

## NOTES ON HISTORY.

NOTE THE FOURTH.

## THE MOUND BUILDERS.

BY CLARENCE ORMOND.

No person conversant with American Antiquities, will attempt to deny that the tremendous mounds found in Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois and other places in the United States, were the work of other hands than those of the present race of red men. Indian traditions, preserved among various tribes, by different persons, at places far distant from each other, show that there once existed where these mounds are found, a powerful, numerous, and enlightened people called the *Allegewee*. The authorities respecting this ancient tribe, who occupy the foreground of American history, leave us in doubt as to the precise period of their domination. Certain it is, that they were a nation far advanced in arts and the policy of government,\* and that while holding a high reputation as hunters, they cultivated maize or Indian corn extensively, and lived in large towns† and that they erected those ancient fortifications which extended over the entire Mississippi valley, as far north as lat. 43°, and the lake country, reaching from Lake St. Clair‡ to the south side of the Niagara-ridge (the old shore of Lake Ontario) and the country of the Onondagas and Oneidas. || Towards the south they extended as far as the borders of the Cherokees and Muscogees. ¶ From the traditions of Father Raymond, they were worshippers of the sun, had a priesthood, and exercised a sovereignty over a very wide area of country.\*\*

At what era the Allegban confederacy existed, and at what time their dominion ceased in North America, we do not know. The Indian nations having no certain chronology, dates must be established by the contemporaneous traditions of the Mexican nations, or by internal antiquarian evidence of undoubted correctness.

The old fort, discovered by Dr. Locke in Highland Co., Ohio, in the year 1738, denoted a period of 630 years from its abandonment, that is, 284 years, or nearly three centuries, before the adventurous Christopher Columbus first directed his course to this continent. The trees on Grave Creek mound indicate the abandonment of the trenches and stone look-out in that vicinity about the year 1138.†† The ramparts at Ma-

rietta, Ohio, had a tree decayed in the heart, but the concentric outer circles which could be counted, were 462.\*

The live oaks on the low mounds of Florida—where one of the Algonquin tribes, namely the Shawnees, aver that they once lived and had been preceded by a people more advanced in arts—denote their abandonment about the year 1145. ‡ But these researches do not probably reach sufficiently far back to denote the true period.

If we fix upon the first part of the twelfth century as the era of the fall of the Allegban race, we shall not probably over-estimate the antiquity of the event. It is probable that they had reached the great valley of the Mississippi, a century or two before their downfall, having felt, in their original position, west and south of that stream, the great revolutionary movements, which preceded the overthrow of the Yolie dynasty, and the establishment of the mighty Aztec empire in Mexican America.

There are but two words left in our geography, which are supposed to be of the ancient Allegban language. These are *Alleghany* and *Yioghogany*; the latter being the name of a stream which falls into the Monongahela river, (the left-hand fork of the Ohio) about twenty miles above the junction of the Monongahela and Alleghany to form the Ohio river, at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Tradition, not of the highest character, however, gives us the word *Yalligen*, or *Yalligee* as the name of this ancient and mysterious nation, although it is nearly identical in sound with the existing and true name of the Cherokees, which, according to the late Elias Boudinot, (a Cherokee) is *Yaulatee*. Colonel Gibson—a plain man, an Indian trader, and no philologist, who furnished Mr. Jefferson with Indian vocabularies of the various dialects of his day, to be used in answer to the enquiries of Catherine the Great—‡ expressed an opinion that this ancient people did not use a Y before the epithet, but were called *Allegewee*. Tradition has, however, strictly speaking, preserved neither of these terms, although both appear to have strong affinities with each other. The word *Alleghany* has come down to us, from the earliest times, as the name of the great right-hand fork of the Ohio, and also as the name, from the same remote period of antiquity, of the chain of mountains extending from New York to Georgia. In this form it is manifestly a local term applied geographically, according to the general principles of the Indian languages, like *hanna* in the river Susquehanna, and *hannock* in

\* New York His. Coll., vol. 2, p. 59-61.

† Davies' His. Car. Islands.

‡ American Philosophical Transactions.

§ Clinton's Dis. His. N. Y. His. Soc. vol. 2.

¶ Seneca Tradition, 1861.

• His. Carib. Islands, Paris, 1658. London Ed. of 1665, p. 204 et seq.

†† Transactions Am. Ethnological Society, vol. 1, N. X., 1845.

\* Clinton's Dis.

† Arc. Am. vol. 1.

‡ Trans. Royal Acad., St. Petersburg.