

II.

It has occurred to me that just here I should try to give your readers some conception of what our country was like before its occupation for military purposes, or for settlement, in the period immediately before this occupation especially. Of one thing I am certain, that several points were occupied as trading posts, used for trade with the Indians, for their furs and peltries. One such trading post, if not two, was established near the mouth of the Nottawasaga River, a little up the river from the military post. How long before is more than I can venture to say; I am led to think for some years. In the very early times of the fur trade, the traders planted their posts along the front only. The Indians were encouraged to come long distances for the purposes of barter—once a year, in the summer. Those whose hunting grounds were less distant, twice a year—at the close of what the traders called their “fall and spring hunts.” The “fall hunt” began in September or October, and ended when the severe cold came on, a little before Christmas. Those who had not far to travel came out, and either put in the severe months near the trading post or passed on farther to the front, into the settlements, and there remained until the snow would begin to harden towards spring. Then having made themselves very light and long hand-sleighs, pack on their household goods and smaller children and hie away to their hunting grounds, for the “spring hunt” and to make sugar. The best time for trapping the marten was in connection with their sugar-making. The snow being hard, travelling was easy, and the fur in its prime condition. The best time for getting the otter was when the streams, frequented by them, began to have open places. The beaver and muskrat were caught later on. When the freshet came with its overflowing waters, the beaver left his winter quarters, on the smaller streams, came down with the flood to the larger waters; here the sexes would meet and nature’s purpose for the propagation of the species be served. While this excitement was on the beaver, they came to their meeting places in numbers, and were easily trapped and often shot, and their fur was in its best condition. The same thing applied to the muskrat and some other fur-bearing animals. It