

In This Week's Issue,
Wainahboozho!
And the First Birch-bark Canoe.
A Terrible Ordeal, etc., etc.

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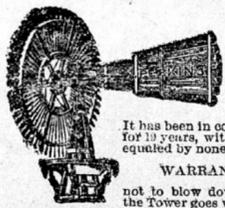
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PART IX.

WAI-NAH-BOO-ZHO!

FIRST BIRCH-BARK CANOE.—ADVENTURE ON THE SUN'S ISLAND.—SUCCEEDS IN GETTING FIRE.

About one of the first things Wainahboozho talked about with Nokomis, was the absence of fire, as the nights at that time of the year were very chilly, and the family inheritance of skins and furs was somewhat limited, this added to Wainahboozho's discomfort greatly. One morning having slept colder than usual, he said, "Nokomis, it is very cold here at night, I wish we had some fire to warm ourselves," but Nokomis said, "Ny-anh, my grand-child I don't think we can get fire, as it is a long distance across Gitche-gumme (big water) to the Island home of Gesis (sun), where fire can be found, and then too, a person would have to go before the mighty Gesis and steal away one of his smiles—rays, but that has never been done, for the Island and the sacred lodge of Gesis is strongly guarded by many spirits and his only companions are his daughters, the clouds, and who weep—rain—for him when he is angry or when his heart feels bad. No, my grand-child I would not advise you to undertake such a long journey and so hazzardous a task." But nothing daunted Wainahboozho, he was young, ambitious and already he was feeling the thirst for glory and the achievements of great deeds, and he at once set about laying plans for the undertaking. He be-took himself to the woods where he held a council with the trees of the forest, (this was presumably the first council or secret session ever held), it finally ended in the the birch trees consenting to give some of their we-gwas (bark), which was part of their snow-white garments and lined with rich purple and gold; the majestic cedar tendered him a few fragrant splinters for the keel and ribs of his craft; the stately tamarac donated some of its wa-taub (the strong durable rootlets) to lace it together, and the princely pine tree assured him that it would shed a few tears of pe-giew (gum) to cement the whole together, and make it water-proof.

In time the keel was laid, the light, feathery ribs were put in place and the white and gold colored robes of the queen of the forest was gracefully set about the corset and the wa-taub was made to gently clasp and lace them together while the tears of the pine—pe-giew—smoothed the creases. Thus, the first we-gwas-o-gee-mon, birch bark canoe, was finished; and a beauty it was too, the like of which none but Wainahboozho and his descendants have ever succeeded to build to perfection.

When all was ready, Wainahboozho embraced Nokomis and bid her an affectionate good bye, after having instructed her to prepare an earthen pot wherein she was to place some punk procured for the purpose, and watch for his coming. He embarked in his

canoe, and having summoned the aid of his father, the North wind, and his uncles, the South, East and West wind spirits, he was soon gone and out of sight. At day-break the next morning he found himself near the glittering shores of the Sun's island home; he hastily stepped ashore and after concealing his canoe, sat down a moment to determine what course was best to pursue to procure fire. Now Wainahboozho had the power to assume the shape of almost any animal he desired, so he changed himself into a rabbit and he proceeded to drench himself with water and sand, then he lay himself down close to the water's edge, apparently more dead than alive. Presently two of the Sun's pretty daughters came to the beach to draw water with which to shower Nature with the crystal beads of the morning dew. One of them saw the poor, forlorn looking rabbit, and she called her sister's attention to the pitiable object; they could not tell what it was, having never seen anything like it before, however, their hearts were touched with pity and they concluded to take it home to their father's wigwam and beg him to smile on the poor half-drowned creature, so that it might get warmed and revived.

When they got home the Sun was already awake and everything was warm and pleasant inside of the sacred lodge, of course no question was asked by the spirits guarding the entrance as they were subject to the daughters as well as to the Sun. So they passed in unmolested and tenderly laid down their burden and went about their work, soon the rabbit began to show signs of life by jumping up and skipping about the lodge at a very lively rate and greatly to the amusement of the two daughters, this soon attracted the attention of the Sun, and he asked his daughters what this was that they had brought into the lodge, rebuking them for admitting strangers in his presence without first asking his permission! While this conversation was going on, the rabbit had come and sat down opposite the Sun and within easy exit of the door; there he sat, in the most matter of fact way, moving his long ears to and fro and twitching his lips and nose in a most amusing and ridiculous fashion, while in this position the Sun happened to look at him, and so comical did the rabbit seem that he could not restrain a smile of merriment escaping him, and its glittering rays rested between the rabbit's shoulders! As soon as this had taken place, Wainahboozho, (for it was he) caught a spark of the fire ray on a small piece of punk he had fastened between his shoulders and darted out of the lodge and sped like an arrow from the bow, towards where his canoe lay concealed, and in less time than it takes us to write this, he was off and far away on his return voyage homeward. When the Sun discovered what had been done he hid his face and bid his daughters, the clouds, forthwith to weep—rain—and endeavor to quench the spark of fire Wainahboozho had stolen, but so swift did the wind spirit hurry his light craft before them, that it was found impossible to overtake him. And thus he was allowed to proceed the rest of his voyage unmolested.

The swiftness with which Wainahboozho and his craft was being hurried along caused the burning punk to be fanned into a blaze and before Wainahboozho could extricate himself from his rabbit skin, the hair was afire, and matters looked serious sure enough. He was now nearing the shore from whence he came, and he at

once commenced to howl and call loudly for Nokomis, to "hurry up, come to me, I am a fire—hi-hai, Nokomis, come quick!" When Nokomis heard this, she rushed out of her wigwam and hurried towards the shore, carrying the pot she had prepared with her, so excited was she that she forgot all about her crutch and a sprained ankle. When she had reached the shore and pulled the canoe on the beach, she first slook some of the fire into the pot then she proceeded to try and relieve Wainahboozho from his agonizing predicament. In many places the rabbit skin had burned through. And when, at last, Nokomis pulled it off of his back, great pieces of his own skin and flesh came off with it! Poor Wainahboozho, he was indeed a sorry looking sight after he was relieved of his fire jacket. Nokomis tenderly supported him to reach the wigwam, where she prepared a soft couch of moss and leaves, and upon which he lay down. Then Nokomis turned her attention to the fire in the pot, she went out and brought in some dry faggot, as she had been instructed to do, and soon a bright, cheerful fire was shedding its grateful warmth about the wigwam. This pleased Wainahboozho exceedingly, and he felt that the great comfort fire would be to him and his brethren, in the future, would more than repay him for the terrible ordeal he had just undergone.

Then he asked Nokomis to go to a certain place and bring some clay or dirt with which to dress his wounds, he also instructed her to gather some roots and herbs for the same purpose, and which were to be used by his brethren likewise, whenever they had needs of them. After his wounds had been dressed, he partook of some herb tea and then lay down to rest. Worn, weary and sore he was soon in a sound sleep. Then Wainahboozho's spirit wafted to the most enchanting scenes, the wonderful marvels and glories in the realms of Dreamland.

The story of "WAINAHBOOZHO" and his many adventures, will be continued in the columns of the Progress as fast as the manuscript can be prepared.

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