

In the original Algonkin myth the hero to which Hiawatha has been accommodated was a child of the sun and the earth. Whatever his names in the numerous versions found in the twenty-eight languages of this richest and most varied Indian stock of North America, he is always the bounteous benefactor of man, the kindest of all divine powers that have ever appeared upon earth. He is always in reality that warm light which dances and quivers before us in fine weather, and through which every man, beast, reptile, insect, fish, bird, and plant lives and flourishes.

This myth has received on the Pacific coast, or more correctly on parts of it, a different treatment from that given it east of the Rocky Mountains. There the benefactor is a female, a daughter of the earth. Nothing is said as to who her father was. It is significant that she dances all day, that she is called the quivering porcupine and the food-producing woman.

In Indian myths from New York to California the porcupine is ever connected with light; in some cases it is the sun himself. In "Tulchuherris" of this volume, Sas (the sun) carries a porcupine quiver, and is advised never to lay it aside, for as long as he keeps it on his shoulder he is safe from his children the grizzlies (the clouds) who wish to kill him.

In California Norwan, daughter of the earth, occupies in part the place of the Algonkin hero, the child of the sun and the earth. Her usual life is of the housekeeping order; she has great supplies of food in her hlut, or residence, and she goes on dancing each day until evening. The great and characteristic event of her life, her departure from the dance with her partner, is of the same scope and meaning as the last journey of Hiawatha when he sails to the west and vanishes in the regions of sunset. The hero of the Algonkin myth must go, he cannot stay; he must vanish in the ruddy glow of evening because he is the warm dancing air of the daytime. He must go whether he will or not. Before he goes, however, he cheers all whom he leaves behind by telling them that another will come from the east to take his place and comfort them. Next morning, of course, the comforter comes, for the life career of the Algonkin hero is included in the compass of a single day, and a successor is bound to come as surely as he himself is bound to go.