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Elias Cook (Ca.);
Grand River Reserve;
August, 1918;
Notebook 5, p.16.

Title:- The Serpent and the Thunder Man



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Theme;- A girl who refused suitors is deceived into marriage by a serpent, but is rescued by a Thunder Man.

Incidents;-

The monster bridegroom

Jove (Thunder Men perform feats)

Whole affected through part

Personages:-

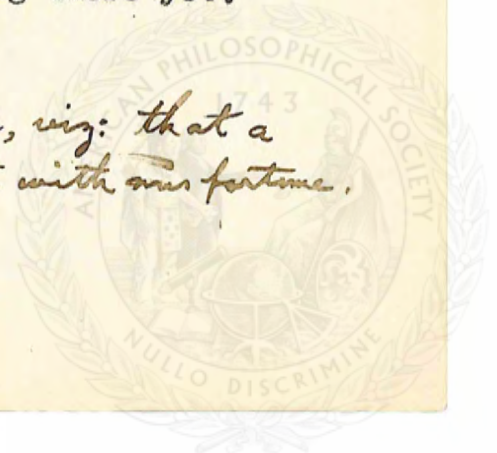
Monster serpent (usaista'gowa')

Thunder Men; Ta'hi' (rumbling or rolling thunder)

Uste' (the one who burns when the lightning strikes). The root-meaning was given by the informant as meaning "dry."

Ending;- "I think that perhaps she is living there yet."

Remarks: A moral seems to be suggested, viz: that a girl who refuses marriage will meet with misfortune.



An old woman and her granddaughter (once) lived together. The girl was good-looking and had just reached maturity. Young men, in fact, often came to try to get her, but she thought that none of them were of any account, so that their efforts were in vain.

When the old woman went to the long-house, the girl always remained at home. On one occasion, when a dance was announced, the old woman tried to persuade the girl to go. She refused, as usual, and said she would rather stay at home. The old woman thought the girl would be all right to remain by herself, so she finally went off to the ceremony alone.

While she was away, a great serpent (usaista'gowa'), which was white in color and a great wizard, transformed itself into a man. The girl observed a good-looking young man pass by carrying something which appeared very nice. She called to him and he stopped. "You had better come in," she said. "I knew something was going on at the long-house," remarked the young man, "and thought that perhaps you were alone. That is why I came. Will you marry me?" "Yes," answered the girl. "I am ready at any time;" so the young man handed her the blanket which he carried, and said, "It belongs to you. Come with me, but leave the blanket for your grandmother to see when she comes back;" so the girl and the young man went off together.

The old woman returned and found her granddaughter gone. The house was empty, and all she could find was a

snake's skin hanging by the bed. She told her neighbors about the matter, and some of them came to see the skin. It was that of a large snake, and they took it out and decided to burn it.

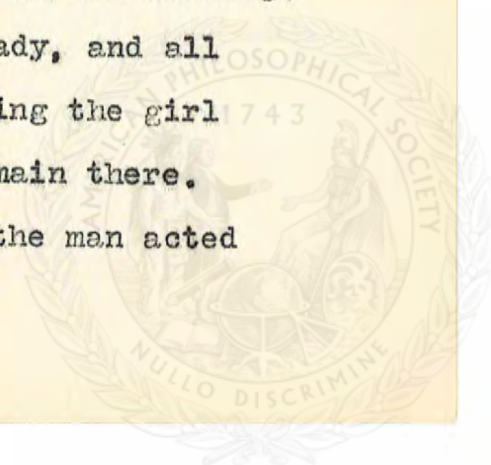
When this was done, they discovered a deep track in the hard ground leading from the shanty to the lake. This had apparently been made when the ground was soft. They followed it to the lake and found that it ended there. They went back, then, and told the old woman that the track led into the water.

The girl had not noticed that she had entered the water. The young man's house seemed just like any other, although it was a big one. The girl saw his mother and father and brothers and sisters. They all appeared like people, too.

Every once in a while the man would go to the young woman in the form of a snake with its mouth open to kiss her. This caused the girl to scream; so the man's mother advised him to quit this and not to frighten her; but he only laughed.

One night, about bed-time, the girl heard the man talking as though he were going away very early in the morning. When the morning came, they got breakfast ready, and all went away as soon as they were through, leaving the girl alone at home. The young man told her to remain there.

That night, when the family came back, the man acted

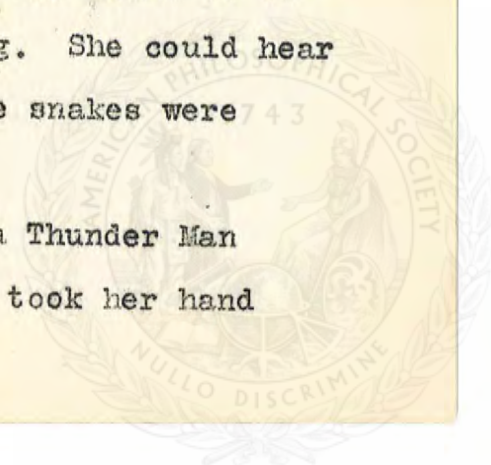


still worse. He went about like a snake and wanted to get into her lap. The girl sprang up and shouted. The mother said to the man, "It's foolish to act like that. You had better quit."

Next day they all went away again, while the girl remained at home alone. It was dry all around where they were. In fact, they had to go to a spring at some distance for drinking-water. About sundown the girl decided to go for some of this, and, when she reached the spring, she saw a man standing there. "What do you want?" he asked. "I want to go home," said the girl. "Just wait for a while," said the man. "I shall come back the day after to-morrow and meet you here. Your husband will know that a man has been here, but you must not admit it to him or he will kill you. To-morrow he will stay at home, but day after to-morrow they will all go away again. Wait until you think they have been gone long enough, then look under the old woman's bed. Their hearts are all hanging there together."

The girl went back and, on the day appointed, she took a corn-husk basket which she had, held it under the hearts and cut the string. As soon as they dropped, the girl found that she was under the water, and it was all she could do to run towards the man she had met at the spring. She could hear the water moving, and it seemed as though the snakes were coming.

The stranger whom the girl had met was a Thunder Man and, as soon as she came to where he was, he took her hand



and pulled her up out of the water. They were in the middle of the lake, but they kept the basket with the hearts in it and went towards the shore.

It began to lightning. The snakes, however, were helpless and unable to follow the hearts. They wriggled up on a dry place and were only just alive when they got to it. The lightning now struck them on the heads and killed them all.

It was one of the Thunder Men named Ta'hi' who saved the girl. (1)

When all the serpents were killed, the Thunder Man prepared some medicine for the girl. He rubbed it down her back, upon which a number of young snakes came out. He killed these, too; then he took the girl to her grandmother's and became her husband, after which he came to see her whenever it rained and thundered at night. He stayed just a little while on such occasions, then went away again. He also told his wife about the various powers he and the other Thunder Men possessed.

The girl gave birth to a child after a while - a boy. "Don't annoy him," the Thunder Man told her, "and don't say anything to him when he is playing outside. Let him have his own way."

The boy grew very fast and would often go into the house and run about and shout and, when he did so, the sound was like thunder. (On one of these occasions) the grandmother said, "You're shouting too loudly. Just quit it at once." The boy started, as though frightened, and

1). The informant could remember only two of the names formerly applied to the individual Thunder Men. One was Ta'hi', who makes a long rumble; the other was Uste' (dry), who burns when the lightning strikes.

began to weep. He kept on weeping, in fact, until he died.

One night, after this, it rained again. They heard the thunder all around and expected he would come into the house again, but he did not appear. After this had happened three times they all concluded the Thunder Man would never return.

The girl was now willing to marry the first man who asked her, and I think that perhaps she is living there yet.

