

THE STORY OF NANA-BO-ZHOO AND HIS BROTHER.

We had done a good day's work at paddle and portage, but we had got early into camp, we had supped, nor had the toothsome trout been wanting at our meal, and now we sat or sprawled round the fire in that condition of utter contentment which is only made possible in this world by the combination of tired muscles and hunger appeased. For a while we were satisfied to let the digestive processes proceed undisturbed, but presently the Old Woodsman rose from his seat, filled his pipe from some one else's pouch, for he was too old a hand to carry cut tobacco himself, lit it with a hot coal from the embers and turning to the old Ojibway, our tried companion on many journeyings by lake and river, said, "John, some of us have never heard the story of Nana-bo-zhoo. Let us have it to-night."

John, who was known among his own people by the, to us, less hackneyed name of Ozhahwashkogezhik, was pleased to signify his assent, and seated himself on a log in a convenient posture for narration while the rest of us filled our pipes afresh and having bestowed ourselves in various attitudes which, if not graceful, were at least unconventional, we all kept silence together, and intently held our faces.

The story that follows has often been told, but I have never seen it exactly as he gave it, and I have tried to write it here as nearly as possible as it was spoken. But the tones and gestures of the old savage, for a savage he was again for the time while he repeated the ancient epic of his people, the solemn grandeur of the pine woods, the delicate play of the moonbeams on the rippling water, the sighing of the summer wind among the branches and the musical murmur of the rapid, all these which formed such an exquisitely fitting background to the story—how shall I convey the least shadow of it all! To those who know and love the woods, and to know them is to love them, no words of mine will be needed. Fancy led by Memory can conjure up the scene, and Hope will whisper, "When the summer comes—"

I.

A long time ago there was an old man called Nana-bo-zhoo. He lived with his brother in a big wigwam. His brother was a great hunter, and Nana-bo-zhoo was a great hand to dress skins and furs. They had plenty of fur blankets and coats and the wigwam was hung all round with fur. Nana-bo-zhoo's brother had a bow and arrow and he could hit a bird or a beast almost as far off as he could see him, but he was such a good runner that he often used to run down the animals that he hunted, even the best runners, like deers and foxes, and kill them with a club. By and by the beasts got afraid they would all get killed; so they held a big council to try and find some way to stop Nana-bo-zhoo's brother from hunting them all down. At this council they agreed that the white reindeer could run the fastest of all the beasts and so they chose him to decoy Nana-bo-zhoo's brother out on a lake, and the sea lion promised that when he got there he would make a noise like thunder and break the ice and drown Nana-bo-zhoo's brother in the lake.

So one day when the snow was deep Nana-bo-zhoo took a walk along the path that led from the wigwam into the wood. Pretty soon he saw the white reindeer standing near the path. Nana-bo-zhoo thought he had never seen such a fine deer before, and he went back very quietly to the wigwam and said to his brother, "Come out as quick as you can; there is the most beautiful white reindeer you ever saw standing beside the

path. I want you to get him for me, but don't take your bow and arrow, take your club and run him down, so as not to spoil his hide." So Nana-bo-zhoo's brother took his club and went along the path very quietly, and before long he saw the white reindeer feeding beside the path. The white reindeer didn't take any notice of Nana-bo-zhoo's brother but went on feeding while he crept nearer and nearer; but at last when he was quite near he trod on a dry branch that was under the snow, the branch cracked and the white reindeer held up his head, threw up his tail and went off with three big jumps. Nana-bo-zhoo's brother ran after him, but though he could run so fast the white reindeer could run just as fast as he, and all day long he kept just ahead of him. Sometimes Nana-bo-zhoo's brother would gain a little bit on the white reindeer, but always just when he got so near that he thought he could almost hit him with his club, the white reindeer would give a big jump and get as far ahead as ever.

At last, near sundown, they began to see a light through the trees in front of them, and in a few minutes they came to a lake so large that they could not see the other side. The white reindeer bounded through the alders on to the ice and Nana-bo-zhoo's brother followed him. They ran on for a long time over the ice out into the middle of the big lake. At last the white reindeer seemed to be getting tired and Nana-bo-zhoo's brother began to gain on him and by and by he got so close to him that he thought he could strike him with his club. But just as he raised his arm to strike there was a noise like thunder and the ice cracked between them. The white reindeer bounded away over the lake but Nana-bo-zhoo's brother fell into the crack and sank to the bottom of the lake.

II.

When night came on and his brother did not come back Nana-bo-zhoo said, "That white reindeer has led my brother a long chase. It is too far for him to carry the deer back to the wigwam before dark. He has camped somewhere till morning. To-morrow he will come back with the meat and the hide." So he cooked his supper, rolled himself in his blanket and went to sleep. But next day his brother did not come back nor the day after, nor the day after that, so Nana-bo-zhoo said, "Something must have happened to my brother, I must go and look for him." So he took his brother's bow and arrow and set out. He followed his brother's tracks as far as the lake, but there a snow storm came on and covered the tracks up. Then the spring came and the ice and snow melted, but Nana-bo-zhoo heard nothing of his brother. At last one day he was walking along the lake shore when he saw the kingfisher sitting on a leaning tree looking into the water. "What are you looking at, kingfisher?" said Nana-bo-zhoo. "Oh, nothing," said the kingfisher; "I am just watching to see if I can catch a fish for my breakfast." "I know better," said Nana-bo-zhoo, "You're looking at something down there in the water. You tell me what you're looking at and I'll paint your feathers for you, and give you pretty colours." Now the kingfisher used to be an ugly bird with ugly gray feathers all one colour, so he said, "All right! I'll tell you what I'm looking at. I'm watching the sea lions playing with Nana-bo-zhoo's brother." So Nana-bo-zhoo painted his feathers and made him pretty colours like you see him now. Then Nana-bo-zhoo asked him how he could get his brother from the sea lions, but the kingfisher said he could not tell him. Now, the kingfisher had no tuft on his head then, so Nana-bo-zhoo said to him, "If you will tell me I will give you a tuft of feathers on your head." "All right!" said the kingfisher. "You go along the lake shore till you