

The Ball Game By the Saco

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North American

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Water-Goblins from the streams about Katahdin had left their birthplace and journeyed away to the Agiochooks, making their presence known to the Indians of that region by thefts and loss of life. When the manitou, Glooskap, learned that these goblins were eating human flesh and committing other outrages, he took on their own form, turning half his body into stone, and went in search of them. The wigwam had been pitched near the Home of the Water Fairies,—a name absurdly changed by the people of North Conway to Diana's Bath,—and on entering he was invited to take meat. The tail of a whale was cooked and offered to him, but after he had taken it upon his knees one of the goblins exclaimed, "That is too good for a beggar like you," and snatched it away. Glooskap had merely to wish the return of the dainty when it flew back into his platter. Then he took the whale's jaw, and snapped it like a reed; he filled his pipe and burned the tobacco to ashes in one inhalation; when his hosts closed the wigwam and smoked vigorously, intending to foul the air and stupefy him, he enjoyed it, while they grew sick; so they whispered to each other, "This is a mighty magician, and we must try his powers in another way."

A game of ball was proposed, and, adjourning to a sandy level at the bend of the Saco, they began to play, but Glooskap found that the ball was a hideous skull that rolled and snapped at him and would have torn his flesh had it not been immortal and immovable from his bones. He crushed it at a blow, and breaking off the bough of a tree he turned it by a word into a skull ten times larger than the other that flew after the wicked people as a wildcat leaps upon a rabbit. Then the god stamped on the sands and all the springs were opened in the mountains, so that the Saco came rising through the valley with a roar that made the nations tremble. The

goblins were caught in the flood and swept into the sea, where Glooskap changed them into fish.

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