

## THE GREAT SPIRIT

Man is so modulated that he must worship something. What and how he worships goes a long way toward furnishing the incentives and ambitions and restraints in his life. This was as true of the Indians as it is of us white folks. Civilization is built upon what we believe so firmly that the beliefs become the activating forces in the lives of the people.

The civilization of the Western World is built upon the principles of Christianity. This civilization is the mother of the virtue, social order, prosperity, and the blessing we enjoy.

It was different with the Indian. For unknown centuries that he roamed North America he lived a part of Nature, intimately and inseparately a part. He was a child of Nature. But he was a human being and he had a soul. He had to have a spiritual guide. With most Indians there was a belief that this world and everything in it was alive and had spirits. Their faith in these spirits and their worship of them made their religion. Most Indians believed that a strong, magical force pervaded the world, and was extended to every god, or spirit. Each tribe has a different name for this force, Manito, Wakan Tanka, Waconda; but the early missionaries called it the Great Spirit, or Great Mystery. The Indian saw the coming and going of the birds but had no explanation for it except in the will of the Great Spirit.

### we hit the trail

Have you heard it said about Indians: "They took from Nature no more than they needed"? How was this a part of their religion? Can we say that this is a part of the conduct of every true conservationist?

The Indians were masters of woodcraft. Their living and their safety depended upon a knowledge of the ways of the woods, the creatures, and the plants. This valuable heritage the Indians passed on to us. These children of Nature passed on some other great heritages. Do you know any of their songs, dances, rituals, and ceremonies about the council fire; any games and creed? What about the Boy Scout Oath?

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## SPRING ANTICS AND LOVE SONGS

Fall brings the harvests, colorful landscapes, and drowsy blue hills; Spring, the return of life and love-making. One hardly knows where to begin with the story. It is time to put up the bird houses and to start educating the neighbors that cats are the birds' worst enemy. It is time to pick out thoughtfully a couple of trails for your excursions into nature. It is well to be interested in all Nature, but to become familiar with life along a couple well-worn trails is best. They become your living library.



The woods are still bare, but the skunk cabbage is wedging its way up through the mire. One trail should include a swamp, if possible. Open up the spathe and see the spadix within, waiting for the insects to carry on the marriage ceremony. This is the way most flowers carry on their mating. Nearby the willow buds may be bursting. The wind will do their mating. Soon every pool will be vibrant with the song of the peepers; the "pump-sucker" will send out his resounding love call. There will be the rat-ta-tat-tat-tat of woodpeckers on dead limbs and robin-rackets on the lawn. The pendulum of life is on the upward swing.

### we hit the trail

There is a thread that runs through all life. To know that thread gives us a kinship with Nature. What is this kinship? Why do we have homes?

Ranger Mac will tell about the spawning nest of the sunfish which can be seen in ponds and lakes about. There will be the story of the hummingbird's pendulum flight to win his mate; then the nursery. In this flight he looks for all the world as though he were hung on an invisible cord. The woodcock and the Wilson snipe carry on an interesting aerial courtship, and the courtship dance of the prairie chicken seems the height of ridiculousness. The turkey tom and the peacock strut their male prowess in farm yards; the rooster declares he is responsible for the sunrise, and in some corner of the barn the male spider plays a rhythmic love tune on a strand of a female spider's web.

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