

Another Link in the Chain

by J. D. A. Evans

"Yes," answered the old man, the early years of whose life were spent upon Red River's banks. "Custer once came up to Manitoba; he was at Star Mound."

A few days ago, the writer was conversing with a man who has resided in Southern Manitoba many, many years. To this native of Red River colony, the three score and ten of life's span are as a tale that is told.

Away in the distance, a faint outline of Star Mound was visible. Star Mound ah! now we have another link in the chain of Manitoba's early days, long, long ago.

"Who did you say?" interrupted the writer, who was an earnest listener to the reminiscences of the old inhabitant. "Then Custer, the great fighter was here?"

"Yes, that's right. They called him the mighty plainsman from over there," pointing in a southern direction toward the international boundary line. "There was a big pow wow when he came, for days; Indian chiefs from all over the country met him, great feasting and a big fight afterwards."

Star Mound the silent witness. Ah! if that lonely sentinel upon the prairie could reveal its historical bearing on Manitoba, a strange story would be unfolded.

When the smoke of aboriginal's teepee curled over the prairie, Rupert's Land was spoken of as the wild fastness westward of the Great Lakes. A scattering of persons now in the very advanced evening of life, have engaged in the buffalo chase; observed the scalps of human beings dangling from Indian's belt; witnessed warriors of the plains engage in tribal warfare, long barrelled muskets of the Hudson Bay Company—chief weapon of combat. As a generality, the ancient resident displays no reticence to talk concerning days in remote past, delights to resurrect from abyss of memory incidents of Red River happenings. A passing reference to Star Mound, its position in the historical record, permits the writer to remark that data are not absent to connect this miniature mountain with days long ago in Manitoba. The relics of Indian tenure: spear and arrowhead, have been unearthed in copious quantity; graves of aborigines are scattered hereabout, upon the summit of Star Mound, mighty hunters of the plains are in their last long sleep.

"Yes," answered the old man, the early years of whose life were spent upon Red River's banks. "Custer once came to Manitoba; he was at Star Mound."

In the early sixties, authentic information says 1861, Custer, warlike in attitude, visited Star Mound, the location which had been selected for a conference of the Indian peoples. We can speak of matters pertaining to the continuance of friendly relationship between the aborigines in Manitoba and those of United States territory adjacent. A vast concourse of the great men of the tribes assembled; the "long tent" orators addressed the great man from the south; Star Mound's summit occupied by those who passed around the pipe of peace. And they danced to the sound of tom tom and dirge, weird chants of Indian life which have been handed down to posterity. In a few days, the deliberations of the assembly terminated; ah! nearly one hundred of the participants sleep beneath the shadows of Star Mound to-day in an unmarked resting place for a fierce encounter took place between two factions.

A resident of the surrounding district in excavating for a well some years ago, brought to the surface a number of skulls. A grim tragedy unfolded. This massacre occurred in the fifties. The facts are that a trader and other men en route from the United States, encountered a band of prowling Indians. Then ensued a fight, brutal murder was committed; the heads of the victims were scalped, the bodies left upon the prairie for the coyote; and the heads were deposited in a hole dug for the purpose.

And what is the Star Mound of to-day? Let us in thought stand upon its summit. Do we gaze down upon the smoke begrimed tent of the aboriginal hunter, observe upon the slopes feather bedecked Indian who is yelling at the approach of bellowing buffalo? No, these features are consigned to oblivion. To-day the farmsteads of a prosperous populace stretch out to distant horizon; elevators tower above the prairies; towns and villages; smoke of railway train rushing through countryside wherein Red River cart trundled along.

Wondrous transformation scene!

Years of long, long ago, when the turrets twain of the church at St. Boniface on Red River, greeted the voyageur, yell of the Indian echoed across silent prairie land.

Early Glimpses of Greatness

The Union at Oxford must have been a fine school of debate for more than one student successful in after years as public speakers. William Charles Lake, formerly Dean of Durham, says in his memoirs that he has heard Lord Coleridge say:

"Well, I have never heard better speaking anywhere than I heard at the Union."

Dean Lake recalls two speeches which he heard there at different times. When he was president of the Union an unknown gentleman commoner made a striking and very poetical speech. Especially memorable was his description of the Alps.

"What is this?" asked Lake.

"Ruskin, a gentleman commoner of Christ Church," was the answer.

The Alps had already set fire to the imagination of the man who was to describe them as they never have been described by another man.

On another occasion, some years later, Lake heard a brilliant speech of quite a different character.

"Who was that?"

"A young gentleman commoner just come up to Christ Church, Lord Robert Cecil."

This was Lord Salisbury, who became the great figure in public life which, on hearing that boyish speech, Lake predicted he would be.

He Knew How to Pick Them

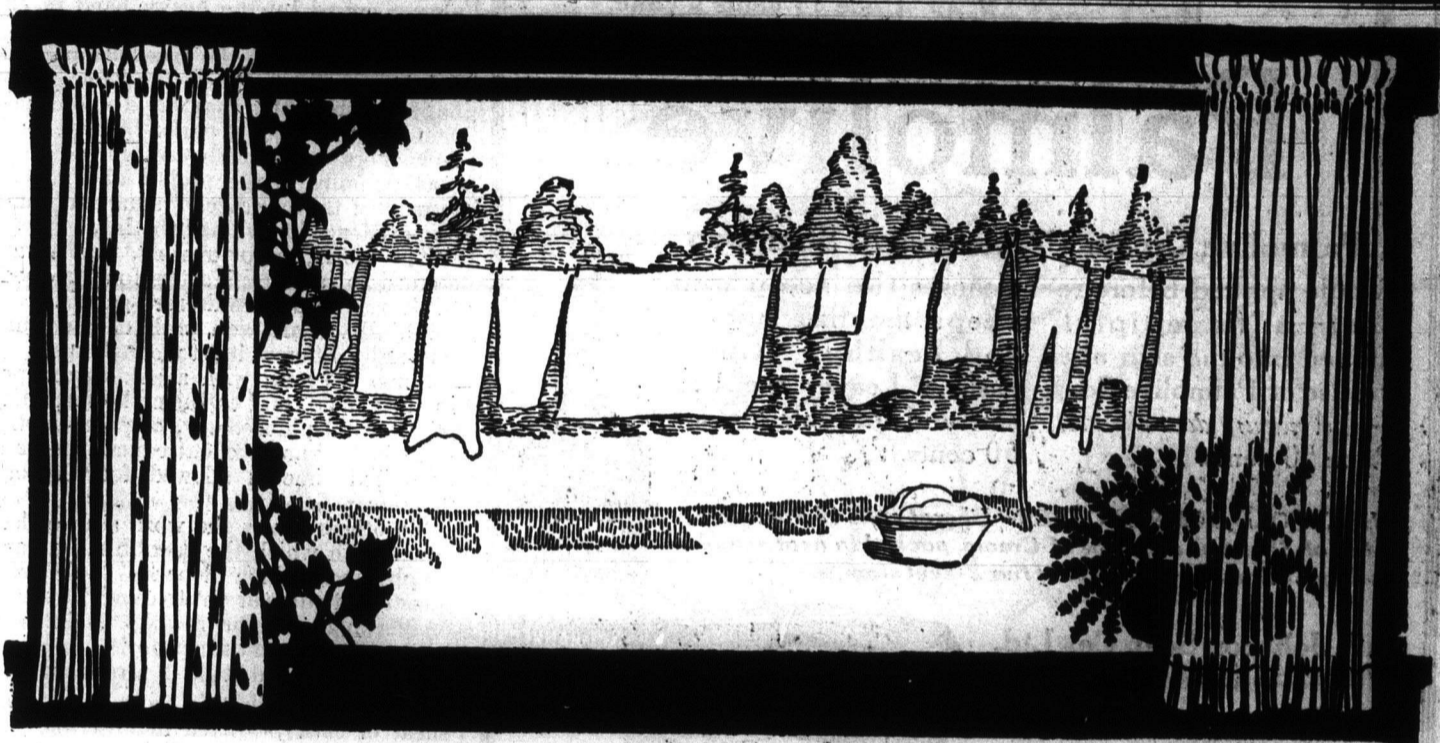
The orchestra was playing loudly in one of the restaurants in Denver during the Democratic National Convention, and the diners were talking loudly so they might hear and be heard. At one table sat a beautiful woman and her escort and at the next table a number of Tammany men.

Suddenly the orchestra stopped, bing! and a Tammany man's voice rang out: "By George, that's a good-looking woman! I'd like to meet her."

The man at the next table, who was with the lady, came over, tapped the Tammany man on the shoulder and said frigidly: "Sir, that lady is my wife."

"Shake," said the Tammany man; "I am glad to meet you. You certainly are a good picker."

And hostilities were averted.



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