution is frequent in them, because it is not easy to find places in social homes for the post-care young people. In addition, these post-care young people are entitled to continue their studies up to the age of twenty-five in appropriate secondary schools, consequently the post-care period can be extended until they finish their studies. Furthermore, sex differences are also specific, the number of boys in care is higher. Besides mental inhibitions, a large number of psychosocial disabilities occur, dangerously challenged by the life-circumstances of the young people in care. The existence of the psychosocial disabilities would require the statement of the double need care, but at present the total absence of double-need children's homes for children with intellectual disability or institutions can be observed in Hungary.

Most inhabitants in children's homes struggle with the lack of self-recognition, which results in failure-oriented or failure-avoidant behavior. In addition, the commonly occurring relationship disorders, mistrust, tension mismanagement, aggression, temper management problems, communication difficulties lead to behavioral disorders (Volentics, 2000). The notions *behavioral problem* and *behavioral disorder* are frequently used as each other's synonyms. Nevertheless, *behavioral problems* represent some value-neutrality, while it is too general and unclear. Consequently, its use for scientific purposes is not appropriate/favored according to Myschker & Stein (2018). Most criteria of the symptoms of behavioral disorders can be detected physically, which might provide clues to underlying problems (Myschker & Stein, 2018). At the same time, by viewing behavioral disorders as a basic children's rights phenomenon and an attribute of the adaptation process (Volentics, 2000), more exact information can be gained to see in which area the particular child needs enhanced support in order to create the highest-level emotional security for them.

In conclusion, we can say that all the problems discussed so far have a significant negative influence on the affection, relationship, and connection of children living in special children's homes. It is characteristic of many kids showing reactive attachment disorders that on the one hand, they are moderate towards people they are acquainted with, and on the other hand, they often turn to people they don't know with overflowing love. They believe that all people can supply because they haven't had the chance to establish long-term basic relationships either with their parents, or with nurses since they were born (Perry & Szalavitz, 2015). It is essential to understand the negative relationship between behavioral problems and social competence, because it opens opportunities for targeted interventions and for working out supporting strategies, i.e., for the development of social skills, emotional control and more effective conflict-management/solving (Hukkelberg et al., 2019).

Elaboration of the programme

"Thus the little boy was always tormented and mocked, and did not grow, except about the nostrils." (Rink, 2014, 94)

In children's protection, it is not miracles that we need or seek for, but therapeutic systems that are suitable to cure injured children besides basic care (Boldizsár, 2019). There are only a few good practices commonly applied in special care children's homes, but additional therapies, especially socio-emotional therapies in

similar areas might be protective (Briones et al., 2021; Crimmens, 2006; Faurot, 2009; Forgan, 2002; Fekete-Szabó, 2013; Folostina et al., 2015; Gereben, 2018a, 2018b; Gries, 2010; Grigore & Bazgan, 2017; Jennings, 2004; Limond, 1998; Rickson & McFerran, 2007; Riggs, 2008; Rahmani, 2011).

There are numerous therapeutic methods used nowadays. The application and use of therapeutic procedures, as well as the user competencies required for each procedure, often overlap (Gereben, 2017). There are different divisions. According to a possible classification, special education therapy includes cognitive skills-development therapies, socio-emotional therapies, as well as professional field therapies. Art therapies can be classified as parts of the socio-emotional therapies group (Gereben, 2018a). The present study does not go into details about the issues of special education therapies. These are only mentioned to place the process of Metamorphoses Fairytale Therapy into context, which provides the base for listening to stories programmes, and is adapted to skills-development schools.

Only very few scientific publications could be found on researching for sources of the theme on the use of storytelling in children's homes. For this reason, the present study uses carried out in analogous fields to demonstrate the topic-related scientific literature. In Hungarian terminology we use the notions of *fairy tale therapy* or *tale pedagogy*, while in foreign publications *storytelling* is well-known. The Hungarian *fairy tale telling* might correspond to the English *storytelling*. The Hungarian expression refers to telling fairy tales, primarily folktales, while storytelling is closer to history telling which incorporates myths, epic anecdotes, literary short stories, family stories, urban legends or historical events besides tales and folktales (Zalka, 2016). Storytelling is converting an idea into a narrative, aiming to inform, enlighten and give inspiration. Its agent is a story which conveys information filled with emotions and is contextualized and sequenced (Gallo, 2016). Storytelling gives people the opportunity to find/form/create/generate common meaning about a remote event or experience. At the same time, it is an inexpensive tool of cultural learning and reflection, it helps children understand the surrounding world and it facilitates the transfer of knowledge overall human history (Landrum, Brakke & McCarthy, 2019). Narrative communication aims to logically project individual experiences. It insists on realistic interpretations of situations. Finally, narrative approaches or processing are usually more effective (Dahlstrom, 2014). Tales offer solutions to tackle different life situations and problems (Emőd, 2013). Situations and heroes in fairy tales can be paralleled by real-life conflicts and problems, as well as responses given to them, thus providing options of solutions for the participants involved (Antalfai, 2017). Fairy Tales and rhymes/sayings have a function of bringing about joy and pleasant experiences (Bajzáth, 2015). They help with elaboration, which means a sound and successful processing of information and emotional tensions, saved in our memories and in the unconscious. Thus, fairytales seem to be suitable to help transform psychic tension into images (Vekerdy, 2006).



Practical examples of storytelling in Hungarian special needs children's homes

"At length he ventured out among the mountains by himself, choosing solitary places, and meditating on how to get strength." (Rink, 2014, 94)

A three year long fairytale therapy project was carried out in three Hungarian children's homes with the aim of developing the participants' self-understanding, communicative and problem-solving skills and creative thinking, as well as building up patience and mutual tolerance. Throughout the programmes, the training were conducted by the group leaders, while the other therapists were working with individuals who couldn't be involved in group activities just then. Finding a common ground and easing the distrust of the young people proved to be challenging, which the project leaders managed to solve by trying to find common points of interest and bringing in humor and flexibility (Csorba-Simon, 2019).

Szőtsné et al. (2007) conducted a fairytale therapy programme with groups in special care children's homes in order to help youngsters map and understand the operation of the world, including their own existence within it, furthermore, to find their own constructive role in life through the illustrated fairy world. The participants of the therapy groups were young men with drug addiction and behavior disorders, whose problems derived unanimously from either the failure or a pathological operation of family relationships. While processing the tales, the participants had the opportunity to rebuild their own image, find new life paths, designate right directions for themselves, and find the necessary resources.

In a children's home in Budapest, bible therapy training was carried out for multi-traumatized youngsters so that they can experience the emotion of security, trust, safety and permanency, stability. For the traumatized young people it is crucial to establish emotional security, as well as to develop appropriate routines and habits. Throughout the training, difficulties in communication and aggressive handlings of situations represented the most serious challenges. To help participants cope with the above problems, the conductors facilitated the elaboration of the traumas connected to separation, the familiarization of moral standards, the formation of suitable social relationships, the development of communication skills and the enhancement of the desire to read.

The Világszép Foundation is committed to support children who live in the child care system. Within their programme, they set the goal to make these children acquainted with tales, which is why they organize camps for them (Havasi, 2018). Trained volunteers tell tales weekly in partner children's homes, trying to implement real time tale tells, while focusing on quality time, individual attention and the participation of the children. The monthly refreshed collection of tales is selected by Csege Zalka, an internationally known storyteller, Storytelling Program Coordinator and professional leader of the Foundation (www.vilagszep.alapitvany.hu).



The antecedents of the tale-listening programme carried out in special care children's homes

“»Lord of strength, come forth! Lord of strength, come to me!« A large animal now appeared in the shape of an amarak¹ and Kagsagsuk got very terrified, and was on the point of taking to his heels; but the beast soon overtook him, and, twisting its tail round his body, threw him down. Totally unable to rise, he heard the while a rustling sound, and saw a number of seal-bones, like small toys, falling from his own body.” (Rink, 2014, 94)

According to the basic theory of Metamorphoses Fairytale Therapy, every single life situation has its fairytale equivalent (Boldizsár, 2010). The construction of the tale-listening programme was planned with keeping this idea in mind. As there are practically no tales which demonstrate life situations of children's care in special children's homes, it was indispensable to map life situations occurring in the tales which are similar to the life situations of the targeted group. The institution chose the state of exclusion as a professional starting point. People with disabilities often live in a closed world, hence the feeling/emotion of being excluded is part of their everyday life (Bánfalvy, 2012). Frequently changing staff in the children's homes, the unpredictability of family relationships and poor external contacts further enhance this feeling. That is why professionals selected tales in which exclusion and separation appear. Among the tales on this topic, the team involved in developing the storytelling programme felt that the Inuit folktale „Kagsagsuk” was the most expressive, which is why we chose this tale as the framework for the current study. The folktale „Kagsagsuk” has proven to be a so-called sensitive tale among the 14-25 age group in the children's home settings².

The programme, based on Metamorphoses Fairytale Therapy aiming to develop social competence, was elaborated among young people with intellectual disability. The project set multiple goals for the participants in skills-developing education, namely targeted social and emotional skills development, so that their adaptive behavior should turn to the right direction, the obstacles of their social integration lessen, in their family they can recognise, understand and handle their own as well as other members' emotions, and as a result of all the above, they should be able to form their own positive self-image and be more successfully involved in community roles (Pechan, 2019). Over the years of the project, we found out which elements of the Metamorphoses Fairytale Therapy methodology proved suitable to build into the development programme of young people with intellectual disability, and which were less or not at all adaptable. Apart from methodology issues, we also gained another valuable piece of information about what tales participants preferred (Pechan, 2020). As the pupils' favorite genres, animal tales and magic tales were applied most frequently in the programme. After listening to a tale, the participants

¹ Now a fabulous animal, originally a wolf.

² During the period of adapting the Metamorphoses Fairy Tale Therapy to skill development school groups, we named those tales „sensitive tales” which young people with intellectual disabilities showed particular receptivity to (Pechan, 2020).

discuss it in groups, which primarily helps them to get a personal approach. As a result of students' social skills development during Metamorphoses Fairytale Therapy workshops, a positive change of their adaptive skills could be observed (Pechan, 2019). According to Kanter (2018), pre- and post-workshop rites add a frame to the workshops, which in itself provides security or safety to children. Tales have a significant role in developing personality and emotional intelligence by moving feelings and emotions in a playful form.

As a consequence of a shortage of experts, the realization of the programme in special care children's home participating in the program unit failed, i.e., neither special education teachers nor educated tale therapists work in these home units. Consequently, no tale therapy project could be carried out. According to the concept that „[t]elling and listening to tales for survival is one of the most important goals of tale therapy” (Boldizsár, 2013), the focus of the programme was placed on taletelling. Hence the idea of a listening to tales programme was born.

Making contacts through storytelling

„If it be thy wish to become strong and vigorous, thou mayst come every day to me. (Rink, 2014, 94)”

Because of the high fluctuation rate of the staff members observed in children's homes, it is of high priority for the children's living relationships to become safe and predictable. It is a basic strive within the five residential home units of the institution to have a permanent teaching staff with a low frequency of teacher absences and substitutions. In recent years, the motivation and support of the staff (so that they stay together with their groups) have turned out to be fairly successful. The support of colleagues working in children's homes, either with individuals or in small groups, has become continuous. These events provided opportunities to involve the colleagues in a common process. The first step was a self-experience before Christmas 2021, when each home unit got an Advent calendar with one tale in each box from the first of December until Christmas Eve, tailored for children or young people living in the homes. During the Advent programme, the colleagues could experience that intentionally chosen short tales or sayings and embracing games for younger kids are a simple and effective way of building relationships with children. Previously, the tasks of daily routine care took the focus of the significance of quality time spent with children. This twenty-four day storytelling process made it clear that even a few minutes long connection can substantially improve children's mood, hence their behavior.

The above Advent storytelling experiences were to a great extent similar to the results of the thirty day morning taletelling programme carried out with parents of kindergarten-age children (Pechan, 2016). The colleagues recorded the quality-time spent together with children, as well as the growth of their pedagogical treasures as positive experiences, while they found the adjustment of the daily taletelling to be the most challenging. Relying on the observations of the “Can there be one more tale?” programme (Pechan, 2016), the Advent live taletelling programme in children's



homes set the specific goal of story reading, because, even in families, telling stories by heart often proved to be difficult.

After the fulfillment of the Advent calendar tale programme, conductors and inspectors became motivated for the introduction of a regular, possibly daily taletelling. The colleagues had the freedom to choose the way they tell tales. The only request was that the tales must be performed verbally. An instant realization of the daily storytelling was not an expectation, each group could move at their own pace during the process. In the tale therapy groups in children's homes, it is of primary importance that via tales the inhabitants learn the positive side of their own personality (Boldizsár, 2019). In the beginning, the tales were selected by the storytellers. Later on more and more often the children asked for the tales and stories they most liked.

While working with people with intellectual disability, the question "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (Spivak, 1996) arises continually. The issue is especially relevant for hierarchical institutions like special children's homes. In the elaboration of traumatic stress, regaining control is an essential step (Perry & Szalavitz, 2015). In accordance with this statement, it was important that children could make decisions about events they were involved in and speak about their preferences. The fact that group members had learned how to select tales collectively while considering each other's wishes, afforded an excellent opportunity to put theory into practice.

In order to follow the tale therapy programmes system worked out in Hungarian children's protection, a simultaneous presence of a two-member staff proved advisable during the sessions. In practice, while one of the two colleagues was telling a tale, the other was dealing with children who did not want to join the tale-listening group just then, thus providing appropriate conditions for tale-listening.

Listening to tales workshops in children's homes are suitable for developing social skills, facilitating receptiveness towards other people. Furthermore, they enable the acquisition of problem solving techniques, increase solidarity, and help adopt communicational, social and problem-solving schemes and patterns conveyed by the tales. The participants of the programmes received an outstandingly great number of emotional experiences: tales help in identifying emotions and feelings, controlling temper and handling stress, as well as learning how to create connection forms (Boldizsár, 2019). Emotional control includes self-knowledge, regulation of one's own emotions, having/sustaining a positive self-image, dominance supervision of impulses, perseverance, courage and stress management. Storytelling might develop social and emotional skills which enable children to build relationships and become members of the society/community (Wright, Diener & Kemp, 2013). The repetition of routines, rites, the way of storytelling, as well as a fixed sequence of the different ways of elaborating tales (verbally and non-verbally) are crucially important in groups of people with intellectual disability by providing security and predictability, thus strengthening patience, calm, trust, and improving functions of attention (Pechan, 2020). In the course of listening to tales, both children and adult adults could experience the process of getting connected and reconnected. The common experiences deepened trust and helped to develop a harmonized atmosphere and establish emotional security.



Building societies

“Again it wound its tail round the boy, and again they fell down, but the little bones were fewer this time; and when the beast threw him down the third time, the last bones fell off.” (Rink, 2014, 94)”

In the workshops, mostly sayings, songs, lap-plays, formula-tales, animal tales and magic tales were applied. Instead of reasoning and explaining, tales educate primarily via images and symbols not comprehensible for our minds, which at the same time trigger emotions and inspirations, sometimes even beyond sense. Observations and experiences in skills developing school groups show that via tales participants with moderate or even severe intellectual disabilities can be involved, trans-physical tokens of story-listening appear, while the activity produces joy and tense reduction (Pechan, 2020).

The quality of life of traumatized children is basically determined by how much supporting love and encouragement they receive from their environment, especially from the adults these children could trust and rely on (Perry & Szalavitz, 2015). In group activities, when many children work at the same time, some factors, namely paying attention to each other, mutuality and interactions between each other, play an outstanding role (Hegedűs, 2019). The ultimate goal of the taletelling sessions programme is to provide activities of pleasure, increase students' active participation and the number of positive experiences, and take up and build in story-listening into children's everyday. The programme also aims to offer opportunities to relax, organize focused and engaging programmes, as well as build and reinforce social relationships.

In summary, we can say that the regularly applied verbal storytelling procedure has a calming, soothing and stress relieving effect. During tale-listening, the groups spend valuable time together. The treasury of tools of the staff in children's homes has been enlarged with a new and simple method. The sessions enhanced children's feeling safe and secure. Thus their behavior became more harmonious than previously experienced. In every home of the institute, verbal storytelling has become a regular activity, confirming connections both between children and between children and adults.

Kagsagsuk

„[The following tale has been constructed from nine different copies, received partly from various places in Greenland, and partly from Labrador, all, however, agreeing upon every principal point. It does not appear to rest upon any historical basis, but merely to have a moral tendency, bringing before us the idea of a superior power protecting the helpless, and avenging mercilessness and cruelty.] (Rink, 2014, p. 93-99)

There was once a poor orphan boy who lived among a lot of uncharitable men. His name was Kagsagsuk, and his foster-mother was a miserable old woman. These poor

people had a wretched little shed adjoining the house-passage³, and they were not allowed to enter the main room. Kagsagsuk did not even venture to enter the shed, but lay in the passage, seeking to warm himself among the dogs. In the morning, when the men were rousing their sledge-dogs with their whips, they often hit the poor boy as well as the dogs. He then would cry out, »Na-ah! Na-ah!« mocking himself in imitating the dogs. When the men were feasting upon various frozen dishes, such as the hide of the walrus and frozen meat, the little Kagsagsuk used to peep over the threshold, and sometimes the men lifted him up above it, but only by putting their fingers into his nostrils; these, accordingly, enlarged, but otherwise he did not grow at all. They would give the poor wretch frozen meat, without allowing him a knife to cut it with, saying his teeth might do instead; and sometimes they pulled out a couple of teeth, complaining of his eating too much. His poor foster-mother procured him boots and a small bird-spear, in order to enable him to go outside the house and play with the other children; but they would turn him over and roll him in the snow, filling his clothes with it, and treating him most cruelly in various ways: the girls sometimes covered him all over with filth. Thus the little boy was always tormented and mocked, and did not grow except about the nostrils. At length he ventured out among the mountains by himself, choosing solitary places, and meditating how to get strength. His foster-mother had taught him how to manage this. Once, standing between two high mountains, he called out: »Lord of strength, come forth! Lord of strength, come to me!« A large animal now appeared in the shape of an amarok (now a fabulous animal, originally a wolf), and Kagsagsuk got very terrified, and was on the point of taking to his heels; but the beast soon overtook him, and, twisting its tail round his body, threw him down. Totally unable to rise, he heard the while a rustling sound, and saw a number of seal-bones, like small toys, falling from his own body. The amarok now said: »It is because of these bones that thy growth has been stopped.« Again it wound its tail round the boy, and again they fell down, but the little bones were fewer this time; and when the beast threw him down the third time, the last bones fell off. The fourth time he did not quite fall, and at the fifth he did not fall at all, but jumped along the ground. The amarok now said: »If it be thy wish to become strong and vigorous, thou mayst come every day to me.« On his way home, Kagsagsuk felt very much lighter, and could even run home, meanwhile kicking and striking the stones on his way. Approaching the house, the girls who nursed the babies met him, and shouted, »Kagsagsuk is coming—let us pelt him with mud!« and the boys beat him and tormented him as before: but he made no opposition, and following his old habits, he went to sleep among the dogs. Afterwards, he met the amarok every day, and always underwent the same process. The boy felt stronger every day, and on his way home he kicked the very rocks, and rolling himself on the ground, made the stones fly about him. At last the beast was not able to overthrow him, and then it spoke: »Now, that will do; human beings will not be able to conquer thee any more. Still, thou hast better stick to thy old habits. When winter sets in, and the sea is frozen, then is thy time to show thyself; three great bears will then appear, and they shall be killed by thy hand.« That day Kagsagsuk ran all the way back, kicking the stones right and left, as was his wont. But at home he went on as usual, and the people tormented him more

3 Or doorway, a long and very narrow, sometimes half-subterranean, tunnel, leading by an upward step to the main, or rather the only, room of the winter hut, and adapted to keeping out the cold air. Its ends we have called the outer and the inner entrance.

than ever. One day, in the autumn, the kayakers⁴ returned home with a large piece of driftwood, which they only made fast to some large stones on the beach, finding it too heavy to be carried up to the house at once. At nightfall, Kagsagsuk said to his mother, »Let me have thy boots, mother, that I too may go down and have a look at the large piece of timber.« When all had gone to rest, he slipped out of the house, and having reached the beach, and loosened the moorings, he flung the piece of timber on his shoulders and carried it up behind the house, where he buried it deep in the ground. In the morning, when the first of the men came out, he cried, »The driftwood is gone!« and when he was joined by the rest, and they saw the strings cut, they wondered how it could possibly have drifted away, there being neither wind nor tide. But an old woman, who happened to go behind the house, cried, »Just look! here is the spar!« whereat they all rushed to the spot, making a fearful noise, shouting, »Who can have done this? there surely must be a man of extraordinary strength among us!« and the young men all gave themselves great airs, that each might be believed to be the great unknown strong man—the impostors!

In the beginning of the winter, the housemates of Kagsaguk ill-treated him even worse than before; but he stuck to his old habits, and did not let them suspect anything. At last the sea was quite frozen over, and seal-hunting out of the question. But when the days began to lengthen, the men one day came running in to report that three bears were seen climbing an iceberg. Nobody, however, ventured to go out and attack them. Now was Kagsagsuk's time to be up and doing. »Mother,« he said, »let me have thy boots, that I too may go out and have a look at the bears!« She did not like it much, but, however, she threw her boots to him, at the same time mocking him, saying, »Then fetch me a skin for my couch, and another for my coverlet, in return.« He took the boots, fastened his ragged clothes around him, and then was off for the bears. Those who were standing outside cried, »Well, if that is not Kagsagsuk! What can he be about? Kick him away!« and the girls went on, »He must surely be out of his wits!« But Kagsagsuk came running right through the crowd, as if they had been a shoal of small fish; his heels seemed almost to be touching his neck, while the snow, foaming about, sparkled in rainbow colours. He ascended the iceberg by taking hold with his hands, and instantly the largest bear lifted his paw, but Kagsagsuk turned round to make himself hard (viz., invulnerable by charm), and seizing hold of the animal by the fore-paws, flung it against the iceberg, so that the haunches were severed from the body, and then threw it down on the ice to the bystanders, crying, »This was my first catch; now, flense away⁵ and divide!« The others now thought, »The next bear will be sure to kill him.« The former process, however, was repeated, and the beast thrown down on the ice; but the third bear he merely caught hold of by the fore-paws, and, swinging it above his head, he hurled it at the bystanders, crying, »This fellow behaved shamefully towards me!« and then, smiting another, »That one treated me still worse!« until they all fled before him, making for the house in great consternation. On entering it himself he went straight to his foster-mother with the two bear-skins, crying, »There is one for thy couch, and another for thy coverlet!«

4 Men in their kayaks, or skin canoes, made for the purpose of seal-hunting, with room only for a single person.

5 The main ledge or bench; a low and broad bench for sitting and sleeping places, occupying the whole length of the wall opposite to the windows, the narrower side-ledge and window-ledge bordering the other walls. It is generally known in Greenland as the „brix.”

after which he ordered the flesh of the bears to be dressed and cooked. Kagsagsuk was now requested to enter the main room; in answer to which request he, as was his wont, only peeped above the threshold, saying, »I really can't get across, unless some one will lift me up by the nostrils;« but nobody else venturing to do so now, his old foster-mother came and lifted him up as he desired. All the men had now become very civil to him. One would say, »Step forward;« another, »Come and sit down, friend.« »No, not there where the ledge⁶ has no cover,« cried another; »here is a nice seat for Kagsagsuk.« But rejecting their offers, he sat down, as usual, on the side-ledge. Some of them went on, »We have got boots for Kagsagsuk;« and others, »Here are breeches for him!« and the girls rivalled each other in offering to make clothes for him. After supper, one of the inmates of the house told a girl to go and fetch some water for »dear Kagsagsuk.« When she had returned and he had taken a drink, he drew her tenderly towards him, praising her for being so smart for fetching water; but, all of a sudden, he squeezed her so hard that the blood rushed out of her mouth. But he only remarked, »Why, I think she is burst!« The parents, however, quite meekly rejoined, »Never mind, she was good for nothing but fetching water.« Later on, when the boys came in, he called out to them, »What great seal-hunters ye will make!« at the same time seizing hold of them and crushing them to death; others he killed by tearing their limbs asunder. But the parents only said, »It does not signify—he was a good-for-nothing; he only played a little at shooting.« Thus Kagsagsuk went on attacking and putting to death all the inmates of the house, never stopping until the whole of them had perished by his hand. Only the poor people who had been kind to him he spared, and lived with them upon the provisions that had been set by as stores for the winter. Taking also the best of the kayaks left, he trained himself to the use of it, at first keeping close to the shore; but after some time he ventured farther out to sea, and soon went south and northwards in his kayak. In the pride of his heart he roamed all over the country to show off his strength; therefore, even nowadays he is known all along the coast, and on many places there are marks of his great deeds still shown, and this is why the history of Kagsagsuk is supposed to be true.

NOTE—In the Labrador tale, the name of the champion is called Kaujakjuk, and in different copies from Greenland, Kausaksuk, Kassaksuk, Kausasuk, and Kauksaksuk. Several parts of Greenland claim the honour of pointing out the ruins of his house. A remarkable ruin on cape Noogsuak, of a very doubtful origin, is supposed to have been his bear-trap. In one of the writings, the relater, hinting at the European fancy for curiosities, observes: »I wonder why the masters, or even the king himself, who all seem so very fond of collecting rare things, if they really believe in the tale, have not taken one of the stones from this trap to be brought away with some ship, if possible.«

⁶ Take off the skin and blubber.

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