

**MANABOZO,  
PP. 1- 89**

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Manabozo, pp. 1- 89 by Francis Neilson

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**FRANCIS NEILSON**

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MANABOZO

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# MANABOZO

BY

FRANCIS NEILSON

London

JOHN MACQUEEN

HASTINGS HOUSE, NORFOLK STREET, STRAND

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1899

**Dedicated**  
TO THE MEMORY OF  
**ANTON SEIDL**

9-4-24 6. W.

## PREFACE

THIS libretto is the first part of a trilogy on the myths of the North American Indians.

Antonin Dvorak, before his "New World" symphony was performed, had thought of treating some of the parts of Longfellow's "Hiawatha," but a dramatic cantata was all the great Bohemian composer saw in the Indian song. He, however, drew Anton Seidl's attention to the poem, which made a deep impression, for Seidl saw in the subject something far more important than the cantata. But in vain he searched Longfellow's "Hiawatha" for those essentials—motive, sequence and action—which should exist before the formative mind of the dramatist or librettist can produce a work for composition.

Reference was made to Heckewelder's "Account of the Indian Nations," and Schoolcraft's "Oneota" and "Algic Researches," some of which works were

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the sources whence Longfellow took his material. There was then discovered a wealth of wild, disconnected legends, characteristics and traditions, strange, beautiful and noble ; primitive ideas similar to those of Greece and Scandinavia, not yet distorted by the aesthetic mind of the modern European, nor scientifically embellished by the superplastic powers of the savant or narrator.

These myths, in many particulars so like well-known European and Asiatic sagas and eddas, perplexed and sorely tried one who then feared the stock term of the uninitiated, plagiarism, but Seidl's confidence and belief in the subject and its potentialities were enough to inspire the most timid. Still, stumbling blocks were many, and not easily surmounted by the dramatist. The chief difficulty was the evident misrepresentation of deities, many writers ascribing to one deity or hero-god the powers and action of another ; principally in the cases of Michabo and Manabozo. Even Longfellow was misled, and imagined Manabozo was another name for Hiawatha, and the poet's commentator

has stated that Longfellow "took Manabozo's other and more euphonic name, Hiawatha."

Some writers have explained the difficulty of the two names by saying that the same hero was Hiawatha to one tribe, Manabozo to another tribe—just as the same god was Zeus to the Greeks, Jupiter to the Romans. But, in truth, there is not one hero only; there are two. You can suppose them to be one only by slighting the correlation between temperament and actions. For you cannot ascribe to a distinct temperament actions that are perfectly alien to that temperament.

Now the actions ascribed in many instances to Manabozo could not have been performed by Hiawatha, for their traits, attributes and purposes were opposite. Manabozo is described as a hero-god of great prowess, one who practised the arts of magic, a vacillating, almost purposeless illegitimate son of the Holder of the Winds of Heaven, West-Wind. The Iroquois tradition of Hiawatha, on the other hand, is of one whose mission it was to teach the peaceful arts, and lead the tribes to noble aims and ends.

When it became plain that Manabozo and Hiawatha were different, and not two names of one hero-god, a unique inference presented itself which disclosed an abstruse significance worthy of thorough investigation. And when this was undertaken, the myths became pregnant with reason, and began to take an almost historical sequence. They seemed in a bright light to glow with new life, and from disconnected vague periods, obscure in redundancy and misleading from lack of differentiation, eras and the essence of symbolism were revealed.

The libretto of Manabozo epitomises the inert age after that of Atotarho, the god of war, the personification of sanguinary savagery.

It is hoped the whole will be regarded before the parts, and that the action may predominate over the expression. Faults of poetic form in this work will no doubt be found, but the librettist has not alone himself to please. Music demands many excursions that would shock the sensitive minds of masters of style. The composer has at his command that great adjunct of expressive suggestion, the