

## THE BOY AND THE DOUENS

Once there was a little boy who liked to have his own way. He always disobeyed his parents.

His home was near the bush and his parents often warned him not to go far among the trees.

One day, his mother asked him to sweep the yard and he did it half-way half-way and ran off to play with his friends.

They were playing hoop and some of them went off to hide in the bushes. The little boy was so eager not to be caught that he went deep among the trees where he was not supposed to go.

He soon got lost and became very frightened.

After much stumbling about he heard the sound of laughter and rippling water.

He made out children's voices and felt overjoyed for he thought he had reached his friends and so ran off towards the sounds.

What he saw made him stop and stare. A set of funny-looking children were catching and eating crabs and crayfish. Many were playing on the banks of the stream. They were douens.

They were naked and wore large straw hats to cover their dada hair which was never combed.

Their feet were turned backwards so that from their footprints it looked as if they were walking in one direction while they were really going in the opposite way.

The little boy was so afraid that in trying to move back behind some bush he fell. A few of the douens saw him and, rushing up, took his hand and started to play with him. At first he tried to pull away but soon the douens had him playing with them. Time flew fast.

Darkness was setting in and the boy longed to get away but did not know which way to go so he stayed with the douens.

All the while, the worried parents and other villagers were looking for him. They were walking throughout the bushes, and calling his name over and over.

At last the douens heard the call so they began to run away, at the same time trying to take the boy along. But he refused to go, pulling away from them with all his might.





**He began to shout and, in a short while, the group of searchers found him.**

**His father was very angry and promised to give him a good licking for going so far into the bushes. But the mother was so glad that she could only hug him. He promised not to have his own way again.**

**Anyway, the villagers were quick to point out to the parents that the douens stole the little boy because he was not christened. They said that douens were children who had died before being christened and that the boy was rescued just in time or he would have been stolen away and turned into a douen.**