



HUMANITY. TEMPERANCE, PROGRESS.

TECUMSEH—AN HEROIC POEM.

(Continued from No. 12, vol. 3.)

BY C. M. D.

During the late war, Tecumseh took part in the first battle, or rather first offensive operations of the British against the Americans. He was on the western frontiers at the time, with about 700 Indians, 300 of whom were warriors of his tribe, directly under his command, and 300 or thereabouts, were Wyandot Indians, under their chief, "Walk-in-the-water," who was under the general command of Tecumseh. The latter, with his 400 redmen, crossed over and helped to carry out the surrender of Hall. Tecumseh was unusually brave and athletic. He fought at the battle of Fort Meigs and Tippecanoe, and was from the Wabash country in Indiana, and of the Shawnee tribe.

Then whoops from the ranks rekindled their ire,
The breast of each warrior lit up with fire,
Wild and determin'd was every eye.
Its wild flashing glow was their anger's reply;
Absorb'd in deep thoughts of vengeance and blood,
They reck'd not the place where the old chief had stood.
Tecumseh's dark eye looked over the scene,
His heart it was sadden'd, determin'd his men;
Like the eagle whose eye far up in the sky,
His unconscious victim can plainly descry.
Tecumseh sprang forth to the old chief's relief,
Whose heart was oppress'd with a deep hidden grief.
"Arise, my grey father," the great warrior said,
"And rest on my bosom thy time-beaten head;
The stones of the past have left thee a wreck,
Yet youth's passing glory thy name will bedeck.
In one thing I differ, Oh Father, from thee—
My voice is for war, my tribe must be free;
The maens of our fathers call on me to fight,
Now battles and blood are Tecumseh's delight.
Ere the sun of to-morrow shall redden the sky,
Our war-whoop shall ring through the plains far and nigh;
Our course will be eastward for Canada,
The land of the Great King and Chippewa.
We'll leave thee, our wives, with tear-flowing eyes,
The homes of our childhood with sorrow and sighs."

Thus ended the Council—the redmen retire,
To prepare for the feast, the war-dance and fire.

The Indian war-dancer is a terrific picture of savage life and customs. It was common all over North America, and may be said to be common amongst many other savage tribes. The warriors paint themselves with clay, and the juice of herbs, in the most frightful and grotesque manner, vying with each other in the art of savage lines. They strip themselves nearly naked, and, thus prepared, dance before large fires in the woods at night; singing the while of exploits of themselves or their tribe. Fearful yells resound through the woods; and the figures and shadows of these frightful men, armed with knives, with arms aloft, together with the forest and the night, render the war-dancer a scene of terror.

The sun had sunk in the western sky,
The birds had hush'd their minstrelsy,
The last bright tint of the glowing west,
O'er the mountains far had sunk to rest;
The shroud of night on the forests fell,
And hush'd all nature with its spell.
The scent of flowers, the hum of bees,
Were sweetly borne on the passing breeze,
And through the air, now dark and still,
Whisper'd afar the whippoorwill!
Was heard the buzz of the bee's flight,
Was seen the fire-fly's sparkling light,
The ratched skies, with stars all bright,
Bespangled were, a gorgeous sight;
The gloomy owl, with scree-to-whoop!
Call'd to his mate the forest through;
The yelping wolf began to howl,
And join in chorus with the owl.
Lo! in the east—the moon! the moon!
As all have seen in the month of June,
With sallow face, enchanting hue,
On eastern skies, its beauties sung,
The summer moon! so full, so calm,
Queen of the sky, earth's nightly balm:
Oft hath thy face fill'd me with peace,
And bade earth's many troubles cease.

Now glows the war-fire, brightly burns,
Each warrior walks around in turns,
Then moody seated on the ground,
Each gazes as in thought profound,
What moves the breast of yonder chief?
What in the big tear finds relief?
In one preface sad thoughts recall,
By white man's hands a son's sad fall;
Another thinks of a father's tomb,
Above whose dust the meadows bloom,
Where once this chief his wigwam rear'd,
By youths fond memories still endear'd;
Where now the white man walks in pride,
These fond attachments to deride
Another pictures in his soul
A brother's death from the fiery bowl,
Which white men had the red man drunk,
Temping the soul to sea his dark drunk.
The memory of a home of love—
Of wife and children gone above,
Victims of the white man's bloody ire,
Destroy'd by him with ruthless fire;
Arouses yonder chief to draw the knife,
As far in war to risk his life.
The Indian feast now being o'er,
The squaws retire to the distance more;
Whilst all the warriors quick arise,
With souls on fire—with glowing eyes—
There painted o'er with every hue,
Naked they stand in grim review;
Determin'd is each warrior's bow,
More savage grows with the faggots glow.
The fires high blaze that light the scene,
Cast shadows on the forest green.
Thus Sachems, and their warriors bold
Were rang'd in lines, one thousand told
The fiery youth, men of years were there,
To sing of death—for scenes of blood prepare.

THE PIASA, OR GREAT INDIAN BIRD.

It is an idea which has more than once occurred to me, while throwing together these hasty delineations of the beautiful scenes through which, for the past few weeks, I have been moving, that, by some, a disposition might be suspected to tinge every outline indiscriminately with the "color de rose." But as well might one talk of an exaggerated emotion of the sublime on the table-top of Niagara, or amidst the "snowy scalps" of Alpine scenery, or of a manly sensitivity of loveliness and the purple glories of the "Compagna di Roma," as of that, or of both combined, in the noble "valley beyond the mountains." Nor is the interest experienced by the traveller for many of the spots he passes confined to their scenic beauty. The associations of by-gone times are rife in the mind, and the traditional legends of the events these scenes have witnessed yet linger among the simple forest sons. I have mentioned that remarkable range of cliffs commencing at Aiton, and extending, with but little interruption, along the left shore of the Mississippi to the mouth of the Illinois. Through a deep, narrow ravine in these bluffs flows a small stream called the Piasa. The name is of aboriginal derivation, and, in the idiom of the Illini, denotes "The bird that devours men." Near the mouth of this little stream, rises a bold precipitous bluff, and upon its smooth face, at an elevation, seemingly unattainable by human art is graven the figure of an enormous bird with extended pinions. This bird was by the Indians called the "Piasa;" hence the name of the stream. The tradition of the Piasa is said to be still extant among the tribes of the upper Mississippi, and is thus related:—

"Many thousand moons before the arrival of the pale faces, when the megalongs and mastoens, whose bones are now thrown up, were still living in the land of the green prairies, there existed a bird of such dimensions that he could easily carry off in his talons a full-grown deer. Having obtained a taste of human flesh, from that time he would prey upon nothing else. He was as artful as he was powerful; would dart suddenly upon an Indian, bear him off to one of the caves in the bluff, and devour him. Hundreds of warriors attempted for years to destroy him, but without success. Whole villages were depopulated, and extermination spread throughout all the tribes of the Illini. At length Ocatoga, a chief whose fame as a warrior extended even beyond the great lakes, separating himself from the rest of his tribe, fasted in solitude for the space of a whole moon, and prayed to the

Great Spirit, the Master of Life, that he would protect his children from the Piasa. On the last night of his fast the Great Spirit appeared to him in a dream, and directed him to select twenty of his warriors, each armed with a bow and pointed arrows, and conceal them in a designated spot. Near the place of their concealment another warrior was to stand in open view as a victim for the Piasa, which they must shoot the instant he pounced on his prey. When the chief awoke in the morning he thanked the Great Spirit, returned to his tribe, and told them his dream. The warriors were quickly selected and placed in ambush. Ocatoga offered himself as the victim, willing to die for his tribe; and, placing himself in open view of the bluff, he soon saw the Piasa perched on the cliff, eyeing his prey. Ocatoga drew up his manly form to its utmost height; and, placing his feet firmly on the earth, began to chant the death song of a warrior; a moment after, the Piasa rose in the air, and, swift as the thunderbolt, darted down upon the chief. Scarcely had he reached his victim when every bow was sprung and every arrow was sped to the feather into his body. The Piasa uttered a wild, fearful scream, that resounded far over the opposite side of the river, and expired. Ocatoga was safe. Not an arrow, not even the talons of the bird had touched him; for the Master of Life, in admiration of his noble deed, had held over him an inviolable shield. In memory of this event, the image of the Piasa was engraved in the face of the bluff."

Such is the Indian tradition. True or false, the figure of the bird with expanded wings, graven on the surface of solid rock, is still to be seen at a height perfectly inaccessible; and to this day no Indian glides beneath the spot in his canoe without discharging at this figure his gun. Connected with this tradition, at the spot to which the Piasa conveyed his human victims, is one of those caves to which I have alluded. Another, near the mouth of the Illinois, situated about fifty feet from the water, and exceedingly difficult of access, is said to be crowded with human remains to the depth of many feet in the earth of the floor. The roof of the cavern is vaulted. It is about twenty-five feet in height, thirty in length, and in form is very irregular. There are several other cavernous fissures among these cliffs not unworthy description.—*The Far West.*

THE CIRCASSIAN WALLACE.

We extract the following account of Schamyl, the chief of the Circassians, from a letter dated Constantinople, and published in the *Uniters*:—"It is said that the power of Schamyl Bey is on the increase. Circassia, in place of ceasing the unequal struggle in which she has been engaged for so many years, appears, on the contrary to find new resources in the courage and alliance of the surrounding tribes. The Caucasus has become the refuge and the rampart of all the mountaineers who defended their ancient liberties; and such is the general confidence in the future, that this military leader is already considered as the founder of a monarchy around which the populations of Georgia, Armenia, and Daghestan are to be grouped. Russia has no longer to put down a partial revolt. The point for her is now to hold firmly against a rising and creating power, which opposes numerous and strong navalities to her own. The vague reports collected relative to Schamyl, represent him as an able and fortunate warrior, surrounded with a warlike army, disciplined by Polish, refugees in the European manner. On Friday public prayers are offered up for his safety—a Mussulman ceremony in honor of royalty. Money is struck with his mark—we do not say his effigy, for the poverty of the country does not permit the use of metal for money, but only leather, which, however, is received in all places where his authority extends, and is even preferred to Russian money. Schamyl is of middle height, well made, and of a robust constitution, which enables him to support with ease all kinds of fatigue, continually on horse-back, at the head of a chosen band of determined troops, composed of Polish lancers and Cossack hulans, he never appears but with the ornaments of his rank and in full uniform; liberal to profusion, he distributes all the booty with those who share his danger; fond of literature, he has around him poets who celebrate his triumphs in popular songs; prompt to conceive plans of strategy, and still more so to execute them, he flies from one extremity of his territory to the other, and falls on the Russian outposts with the rapidity of lightning, and after occasioning them serious loss, returns to his impregnable mountains, or flies to other dangers. His batteries of artillery are numerous and com-