

This is a tale of what is said to have happened a long, long time ago, within a few days of the time when an Arthur Chase and one or two other boys were captured by Indians and managed to escape and return to their families in the Pawtuckaway Mountains. It has no basis in records of the time and so must be regarded as a legend. No name for the main character exists, but it was said the incident happened only a week after the kidnap of young Master Chase and his friends.

This young man was tending the last of the "sugaring-off" - the skimming of the steaming trays of maple syrup which no doubt was the reason for what later occurred as he was said to be a clumsy sort of boy and spilled about as much on himself as he was able to put in the bark containers. At the moment he no doubt felt he was fortunate since he apparently saw the approaching Indians and took off thru the forest like a frightened deer. The tracks showed there was an extended chase by the Indians. The young fellow evaded them successfully finally squeezing between the two large slabs of rock nearby.

There were - in those days - a species of spider noticed by the early settlers, nearly as large as Tarantulas. They were relentlessly killed by the settlers since it is said they were prone to attack anything regardless of size, and their bite was poisonous. Nearly as bad was the fact that streams of "Cobweb-silk" were always oozing from their abdomens. The young man might never have been found were it not that crows were noticed to be congregating in large numbers over a rocky area of the North Mountain. The searchers found him wedged down between two slabs of rock.

He was wound around and around by countless yards of cobweb silk, and the first to reach him said that a huge spider glared at them and leaped at them until it was squashed to death. There were a number of twin punctures in the neck of the unfortunate boy. What was established to have happened was that he apparently wedged himself in tightly and secure from his pursuers fell asleep. Attracted no doubt by the odor and the taste of maple syrup the spider had feasted royally and when the boy finally awakened it bit him repeatedly in

the neck.

Once the boy had succumbed it resumed the habit of all spiders, that of encasing its prey in its "silk" to be sure there would be a repast for the future. Along with the other less gruesome legends the incident was soon forgotten by all but a few of those with tenacious memories who have "kept alive" the legends of the past. Even the common "house spider" sometimes grows to an astonishing size. My entomologist friends say there is no record of any species of spider once extant in New Hampshire that was fully as virulent as the Tarantula, and when pinned down for an opinion the answer I got was: "There just possibly might have been." A correction is that New Hampshire perhaps (?) had no giant spiders, but the Black Widow, although tiny is a rather deadly Arachnid and is sometimes seen in this state.

Odd that in the Scottish legend a spider pointed the way to success to a king, but here one (or more) meant death to a young man.