

The Hobomak

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North American

Intermediate

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Such was the Indian name of the site of Westboro, Massachusetts, and the neighboring pond was Hochomocko. The camp of the red men near the shore was full of bustle one day, for their belle, Iano, was to marry the young chief, Sassacus. The feast was spread and all were ready to partake of it, when it was found that the bride was missing. One girl had seen her steal into the wood with a roguish smile on her lip, and knew that she intended to play hide-and-seek with Sassacus before she should be proclaimed a wife, but the day wore on and she did not come. Among those who were late in reaching camp was Wequoash, who brought a panther in that he had slain on Boston Hill, and he bragged about his skill, as usual. There had been a time when he was a rival of the chief for the hand of Iano, and he showed surprise and concern at her continued absence. The search went on for two days, and, at the end of that time, the girl's body was taken from the lake.

At the funeral none groaned so piteously as Wequoash. Yet Sassacus felt his loss so keenly that he fell into a sickness next day, and none was found so constant in his ministrations as Wequoash; but all to no avail, for within a week Sassacus, too, was dead. As the strongest and bravest remaining in the tribe, Wequoash became heir to his honors by election.

A year later he sat moodily by the lakeside, when a flame burst up from the water, and a canoe floated toward him that a mysterious agency impelled him to enter. The boat sped toward the flame, that, at his approach, assumed Iano's form. He heard the water gurgle as he passed over the spot where the shape had glimmered, but there was no other sound or check. Next year this thing occurred again, and then the spirit spoke: "Only

once more.”

Yet a third time his fate took him to the spot, and as the hour came on he called his people to him: “This,” said he, “is my death-day. I have done evil, and the time comes none too soon. Sassacus was your chief. I envied him his happiness, and gave him poison when I nursed him. Worse than that, I saw Iano in her canoe on her wedding-day. She had refused my hand. I entered my canoe and chased her over the water, in pretended sport, but in the middle of the lake I upset her birch and she was drowned. See! she comes!”

For, as he spoke, the light danced up again, and the boat came, self-impelled, to the strand. Wequoash entered it, and with head bent down was hurried away. Those on the shore saw the flame condense to a woman’s shape, and a voice issued from it: “It is my hour!” A blinding bolt of lightning fell, and at the appalling roar of thunder all hid their faces. When they looked up, boat and flame had vanished. Whenever, afterward, an Indian rowed across the place where the murderer had sunk, he dropped a stone, and the monument that grew in that way can be seen on the pond floor to this day.

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