Maine Indian Legends.

When the white people came the Indians of the Algonquin stock were spread out from the Blackfeet of the Rocky Mountains to the Boetucks of "Newfoundland, save only a few "islands" of other stock, like the Sioux of Dakota and the Iroquois of "New York State. It should cause us no wonderment then to know that the Hiawatha legends of the Chippewas, or Ojibways, of Minnesota were closely akin to the tales told around Penobscot camp-fires. Many of the words in Longfellow's poem are the same as those in the Penobscot tongue, and the stories of Mondahmin, or the Indian corn, the Four Winds, the coming of Winter are closely similar. Cooper's Mohicans in speaking of the Mohawks as Maquas, used the same word that the Penobscot Indian uses today of his hereditary and dreaded foe.

Cooper's chief Chingargook, the Raven, bears the Penobscot name K'chigargook, "the big black one", for the same bird. Thus the problems arising from the Maine Indian myths and legends, like those arising from the language itself, are not merely local and unimportant questions.

Indeed what is said to be the oldest known civilization is chiefly known to anthropologists from the remains discovered within a few miles of this place. Those Red-paint people of Alamoosook hark back to a period before any other antiquities in this country, say some. It is not, however, fully explained by them how when the Puritans were seeking a landing that cold December, their scouts alongshore under Mr. Edward Winslow, came across a typical "red-paint burial" of a white man and a boy upon the shores of Cape Cod. But Winslow recorded it in detail and Capt. John Smith quoted it later in his books. The name Alamoosook is generally interpreted as "dog place"; it does mean that in modern Indian; but inspite of the ingenious Abbe Maurault's philological
conjectures about "the land of the little dogs"—which we all know never existed in Maine—there seems to be much more likelihood in the conjecture of a much greater student of Indian than the Abbe, Professor William F. Ganong, that it probably came from oolammonoosook, the "red paint place", which we find again in Olamon, further up and in Oolammononegamoook, the "Silver Lake of Katahdin Iron Works, and Munolammonungun, the west branch of Pleasant River. If any well acquainted locally could point out any place where red hematite, or bog iron ore is found, particularly if it were upon Verona, the etymology of Alamoosook would be almost certain.

Scattered all the way up and down the river are Indian names now all but lost. There is Tikopeessuk, Salmon Point, just above here, and Walinaytuk, or Frankfort Marsh Bay. Keenabskatnek is the old name of Mount Waldo. Then there was Edahlit'quakilahmook or Eld "ill Cove and Edahlowekeck-hardimuck, "place where they drew marking or writing," or Hampden Narrows. Every place had a name to them, as to us, and every name had a meaning.

And many of these places had for the Indian some peculiar significance, for which he felt veneration, even awe. Did he float down the river through Hampden Narrows he looked at the writing on the rocks. Mikumwessuk, the dwarfs did that, they the little men a finger-length tall, with their narrow faces and slitted eyes and queer little straight noses, the Mikumwessuk of whom he was not afraid, because they were friendly and fore-knowing and the makers of beads for him and of little kettles and teapots. They have gone now, the whites have driven them off. Some time ago, a long time ago an Indian found some of the beads made them down at Oonegarnasuk, Stockton Springs, that is, the little carrying place,
the "short carry", but now they are all gone. The white people drove them away and spoiled all their writing.

Then there was Seebus-Edalobski-Tahesit, the statue of a bird. It was a rock greatly resembling a bird which used to stand near the entrance of the Punch Owl down in Eggemoggin Reach. But the white people knocked off the head of it and Seebus-Edalobski, tahesit is no more.

But most of all have I heard them shake their heads and lament over the desecration of Dyce's head, Mahdahgamoosook, as they called it. It was there that Glusgehhbeh (Glooscap) landed on his great moose hunt when he made his flying leap, and there used to be plainly seen the prints of the snowshoes he had on. But the white people have destroyed those revered evidences of of the great hero's presence on earth; Mahdagamoosook is no more.

But there are other memorials of Glusgehhbeh which not even the whites can efface. And hereby hangs a story so Indian in its vague largeness that one hesitates to tell it except to those who know the Glooscap legends and who understand the Indian mind. It takes a long time to understand the Indian's mind, and then when you think you know it fairly well, suddenly you discover that you do not. He is both matter-of-fact and mystical. His place names, for example, are usually the plainest prose, and the white man's translations of them are utter bosh. Is Winnepesogee "the smile of the Great Spirit"? Not by a long chalk! It is "big water from wiwini, in the vicinity, nebes, lake, aki, region, place" or about that. And Missisippi is not "father of waters", but plain Penobscot mitche, or Kachi as we have it, sebou, river, big river Is Kentucky "dark and bloody ground"? It is very doubtful. The last two syllables stand for our auklee, ground, but it is problematical whether an Indian is used to making words as long as he pleased could crowd two ideas like "dark" and "bloody" into the single syllable "ken".
Thus, on the one hand, the Indian is quite prosaic in his place names. But he is so vague in other concepts as to be quite irritating to the logical English mind. When my old lady tells me about a woman she knew hanging her two children to the rainbow, and everybody knew it, because everybody could see them hanging there, and she did it only about twenty-five years ago, it is hard for me to accept it with the same unquestioning belief that she does.

Therefore in the Glusgehbeh legend, forbear to ask how and why; take it on the authority of the old men, who handed it down and showed what you may see any day, the evidence of the rocks.

Glusgehbeh, or Glooscap was the eastern, and probably the original prototype of Hiawatha. He was a demi-god and also the first created man larger than men, of magical power, yet living among them and coming to teach them. In modern Indian the word means "a liar", that is one who invents what he tells; but in the old tongue, now forgotten, it meant "the man out of nothing." This is what a Penobscot Indian has written of him: "Klose-kur-beh, "The Man from Nothing" was claimed by all the children of the red man, to be the first person who came upon earth. And he was their teacher! He taught them how they must live, and told them about the spiritual power.

Now the story of Glusgehbeh's hunting is variously told. It is permissible in such a presentation as this to unite tales that belong together. But thus it goes. At one time Glusgehbeh and his dog Madamus, were hunting moose together up in the far woods and they came upon the now moose and her calf. The big moose he killed at Moosehead Lake, and her body is Kineo. But the calf led him a long chase across country, he and his dog, "e threw down
his pack and his kettle, which he had been carrying, and one is to this day, Kokadjo, the kettle, and the other Sabotawan, the pack, or Big and Little Spencer Mountains, east of Moosehead. But still the calf ran before them till he came to Penobscot Bay. Then the moose took to the water and the dog tried to head him off, while Glusgehbeh with a flying leap, jumped across Penobscot Bay and landed with both snow-shoes on Dyce's head at Castine. There was Mahdahgamoosook, the mark of his snow shoes, and he pursued the moose to Cape Rosier, where he killed him. To this day you can see Moose-oocachick, the moose's rump, a great rock near the water. Glusgehbeh dressed the moose out and his liver is a piece of volcanic lava, which lies, or did lie somewhere near, and the fat, white entrail he threw to his dog off on Islesboro. To this day you see it running under water across the bay, a stripe of white quartz about two feet wide, appearing finally about a quarter mile below the wharf at Ryder's Cove. And thus writes a Penobscot Indian about this event. (Red Man, page 51-53)

It is true that Glooscap's moose has been killed at Bar Harbor and all over the country wherever anything was present to remind the Indians of the tale. It does not in the least disturb an Indian to have the same event happen in a half score of different places; to that sort of realism he must not be limited. But nowhere is there so good evidence that the story is true as here on our own bay where we may see the moose's rump, and his liver and his entrails stretching out under water and ever the pot-holes where he boiled the meat and ate it, presumably upon the Bagaduce River.
There are two phases of this Glusgehbeh story,— the philosophical and the entertaining. On the one hand there is a rather Rabelaisian giant, who is on good-humored terms with all the animals, who even has a merry jest with the whale that serves as a ferry-boat for him and when she asks, "K'teen penabskwass n'aga tamawe?" Hast thou not such a thing as an old pipe and tobacco gives her his own and the whale goes off smoking Glooscap's pipe, as today may be seen whenever a whale blows. On the other hand such stories as this Micmac tale, and on the other a being of dignity, who is told by the Great Spirit how to what to do, and who teaches men the arts of agriculture, of canoe-building, of making tools and weapons. The earth is full of wild animals of huge size and the first men and woman, human, not supernatural like himself, were afraid of these huge beasts. So "Klosekurbeh, who saw the condition of things, went forth to meet all the ferocious roving beasts; he called each one to him and these that obeyed, he asked if they were willing to become small; and all that came with willingness he transformed into small animals and covered them with fine fur. Those that hesitated and lingered behind, he changed smaller and with coarse hair." Note how in their attempt at philosophy they are trying to account for what they have observed, that it is the small creatures which are the fur-bearers.

Miqueih, the squirrel friskily resists him. He leaps into a tree and says, "When man leaps from branch to branch as I, then shall I submit to his bidding". The Klosekurbeh said, "Because from the branches of a tree you choose to bark at a man—be it so—but as you are to leap from branch to branch your great weight will break the branches down, therefore you need to become small so you can travel on the branches of the trees" and immediately
immediately the animal became small and Klosekurbeh called him "Miqu-go-a" (squirrel.) The squirrel was ever a favorite of Glusgehbeh’s. He used to carry him in his bosom, and then, when he needed a helper, he would take out the squirrel, stroke him a few times and cause the squirrel to grow large again. So the squirrel often figures as Glusgehbeh's dog to fight for him. But he is not Mahdasmus, the true dog who talked with him.

With one of the old animals Glusgehbeh had trouble. This was Par-sar-do-keppiart, the mammoth, who for his disobedience was sentenced to extinction; his bones should last, but no red man should see the hide and hair that he was so proud of. How did the Indian know about the mammoth? How did he know about the Ice Age of which he seems to have a tradition? It can hardly be assumed too hastily that these are late interpolations, borrowed from white men. For the man who tells them was an honest seeker after truth, and when we think of it, it is only within the memory of men now living that there has been any adequate notion of the geologic changes which brought the glacial period. Our own fathers, if not we ourselves were but the other day believers in Usher’s Chronology and computed all geologic changes as confined to the six thousand years of the good bishop. But these Inidnas knew about the coming of winter, that is of the ice age, of the warmer time before it, of the huge ante-diluvian beasts, of the way human life developed upon the earth.
Parts of this Glusgehbeh legend are full of poetic beauty. What could be more intrinsically poetical than this passage, as told in the words of a Penobscot Indian? Klose-kurbheh, after one of his labors, for the first time feels tired. In the words of the narrator: "When night came this same lonely feeling was still upon him, he prepared a place for a night's rest. After the darkness had come and before laying himself down to sleep, to cheer himself, Klosekurbeh did sing. When this was done the seven trees that stood nearest bent their tops down and listened to the singing of Klosekurbeh, and when the singing was ended over, the largest of the seven straightened its body up and said, "How grateful the heart of man ought to be when he can bring cheer to himself by singing when lonely. When my kind and I sing, we sing in distress when the fury of the winds shake our limbs we sing in wailing,--our roots are many and strong and cannot move to avoid the fury of the heavens. We stand and wait for whatever befall us, because you can move at your pleasure do not linger here." How much better off is a man than a tree! He can move at pleasure, and he can sing for solace!

The whole long tale as related by Joseph Necolar is a mingling of philosophy, history and tradition upon a high level and at great length. Here in the briefest possible form is another version as told to Leland by a Penobscot woman:

"Glusgehbe gave names to everything. He made men and gave them life, and made the winds to make the waters move. The Turtle was his uncle; the Mink, Uk-see-meezel, his adopted son; and Monim kwessos, the Woodchuch, his grandmother. The Beaver built a great dam, and Glusgehbe turned it away and killed the Beaver.
Moose-tchick he killed a moose. The bones may be seen at Bar Harbor, turned to stone. He threw the entrails to the Moose across the bay to his dogs, and they too, may be seen there to this day, as I myself have seen them; and there, too, in the rock are the prints of his bow and arrow."

This is a Micmac tradition, in the words of an old Indian "Glooscap had two dogs. One was the Loon (Kweemoo), the other the Wolf (Malsum). Of old all animals were as men; the Master gave them the shapes they now bear. But the Wolf and the Loon loved Glooscap so greatly that since he left them they howl and walk who hears their cries over the still and lonely lake, by the streams where no dwellers are, or afar at night in the forests and hollows, hears them sorrowing for the Master."

So the loon crying at night is Glusgahheh's faithful dog, gone mad with waiting for him to return. The Loon is thus accounted for.

But why do the Toad and the Porcupine have no noses? Oh, that was Glusgahheh too; they were malevolent witches, who said they would kill him, and he touched their noses softly. "But the two witches, looking at one another, saw presently that their noses were both gone, and they screamed aloud in terror, but their noses were none the less flat. And so it came about that the Toad and the Porcupine both lost their noses and have none to this day". (Leland, .108)

The Raven was white once; but Moseek, the Wood-worm in revenge, bound him and tried to burn him. The smoke of the birch-bark torches blackened the white bird, and now he is always Kchi-hgahgook, "the big black one". Why is the rabbit's nose split? Why is his tail so short? Why is the Partridge's leg nothing but sinew while his breast is good? Why does he drum by himself in the woods? All such questions have stories to answer