

The Loss of Weetamoo

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North American

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Winnepurkit, sagamore of the coast settlements between Nahant and Cape Ann, had married Weetamoo, daughter of Passaconaway, king of the Pennacooks, and had taken her to his home. Their honeymoon was happy, but old ties are strong, and after a little time the bride felt a longing to see her people again. When she made known this wish the husband not only consented to her visit, but gave her a guard of his most trusty hunters who saw her safe in her father's lodge (near the site of Concord, New Hampshire), and returned directly. Presently came a messenger from Passaconaway, informing his son-in-law that Weetamoo had finished her visit and wished again to be with her husband, to whom he looked for an escort to guide her through the wilderness. Winnepurkit felt that his dignity as a chief was slighted by this last request, and he replied that as he had supplied her with a guard for the outward journey it was her father's place to send her back, "for it stood not with Winnepurkit's reputation either to make himself or his men so servile as to fetch her again."

Passaconaway returned a sharp answer that irritated Winnepurkit still more, and he was told by the young sagamore that he might send his daughter or keep her, for she would never be sent for. In this unhappy strife for precedent, which has been repeated on later occasions by princes and society persons, the young wife seemed to be fated as an unwilling sacrifice; but summoning spirit to leave her father's wigwam she launched a canoe on the Merrimack, hoping to make her way along that watery highway to her husband's domain. It was

winter, and the stream was full of floating ice; at the best of times it was not easy to keep a frail vessel of bark in the current away from the rapids, and a wandering hunter reported that a canoe had come down the river guided by a woman, that it had swung against the Amoskeag rocks, where Manchester stands now, and a few moments later was in a quieter reach of water, broken and empty. No more was seen of Weetamoo.

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