

HOW SQUIRE COYOTE BROUGHT FIRE TO THE CAHROCS.



"HOUSED IT SAFE WITH TWO BELDAMS DIRE."

IN the beginning Chareya made fire
(That is, the Cahrocs say so),
Housed it safe with two beldams dire,
And meant to have it stay so.
But the Cahrocs declared that fire should
be free,
Not jealously kept under lock and key.
Crafty Squire Coyote,
— Counselor of note, he,—
Just such a case he was meant for:
Forthwith his honor was sent for.

Squire Coyote came. On hearing the case,
The cunningest smile passed over his face;
Then, slyly winking,
In the midst of his thinking

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He stopt, stopt short.
An emphatic snort,
And said he: "Tight spot,
'Twere vain to conceal it:
Very sorry you're in it.
But, though tight as a Gordian knot,
What are you 'bout
That you don't get out?
It's only the work of a minute:
The way to get fire is to — *steal* it."
Squire Coyote was right—every Cahroc
knew it,
But (bless them!) how were they going to
do it?
"Ah!" said Coyote,
Stroking his goatee



"AWAY HE FLEW."

And taking his hat,
 "Let me 'tend to that."
 Then, airily bowing to left and right,
 He scampered away, and was out of sight.

Fire for the Cahroc nation!
 Coyote made preparation.
 From the land of the Cahrocs afar to the
 East

—The rogue, he knew every inch of the
 road—

Was stationed, now here, now there, a beast,
 All the way to the hut where the hags abode.
 The weaklings farthest off he put,
 The strong ones nearest the witches' hut;
 And lastly, hard by the guarded den,
 Placed one of the sinewy Cahroc men.

This done, up he trotted, and tapped,
 The gentlest possible, rapped

At the old crones' smoky door.
 "Beg pardon for being so bold;
 Fact is, I am numb with cold:
 Pray give me a bed on your floor."
 The trick succeeded; they let him in,
 And, snug at the feet of the beldams dire,
 He stretched his length to the open fire.

Not long he lay, when, oh, the din,
 The drubbing sudden heard outside!
 Such a bumping and banging,
 Such a whacking and whanging!
 "Itch to your skins!" the witches cried,
 And rushed from the hut to see
 What the horrible noise could be.

Now, it was only the Cahroc man
 Playing his part of Coyote's plan;
 But the simple old crones, you can well un-
 derstand,

Didn't see through it,
 And, before they knew it,
 Coyote was off with a half-burnt brand.
 Twitching and whisking it,
 Switching and frisking it,
 The best he knew,
 Away he flew,
 The Cahrocs' laughter
 And the crones close after.

And the race must soon be over.
 Race over? See there — who's that?
 Zounds! What a monstrous cat!
 It's the cougar sprung from his cover.
 Ha, ha! All but from the head crone's
 hand
 His jaws have rescued the precious brand,
 And he's off like shot!
 "On time to a dot,"



"HIS JAWS HAVE RESCUED THE PRECIOUS BRAND."

Over hill and dale,
 Like a comet's tail,
 Sweeps the borrowed brand
 Toward Cahroc-land.
 But the crones are fleet and strong,
 And it can't be long
 Before Coyote is made to feel
 How wicked a thing it is to steal.
 His spindling pegs
 —Mere spider legs—
 Nature never designed 'em
 To match the big shanks behind 'em.

He runs as never wolf ran;
 Every muscle and nerve,
 All his wild-wood verve,
 Is put to the strain;
 But, scratch it the fastest he can,
 The gray hags gain,

Coughs Coyote, clearing the soot
 From his throat and the specks from his
 eyes;
 "Bravo, my gallant brute!—
 And still the good fire flies!"

Fly it had to. You wouldn't believe old
 bones
 Could scuttle as now did the legs of the
 crones.
 The witches were marvelous fleet and
 strong,
 But, you see, the line of the beasts was too
 long:
 From the cougar the brand was passed to
 the bear,
 And so on down to the fox, to the hare,
 Thence on and on, till, flat in their tracks,
 The crones collapsed like empty sacks.

Thus the brand was brought from the bel-
dams' den
Safe to the homes of the Cahroc men.

And only two mishaps
'Mongst all the scampering chaps
That, each from the proper place,
Took his turn in the fire-brand chase.
The squirrel, as sudden he whirled,
Turning a corner of stumps and bowlders,
Burned his beautiful tail, so it curled
Clean over his back,
And scorched a brown track,
Still seen (tail also) over his shoulders.

The frog, poor thing!
His was a harder fate.
Small as smallest coal in the grate
Was the brand when he got it.
Jump and spring
He did, till he thought it
Was safe; when, pounce, like a stone,
Fell the claws of the foremost crone.
At last
He was fast;
No sort of use
To try to get loose.
His eyeballs bulged, his little heart thumped—
'Most broke his ribs, so hard it bumped.
So frightened he was, that, down to this day,
He looks very much in the same scared way.

The frog was caught,
Was squeezed
Till he wheezed;
But not too tight
For just a mite
Of ranine thought:

“Co-roak, chug, choke,
Granny Hag, good joke.
Well you've followed it;
So move up your hand
And take your old brand”—
Then he swallowed it!
And before the crone could wholly recover
From the sight of such a wonder,
Slipping her fingers from under,
He plunged into a pool all over.
He had saved the brand,
But the witch's hand
Still clutched his special pride and care —
His tail, piteously wriggling there.
Henceforth—he must grin and bear it—
The tadpole alone was to wear it.

At length, when the crones had gone,
He sought an old log, and got on:
“Rather short of beauty,
But I did my duty;
That's enough for a frog.”
Then he spat on the log,
Spat the swallowed spark
Well into its bark.

Fire, fire to your heart's desire;
Fire, fire for the world entire:
It's free as air to everybody,
White man or Cahroc, wise man or noddy.

From the beldams' den,
A gift to all men,
Coyote brought it.
In the wettest weather
Rub two sticks together,
Presto — you've got it!

John Vance Cheney.

TO A FACE AT A CONCERT.

WHEN the low music makes a dusk of sound
About us, and the viol or far-off horn
Swells out above it like a wind forlorn,
That wanders seeking something never found,
What phantom in your brain, on what dim ground,
Traces its shadowy lines? What vision, born
Of unfulfillment, fades in mere self-scorn,
Or grows, from that still twilight stealing round?
When the lids droop and the hands lie unstrung,
Dare one divine your dream, while the chords weave
Their cloudy woof from key to key, and die,—
Is it one fate that, since the world was young,
Has followed man, and makes him half believe
The voice of instruments a human cry?

E. R. Sill.