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THE LAST OF THE ILLINOIS,

--AND--

A SKETCH

OF THE

POTTAWATOMIES.

Read before the Chicago Historical Society, December 13, 1870.

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JOHN DEAN CATON, J. D.

Chicago:

RAND, McNALLY & CO., PRINTERS, 51 CLARK STREET.

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READ BEFORE THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY, DEC. 13, 1870.

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JOHN DEAN CATON, LL. D.

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1870.

On the evening of December 13, 1870, the Honorable JOHN D. CATON, LL. D., late of the Supreme Court of Illinois, read before the Chicago Historical Society a paper entitled, "The last of the Illinois, and a Sketch of the Pottawatomies." Upon the conclusion of which, on motion of Mr. Arnold, seconded by Jas. L. Stark, Esq., it was unanimously—

Resolved, That the thanks of the Society are tendered to the Hon. John Dean Caton for the able and interesting paper he has read, and that he be requested to place the same among the archives of the Society and furnish a copy for publication.

JOHN D. CATON
JAS. L. STARK

ADDRESS.

Of the ancient civilizations we know but little. The beginnings of the Egyptians, the Etrurians, the Grecians, the Romans, and even the Milesians, are either entirely shrouded in the dark shadows of the far distant past, or are only lit up by the feeble rays afforded by uncertain fables or mythical traditions. Even far beyond these, great peoples lived, whose existence and civilization are testified to, by broken monuments and ruined architecture, widely scattered, especially over Arabia and some parts of Africa, while in our own country and particularly in Yucatan, we see by their works that nations have lived of whom we know absolutely nothing as to whence they came or whither they have gone.

Geologists tell us of older peoples who occupied many portions of our globe, whose times they have divided into different ages, as, the stone age, the bronze age, and the iron age, because of the materials which they used in their arts, but of their coming and their going they can tell us nothing, except that they existed one after another and ceased to be. Whence came the mound-builders of our own land, or those who worked the copper mines of Lake Superior, or those whose old inscriptions are found on the great stones of New Mexico, or when they disappeared, none can tell; they lived, made their record and are gone, all else is as silent and as dark as the tomb that covers them. Yet, in all these records history is written, dim and shadowy though it be, still it is history, and we seize

upon each sentence of it as upon a precious treasure, and we ponder it and strain our eyes to find more than it really tells, but the misty veil of antiquity hangs over it, and finally we turn away unsatisfied.

—When America was first visited by Europeans, at least those who recorded what they saw, it was occupied by barbarous tribes, some much more advanced than others, but still all were barbarians. Tradition, among the more advanced, pretended to tell how their ancestors had come from more northern climes, till finally they settled in the milder countries of Mexico or Peru, where they attained a sort of semi-civilization far in advance of the wilder nations, either to the north or south of them, but whether their ancestors were the mound-builders or the copper-workers, who once lived where we live, and were driven away by fierce northern hordes, more athletic than they, or peacefully left the land in search of a climate less rigorous, we can never know, nor can we satisfy ourselves of the degree of credence which we should place in their own traditions as told by their old men to the first Europeans who saw them and by whom their stories have been handed down to us.

We do know, certainly, that when the Atlantic coast was first visited by white men who have transmitted to us accounts of what they saw, they found here tribes of Indians who subsisted principally by fishing and the chase, although they practiced agriculture to a limited extent, for they supplied the first immigrants to New England with corn from their hidden stores. The early explorers occasionally found the same grain cultivated in the valley of the Mississippi, and Lewis and Clarke procured supplies of it on the Upper Missouri. Still their agriculture was too limited to have had much influence on the density of population; and without the cultivated products of the soil no country can sustain a large population of men, if

we except some tropical countries where spontaneous fruits are in perpetual season, and even there the aboriginal population was found to be very sparse as compared with countries where agriculture furnishes the principal sustenance to man.

From the changes which had recently taken place among the original inhabitants of this country, when they were first discovered, as told by their old men, and also from the changes which occurred after their discovery, but before the exterminating influence of civilization bore upon them, we may safely assume that national and even tribal formations had been quite recent, yet recent as they no doubt were, we know almost nothing of them. While we know that some nations become totally extinct by reason of aboriginal warfare alone, we cannot point to a single instance of the birth and growth of any native tribe unless the uniting of the remnants of several broken tribes into one, may be so considered.

At last we are forced back to the conclusion that it is only comparatively in modern times and of civilized communities that history, whether written in books or among the rocks, tells us of the origin of nations. To this we can mention one notable exception. By divine interposition, we are told of the beginning and of the progress, and by profane history of the final extinction of one of the great ancient nations of the earth. There we are told of its founder, Abraham, of its struggles, of its triumphs and its misfortunes, of its victories and its defeats, of its pure worship and its gross idolatry, and of its final extinction as a nation under the Roman Empire.

Necessarily, the history of the aborigines of this country is confined to the period since their first discovery by the educated man, and to the few uncertain traditions told by them of their comparatively very recent times, and most of these traditions as handed down to us are purely of a mythological character, and serve to teach us of the nature of the imagination or mental

condition of the native rather than of actual facts that had gone before. Nor do those who have made the study of the native American a specialty seem to have given that study the form of connected history to any large degree, and he that would inform himself of such history must gather it from a thousand different sources, picking up a grain here and there, as he can find it.

More than thirty-seven years ago, when I first became a citizen of Chicago, I found this whole country occupied as the hunting grounds of the Pottawatomie Indians. I soon formed the acquaintance of many of their chiefs, and this acquaintance ripened into a cordial friendship. I found them really intelligent and possessed of much information resulting from their careful observation of natural objects. I traveled with them over the prairies, I hunted and I fished with them, I camped with them in the groves, I drank with them at the native springs, of which they were never at a loss to find one, and I partook of their hospitality around their camp fires.

Wild scenes have always had a charm for me. I have ever been a lover of nature, and the enjoyment of those scenes when prairie and woodland, lake shore and river were almost everywhere as nature made them, have left behind a pleasing memory which sometimes makes me almost wish that I could live over again my younger days. Since nature's handiwork has been defaced all around us by the hand of civilized man, I love to hie away to distant shores and the far-off mountains, and with a few friends of tastes similar to my own, enjoy the wild scenery among the rock-bound islands of Puget's Sound, or the still solitude of the high Sierras. Who would have thought at the time of which I speak that he who then here enjoyed the charms which nature throws over all her works, would ever seek the far-off scenes of the Pacific slopes in which to indulge his favorite reveries? There are some who hear me now, who

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remember the lake beach with its conical sandhills covered over by the evergreen juniper whose fragrance loaded with a rich aroma the soft breeze as it quietly crept in from the rippling waters of the lake.

That old lake shore, fashioned as God had made it by his winds and waves for ten thousand years before, had more charms for me, than since the defacing hand of man has builded there broad avenues and great marble palaces, which are as far beneath the works of nature's Architect, as man himself is beneath Him who made all things well.

I thought that then a romantic place fit for the mating of native lovers, in which to say soft words, and I felt assured that it was so thought by them when once I was called upon to unite in wedlock there a happy pair, whose ambition it was to conform to the white man's mode in that solemn rite, and, as the dusky bride explained, that it might last forever.

As might have been anticipated, neither history nor tradition pretends to go back to the origin of any of the native tribes who occupied this land when first explored by civilized man. At that time the country where we live was principally occupied by the Illinois Indians who were an important people, who ranged from the Wabash to the Mississippi, and from the Ohio even to Lake Superior, although there were a great many other tribes occupying the same territory. Their chief location was in Northern Illinois. Here was their home, and their great metropolis was where Utica now stands, in La Salle county. There then stood the largest city ever built by northern natives. It was a delightful place in the bosom of a beautiful valley, and the city occupied all the intervening space between the river and the bluff, nearly a mile in extent. Their great cemeteries there testify to the populousness of the place, even were the testimony of the first discoverers wanting. If we do not know of the beginning of any native nation, we are credi-

bly told of the extinction of this great people, and that too within a century after they were found so populous and so prosperous by the enterprising explorers.

Soon after their discovery by La Salle, the great Iroquois confederation, whose battle fields were strewn with their victims almost from the Atlantic coast to the Wabash, and from the Great Lakes, and even north of them, to the Alleghanies and the Ohio, finally extended their enterprises to the Illinois. With a great slaughter they defeated this hitherto invincible people, laid waste their great city, and scattered them in broken bands over their wide domain. From this terrible blow they never recovered. For a century later they struggled with waning fortunes against northern encroachments, till finally they were exterminated by the Pottawatomies and the Ottawas, at Starved Rock, the Fort St. Louis of La Salle, which overlooks the site of their great city and the scene of their first great defeat and slaughter by the conquering Iroquois, as I shall presently relate. There still stands this high isolated rock as it has stood for thousands of years gone by, the swift current of the river bathing its feet on one side, its summit overlooking the broad valley and the many wood-clad islands for many miles above and below it, fit monument to the great departed who had, during many long years of peace and security, looked upon its impregnable heights as a secure refuge in case of disaster. Alas! if it was secure against the approach of human hands, gaunt famine could scale its ascents and do its deadly work. There is and ever will be a charm about the place, both from its own romantic surroundings and the melancholy story of the bloody scenes it has looked down upon. While the visitor stands upon its native battlements, silently pondering what has been told him, insensibly his imagination carries him back to ages long ago, and he thinks he hears the wail of woe, oft and oftentimes

repeated, and then again the song of revelry and joy sung by those departed long before the white man saw it. The ancestors of my ancient friends were responsible for the last sad catastrophe.

The Pottawatomies were a tribe of the great Algonquin confederation, whose power was so severely felt by the British forces when at war with France, in the middle of the last century, though we do not know the story of their individual prowess in that sanguinary warfare.

When Fathers Allones and Doblou first visited Green Bay, and there established a mission, just two hundred years ago, they found the Pottawatomies established on those verdant shores, and this is the first mention I can find of them in history. That was then their settled home, though they roamed, far away, for they were in the habit of extending their visits to the shores of Lake Superior. In 1671 they are mentioned as met with at La Point, on that Lake, by the missionary fathers, not as residents, but as visitors. At that time they were not known south of the lakes, for when Joliet and Marquette returned from their discovery of the Mississippi, by way of the Illinois River, in 1674, they met none of the Pottawatomies here.

In 1675, Marquette, no doubt by invitation of the Illinois Indians, whom he had met the year before on his return with La Salle from the Mississippi, came from Green Bay to establish a Mission here. In this journey he was attended by a party of Illinois Indians, and also by a band of the Pottawatomies. So far as we know, these were the first of the tribe who ever saw the country south of Lake Michigan. They coasted the west side of the lake in open boats or canoes, in the latter part of the season, when the lake is boisterous and forbidding. It was a perilous and fatiguing voyage of four months duration, and sorely tried the endurance of the zealous

missionary. They at last reached Chicago, just as winter was closing in, and proceeded up the South Branch of the river to where Bridgeport now stands, and there built a hut, in which the missionary wintered. After the lonely and tedious winter was passed, he proceeded down the Illinois River to the great city of the Illinois, below Starved Rock, and there established the first Mission ever founded in the Illinois country, and named it Kaskaskia.

How soon after this the Pottawatomies left their old home on Green Bay, and sought more hospitable regions further south, we are not informed; nor can we tell whether the emigration was gradual, or if they broke up all together, but as we find them in their southern homes in different bands, the probabilities are that they left in parties. A portion settled on the Saginaw Bay, in Michigan, who were subsequently known as the Pottawatomies of Saginaw, or of Huron. Others descended as far as Detroit, and settled in that neighborhood. Others found their way to the St. Joseph River, on the east side of Lake Michigan; and others, it may be presumed, came directly to Northern Illinois, though it is possible they spread from Michigan into Illinois. The precise date of these several migrations we cannot give, but Cragon and Bouquet found them, in the middle of the last century, occupying the country about Detroit and Fort St. Joseph; and we find no account of them within the last hundred years and more at Green Bay. From these explorers we get the first intimation of their numbers, and yet this is of the most unsatisfactory kind. They set them down at three hundred and fifty; and Dodge, a quarter of a century later, places them at four hundred and fifty, while Hutchins places them at a still lower number than the first. Upon these numbers we can place but little reliance; at best it could have been but imperfect estimates, including no doubt only those bands whom they met at Fort St. Joseph and

Detroit, without taking into account those at Saginaw or in Illinois. We may safely assume, also, that these figures are designed only to express the number of their warriors, for Sir William Johnson, who assembled the Algonquin confederation at Niagara in 1763, informs us, that of the nineteen hundred and thirty warriors there assembled, four hundred and fifty were Pottawatomies, or, according to the old orthography, *Pouteotamies*. With them and their associate warriors, General Bradstreet there concluded a treaty which pacified all the Indian tribes bordering the upper lakes, who had hitherto been such inveterate enemies to the British Government and the English immigrant. A reasonably conciliatory course with them since, and a moderate share of good faith towards them, have enabled the Canadas to live with those who resided on the north shores, in amity in times of peace, and depend upon them as allies in time of war. The number of warriors representing the Pottawatomies at the Algonquin convocation at Niagara, shows that the whole tribe must have been largely in excess of the numbers given by Bouquet and others, and their report so nearly approximates to the number of warriors at Niagara, as to convince us at once that they spoke only of their able-bodied men. Nor is it very probable that all the warriors which the several bands of that tribe could furnish, made the long journey to Niagara to attend the council. The fact that the Pottawatomies furnished nearly one-fourth of the representatives in that council of the whole Algonquin confederation, should convince us of the commanding importance of this tribe in that powerful association of the Indians, and so were they the last, south of the lakes, as we shall see, to yield up their place to the irresistible advance of civilization.

The fraternal relations existing between the Pottawatomies and the Ottawas, were of the most harmonious character. They lived together almost as one people, and were joint

owners of their hunting grounds. Their relations were quite as intimate and friendly as among different bands of the same tribe. Nor were the Chippewas scarcely more strangers to the Pottawatomies and the Ottawas than the latter were to each other. They too claimed an interest in the lands occupied, to a certain extent by all jointly, so that all three tribes joined in the first treaty for the sale of their lands ever made to the United States.

Chicago was ever an important point in the estimation of the Pottawatomies and their associates, and here was the council held which resulted in that first treaty in 1821, when the three tribes named ceded to the United States five millions of acres in Michigan.

Since their emigration from the north, a sort of distinction had grown up among the different bands of the Pottawatomies, arising from their several locations, which seem to have stamped upon their tenants distinct characteristics. Those occupying the forest lands of Michigan and Indiana, were called by themselves and by the traders the Indians of the Woods, while those who roamed these great grassy plains were called the Prairie Indians.

The former were much more susceptible to the influence of civilization than the latter. They devoted themselves, in a very appreciable degree, to agriculture, and so supplemented the fruits of the chase very largely in their support. They welcomed the missionary among them with a warm cordiality. They listened to his teachings, and meekly submitted to his admonitions. They learned by heart the story of our crucified Redeemer, and with trembling voices recounted to each other the sufferings of the cross. They bent the knee and bowed the head reverently in prayer, and raised their melodious voices in sacred songs taught them by the holy fathers. They received the sprinklings with holy waters, and partook

of the consecrated elements, believing devoutly in their saving grace. They went to the confessional with downcast looks, and with deep contrition told the story of their sins, and with a radiant joy received the absolution, which in their estimation blotted them out forever. Here indeed was a bright field of promise to those devoted missionaries, who deeply felt that to save one heathen soul from the awful doom which they believed awaited all those who died without the bosom of the church, was a rich reward for a whole life of pinching privation and of severe suffering: and their great ambition was to gather as many redeemed souls as possible to their account, each of which should appear as a bright jewel in the crown which awaited them in that future state to which we are all so rapidly hastening.

It was very different, however, with the Prairie Indians. They despised the cultivation of the soil as too mean even for their women and children, and deemed the captures of the chase as the only fit food for a valorous people. The corn which grew like grass from the earth which they trod beneath their feet, was not proper meat to feed their greatness. Nor did they open their ears to the lessons of love and religion tendered them by those who came among them and sought to do them good. If they tolerated their presence they did not receive them with the cordiality evinced by their more eastern brethren. If they listened to their sermons in respectful silence they did not receive the truths they taught, with eager gladness. Even if they believed for the moment what they were told, it made no permanent impression on their thoughts and actions. If they understood something of the principles of the Christian religion which were told them, they listened to it as a sort of theory which might be well adapted to the white man's condition, but was not fitted for them, nor they for it. They enjoyed the wild roving life of the prairie, and in common

with almost all other native Americans, were vain of their prowess and manhood, both in war and in the chase. They did not settle down for a great length of time in a given place, but roamed across the broad prairies, from one grove or belt of timber to another, either in single families or in small bands, packing their few effects, their children and infirm on their little Indian ponies. They always traveled in Indian file upon well beaten trails, connecting, by the most direct routes, prominent points and trading posts. These native highways served as guides to our early settlers, who followed them with as much confidence as we now do the roads laid out and worked by civilized man.

Northern Illinois was more particularly the possession of the Pottawatomies, but, as before stated, I have sought in vain for some satisfactory data to fix the time when they first settled here. They undoubtedly came in by degrees, and by degrees established themselves, encroaching at first upon the Illinois tribe, advancing more and more, sometimes by good-natured tolerance, and sometimes by actual violence. I have the means of approximating the time when they came into exclusive possession here. That occurred upon the total extinction of the Illinois, which must have been sometime between 1766 and 1770. Méachelle, the oldest Pottawatomie chief, when I became acquainted with them, thirty-seven years ago, associated his earliest recollection with their occupancy of the country. His recollection extended back to that great event in Indian history, the siege of Starved Rock and the final extinction of the Illinois tribe of Indians, which left his people the sole possessors of the land. He was present at the siege and the final catastrophe, and although a boy at the time, the terrible event made such an impression on his young mind, that it ever remained fresh and vivid. I am indebted to Mr. William Hickling for assisting my memory on a point so important.

The death of Pontiac, the great Ottawa chief, occurred in 1766. He was the idol of his own people, and was beloved and obeyed scarcely less by the Pottawatomies. They believed that the Illinois Indians were at least accessory to his murder, and so held them responsible, and consequently the Ottawas and Pottawatomies united all their forces in an attack upon those whose deadly enemies they had now become. I am not satisfied that their previous relations had been those of cordial friendship, but if the peace had not been broken by open war there was that bad blood existing between them which must have arisen between those who were making and those who were suffering encroachments.

The Illinois Indians never fully recovered from the great calamity, which they had suffered a century before at the hands of the Iroquois. By that their spirit and their courage seemed broken, and they submitted to encroachments, from the north by their more enterprising neighbors, with an ill grace, no doubt, but without protecting their rights by force of arms, as they would have done in former times, and sought to revenge themselves upon those upon whom they looked as their actual enemies in an underhand and treacherous way.

In the war thus waged by the allies against the Illinois, the latter suffered disaster after disaster till the sole remnants of that once proud nation, whose name had been mentioned with respect from Lake Superior to the mouth of the Ohio, and from the Mississippi to the Wabash, now found sufficient space upon the half acre of ground which crowns the summit of Starved Rock. As its sides are perpendicular, except on the south where it may be ascended with difficulty by a sort of natural stairway, where some of the steps are a yard high and but a few inches wide, and not more than two can ascend abreast, ten men could repel ten thousand with the means of warfare then at their command. The allies made no attempt to take

the fort by storm, but closely besieged it on every side. On the north or river side, the upper rock overhangs the water somewhat, and tradition tells us how the confederates placed themselves in canoes under the shelving rock and cut the thongs of the besieged when they lowered their vessels to obtain water from the river, and so reduced them by thirst, but Méachelle, so far as I know, never mentioned this as one of the means resorted to by the confederates to reduce their enemies, nor from an examination of the ground do I think this probable, but they depended upon a lack of provisions, which we can readily appreciate must soon occur to a savage people, who rarely anticipate the future in storing up supplies. No improvident people could have subsisted long in such a place. How long they did hold out Méachelle did not and probably could not tell us; but at last the time came when the unfortunate remnant could hold out no longer. They awaited but a favorable opportunity to attempt their escape. This was at last afforded by a dark and stormy night, when led by their few remaining warriors, all stole in profound silence down the steep and narrow declivity to be met by a solid wall of their enemies surrounding the point where alone a sortie could be made, and which had been confidently expected. The horrid scene that ensued can be better imagined than described. No quarter was asked or given. For a time the howlings of the tempest were drowned by the yells of the combatants and the shrieks of the victims.

Desperation lends strength to even enfeebled arms, but no efforts of valor could resist the overwhelming numbers, actuated by the direst hate. The braves fell one by one, fighting like very fiends, and terribly did they revenge themselves upon their enemies. The few women and children whom famine had left but enfeebled skeletons, fell easy victims to the war-clubs of the terrible savages, who deemed it as much

a duty and almost as great a glory to slaughter the emaciated women and the helpless children, as to strike down the men who were able to make resistance with arms in their hands. They were bent upon the utter extermination of their hated enemies, and most successfully did they bend their savage energies to the bloody task.

Soon the victims were stretched upon the sloping ground south and west of the impregnable rock, their bodies lying stark upon the sand which had been thrown up by the prairie winds. The wails of the feeble and the strong had ceased to fret the night winds whose mournful sighs through the neighboring pines sounded like a requiem. Here was enacted the fitting finale to that work of death which had been commenced, scarcely a mile away, a century before by the still more savage and terrible Iroquois.

Still, all were not destroyed. Eleven of the most athletic warriors, in the darkness and confusion of the fight, broke through the besieging lines. They had marked well from their high perch on the isolated rock, the little nook below, where their enemies had moored at least a part of their canoes, and to these they rushed with headlong speed, unnoticed by their foes. Into these they threw themselves, and hurried down the rapids below. They had been trained to the use of the paddle and the canoe, and knew well every intricacy of the channel, so that they could safely thread it, even in the dark and boisterous night. They knew their deadly enemies would soon be in their wake, and that there was no safe refuge for them short of St. Louis. They had no provisions to sustain their waning strength, and yet it was certain death to stop by the way. Their only hope was in pressing forward by night and by day, without a moment's pause, scarcely looking back, yet ever fearing that their pursuers would make their appearance around the point they had last left behind. It was truly a race

for life. If they could reach St. Louis, they were safe; if overtaken, there was no hope. We must leave to the imagination the details of a race where the stake was so momentous to the contestants. As life is sweeter even than revenge, we may safely assume that the pursued were impelled to even greater exertions than the pursuers. Those who ran for life won the race. They reached St. Louis before their enemies came in sight, and told their appalling tale to the commandant of the fort, from whom they received assurances of protection, and were generously supplied with food, which their famished condition so much required. This had barely been done when their enemies arrived, and fiercely demanded their victims, that no drop of blood of their hated enemies might longer circulate in human veins. This was refused, when they retired with impotent threats of future vengeance, which they never had the means of executing.

After their enemies had gone, the Illinois, who never after even claimed that name, thanked their entertainers, and, full of sorrow, which no words can express, they slowly paddled their way across the river, to seek new friends among the tribes who then occupied the southern part of this State, and who would listen with sympathy to the sad tale they had to relate. They alone remained the broken remnant and last representatives of their once great nation. Their name, even, now must be blotted out from among the names of the aboriginal tribes. Henceforth they must cease to be of the present, and could only be remembered as a part of the past. This is the last we know of the last of the Illinois. They were once a great and a prosperous people, as advanced and as humane as any of the aborigines around them; we do not know that a drop of their blood now animates a human being, but their name is perpetuated in this great State, of whose record of the past all of us feel so proud, and of whose future the hopes of us all are so sanguine.

Till the morning light revealed that the canoes were gone, the confederates believed that their sanguinary work had been so thoroughly done that not a living soul remained. So soon as the escape was discovered, the pursuit was commenced, but as we have seen, without success. The pursuers returned disappointed and dejected that their enemies' scalps were not hanging from their belts. But surely blood enough had been spilled—vengeance should have been more than satisfied.

I have failed, no doubt, to properly render Méachelle's account of this sad drama, for I have been obliged to use my own language, without the inspiration awakened in him by the memory of the scene which served as his first baptism in blood. Who can wonder that it made a lasting impression on his youthful mind? Still, he was not fond of relating it, nor would he speak of it except to those who had acquired his confidence and intimacy. It is probably the only account to be had related by an eye-witness, and we may presume that it is the most authentic, and may well deserve preservation, and so may be worthy of a place in the archives of this Society, whose proper mission it is to gather up and bring to light whatever still remains to be gathered from the memories of those who are fast fading away, of scenes whose theatre was the land we live in, and of peoples who once occupied this territory. The few dim lights still remaining will soon be put out, and darkness and oblivion must shroud forever all that is then unrecorded.

This great event in Indian history secured to the Pottawatomies all the territory then belonging to the Illinois, and the exclusive right to which was undisputed by other tribes. It extended their possessions to the lands of the Peorias on Peoria lake. They occupied to the Wabash as far south as Danville and even beyond. On the other side they occupied to the Rock river, though their right to a strip of land on the east side of that river was disputed by the Sac and Fox Indians who

ranged the prairies west of there and beyond the Mississippi. They extended north into Wisconsin as far as Milwaukee, though their northern boundary was never well defined, but their friendly relations with the Chippewas prevented this from ever becoming a source of disagreement between them. After the extermination of the Illinois, their general condition was that of peace, and I have learned of few incidents since worthy of record. As before intimated they had a perpetual difficulty with the Sacs and Foxes about the lands bordering on the east side of Rock river, and when the braves of the contestants met on the disputed territory they fought it out, but I have not learned that the war was often carried beyond the contested grounds, though the eastern boundary of these was quite undefined.

As a tribe, the Pottawatomies may not have taken an active part against the United States in the war of 1812, yet it is certain that many of their young chiefs and braves did so. On this subject they were extremely reticent. At one time, when riding over the prairie south of Blue Island, in 1833, with Billy Caldwell, when the old chief as usual was answering my questions about the past and what portion of the country he had visited, as it seemed inadvertently, he commenced giving an account of an expedition of the British from Canada across to Ohio, of which he and a number of his warriors formed a part, but he had hardly got them landed on our shores, when he seemed to remember that I was an American and that it was better not to enlighten me further on the subject, and he broke off suddenly, nor could I by any means prevail upon him to return to the subject.

During the Black Hawk war, as it was called, in 1832, as a people they remained loyal to the United States, but it was with great difficulty that many of the young men were kept from participating in the affray with the Sacs and Foxes. But the

part they acted in that affair may be found in the written history of the times.

Chicago was ever a favorite resort of the Pottawatomes. Here they chose to hold their great councils, and here they concluded the last treaty with our Government as they had the first, as I have already stated, twelve years before. This last treaty was held in 1833, and I was a daily attendant upon the deliberations of the council. By this time the Ottawas and the Pottawatomes had become so blended and intermixed that they had become practically one people, and were generally designated by the latter name. I do not remember the number of Indians in town at the time of the treaty, but the assemblage was by no means confined to the chiefs who participated in the deliberations. There were certainly several thousand natives here, who were supplied with regular rations of beef and flour by the Government, and it was manifest that they were quite willing to protract the conference so long as these should last. At the close of each important deliberation, especially if much progress seemed to have been made, a keg of twisted plug tobacco was rolled into the council house, the staves cut in the middle with an ax, and the chiefs told to help themselves. This was accompanied with a box of white clay pipes. They helped themselves with great decorum, and even some ceremony.

By this last treaty, concluded at Chicago, in 1833, the Indians disposed of all their remaining lands to the United States, except some specific reservations to some of their chiefs, and agreed to remove to a limited location assigned them west of the Missouri river. When the treaty was finally concluded and the presents all distributed, and no more rations served out, they gradually dispersed till only those who resided in and about Chicago remained. For two years longer this people continued among us, subsisting as they had done before, noth-

ing worthy of note, so far as I know, occurring in the meantime.

In 1835, and for the last time, the whole assembled at Chicago, to receive their annuity from the Government, and to make their final start for their new home. I was absent at the time of their assemblage, and have no means of stating at what date they began to make their appearance in the town, for now Chicago had really begun to present an appearance which would well justify the name. Here for the first time, many who had through their whole lives been in the habit of visiting this favorite location, when the rank grass grew waist high where the Tremont and the Sherman houses now stand, must have been deeply impressed with the marks of civilization vastly more extensive than any they had ever seen before or been able to comprehend. It assured them, and they comprehended it, that they were already strangers in their native land. That a mightier race had come, so far their superior that they must fade away before it. It is emphatically true of all our American Indians, that they cannot exist, multiply, and prosper in the light of civilization. Here their physical vigor fails, their reproductive powers diminish, their spirit and their very vitality dwindle out, and no philanthropy, no kindness, no fostering care, of government, of societies, or of individuals, can save them from an inevitable doom. They are plainly the sick man of America; with careful nursing and the kindest care, we may prolong his stay among us for a few years, but he is sick of a disease which can never be cured except by isolating him from civilization, and remanding him to nature's wildness, which in truth has more charms in many cases for even the white man, than the refinements and the restraints of the white man's mode of life. Our tastes for these are the results of artificial training, and our tendency is constantly to relapse to a wilder life in the woods and in the mountains. The bivouac of the soldier

has a charm to which he often recurs with animated pleasure. The camp-fire of the hunter has a fascination which he who has enjoyed it can never forget. And in our earliest childhood we showed our natural tastes and inclinations by listening to stories of these, with more avidity than any other. Mayne Reid built his hopes on this juvenile taste, which he knew was stronger than any other, when he wrote his charming stories which have made his name so popular, yes, and so dear, too, to the rising generation. Accounts of huntings and fishings, of living in the woods and in the plains, or in some sweet little nook at the foot of the mountain, down which the babbling brook comes from the melted snows far above, and where nature in her unbroken beauty and her sublimity reigns around in her supreme silence, and there is no mark and no sound of civilization near,—these have fascinations for even the white race as well, which are entirely wanting in the most glowing accounts of cathedrals, and palaces, and pictures, descriptions of which fail to interest those whose tastes have not been cultivated up to their full appreciation. If a love of nature in her wildest moods and scenes be a relic of barbaric taste, which civilization has failed to eradicate, then to that extent, at least, I am a savage still.

This tendency in the white race to revert to what we may term the natural tastes, is strongly manifested, whenever we see one taken in infancy and brought up among savages. Almost always he is the greatest savage of them all, notwithstanding the hereditary influence through many generations of those cultivated tastes and habits which distinguish the civilized man from the savage. This observation may not be confined to the case cited, although that is perhaps the most convincing of this tendency to revert to the savage state. We often see cases where men have grown to maturity in the midst of civilized society, uniting themselves with the native tribes, and enjoy-

ing that life better than the former, and choosing to spend their days with their new found friends, although it involves a sacrifice of all those ties which so strongly bind us to friends and kindred and early associations. In such cases we rarely find them practicing those arts which they had early learned, or those habits of industry which is the distinguishing characteristic of civilized man. It is undoubtedly true, in these latter cases, that he who becomes a savage after puberty, has an exceptional inclination to revert to the wild state; still the number is so considerable as to show us that civilization has not been so long continued as to wholly change our natures; and that it is almost, if not entirely, artificial.

I think the facts will warrant the conclusion that this tendency to reversion is much stronger in the male than the female. In the few instances where the white female has been reared in savage life, and has then been reclaimed, she has more readily conformed to civilized habits, and has shown less longing for the wild scenes among which she was reared; and when she has been introduced to savage life after maturity, she seems always happy to escape it. In observing this fact, however, we ought not to forget that the harder lot of the female among savage peoples may tend to make her more willing to escape from what is really a state of bondage and servitude, than with the man, who is in every sense an equal, or, from his higher intellectual endowments, may most likely occupy a superior position.

Reverse the state of things, and how rarely do we find the savage ever civilized. In the numerous instances where the savage infant has been removed from the influences and allurements of his ancestors, and reared entirely among us, and taught all that civilization and Christianity could teach him, but very few have been wholly weaned from the tastes and inclinations which they have inherited from their savage ances-

tors. Some notable and brilliant exceptions are no doubt to be met with, but they are so rare as to inspire rather our remark and admiration than a well grounded hope that we can ever succeed in reclaiming them as a people.

The native American is in some respects a proud and a sensitive being, and is not wanting in reflective powers. When brought in contact with civilization, he recognizes his inferiority, and appreciates his inability ever to overcome it. He feels that he cannot live with the stranger, except as an inferior, and, inspired by his native pride, he would rather cease to be than to do this. He appreciates his inevitable doom. He ceases to hope, and then comes despair, which contributes more than all else to hasten the result which he foresees. While all have seen from the beginning that the aborigines melt away and die out before the advance of civilization, in spite of the most humane efforts to produce a different result, we may not have appreciated all the causes which have contributed to this end. Those which have been the most readily understood, because the most patent, are the vices and diseases and poisonous drinks which the white race has introduced among them from the very first. If these were the only causes we might deem it possible, by municipal regulations, to remove them. While this would be a great boon which civilization undoubtedly owes to the original owners of the soil where we are so rapidly expanding into a great nation, I am satisfied it would not secure the great end which philanthropy must most ardently desire. Still they would not amalgamate with civilization, nor become civilized as a separate people. They can only live and prosper and multiply by continuing as their ancestors have lived, in a wild state, roaming over large areas sparsely populated, depending upon what they can secure of nature's raising, and when their numbers become too great for subsistence upon such supplies, they must become reduced by wars, disease or famine.

The views I have suggested, of the effect upon the mind and the sensibilities of the Indian, which is produced by his observations of advancing civilization as it intrudes upon him, and its reflected influence upon his physical organization, I think well illustrated and confirmed by the observations of Mr. Sproat in his "Scenes and Studies of Savage Life." He employed a large number of natives about his saw-mills at Barclay Sound, on Vancouver's Island. Here the natives were settled around him in comfortable dwellings with their families, and worked promiscuously with the white laborers. The strictest temperance was enforced throughout the settlement, and no violence was permitted toward the natives, but they were treated with the utmost kindness and fairness. They were well fed, well clothed, and carefully taught. Here they were surrounded with all the best influences of civilization, and as few of the vices as we may expect to find, when the red man is brought in contact with the white.

For a time all seemed to go on well, and the experiment promised a success. At length, however, a change became observable, especially among the Indians who lived nearest the white settlements. A few of the sharpest of the young natives had become offensively European, as he calls it, but the mass of the Indians had ceased to visit the settlement in their free, easy and independent way, but lived listlessly in their villages, brooding seemingly over heavy thoughts. They seemed to have acquired a distrust, nay, almost a disgust for themselves. At first they had looked upon mills and machinery, upon steamships and upon great houses, indeed upon all the wonderful works of the new comer, with curiosity and interest, but now, with distrust, with disgust, and even with despair; the effect of this despair was now manifest. They even began to abandon their old tribal habits, practices and ceremonies. Presently, without any apparent cause, an unusual amount of sickness was observed

among them, and the death-rate was largely increased, and so continued during the five years that our author remained among them. Nobody molested them. Notwithstanding all their comforts and all the care bestowed upon them they sunk into a gradual but sure decay:

The light of civilization instead of warming them into new life seemed to bring a blight upon them; they felt that they were an inferior race. They lacked the energy, and therefore the ability, to become and live as civilized men, and their proud hearts were crushed at the thoughts of living with the white race as inferiors and therefore a degraded race, and then necessarily followed disgust and despair, and then came disease and death.

Had they lacked that lofty pride and that love of independence which are so marked a characteristic of our Indians, they might have enjoyed the comforts which civilization brought them, without mortification at the consciousness of living as inferiors among a superior race. But no kindness, no assistance, no proffered recognition of equality, could hide from their view that they were and must be inferiors, while they could in contentment brook no superiors in fact.

In several cases advanced aboriginal Indian tribes, have by act of Congress been declared citizens and endowed with all the rights and privileges of citizenship. Still they were conscious of their inability to properly exercise and enjoy those rights and privileges. They knew they could not exercise the franchise side by side with the white man, with the same degree of intelligence and judgment, and so they scorned to use it. Perhaps it would have been better for them could they have ignored the real distinction which existed between them and the white race, and persuaded themselves, or been persuaded by others, that they were the equals of any. They had too much shrewdness to be thus blinded, and so they recognized a

truth which another disposition would have concealed from them, and submitted to what seemed to be a fate, in a sort of reckless, sullen silence, at least till a possible opportunity should occur for striking a blow, though it might be an expiring one, for what they believed existence; and if not for existence then for revenge—if not for the future then for the past.

Laying aside what all must recognize as palpable evils introduced among them, as fraud, whisky, and demoralization, there is, upon a deeper look beneath the surface, a fatal difficulty which all the kindness and service which civilization, philanthropy and Christianity can render them cannot overcome.

The proud and haughty chieftain clearly sees in the coming of the stranger, and in his proffered kindness, the unavoidable degradation of his people from that lofty estate of proud independence which his forefathers maintained, and that at last, after being driven from their envied inheritance, and finding no place of rest but in the grave itself, their final extinction from the face of the earth. It is a sad picture, and yet it stands out before us in the light of the past as if painted on the wall before us by the Divine finger. We may not deny that the sacrifice is necessary to promote the greatest good to the greatest number, but surely we may heave a sigh of sympathy for the victim whose immolation is necessary to carry out even a Divine plan. And so may we have some compassion for him if in his death-throws he manifests his savage and untamable nature. If it was his misfortune to be born a savage, with no rights which the white man is bound to respect, then it was his misfortune also to be born with a nature which renders him incapable of civilization, a lofty desire for independence, a profound detestation for everything like servitude, a deep-seated sentiment of revenge, and, above all, a

total inability to appreciate how it is that he has no rights which he may call his own, and which even a superior race should regard.

We must admit that even our boasted civilization has its strange phases, and sometimes its manifest inconsistencies. We repeat the maxim that might makes right always with reproof, and yet act upon it whenever the public weal is supposed to require it. Perhaps the truest and the best justification which we can plead for insisting upon taking the lands of the aborigines whenever we wish them, using no more force than is necessary to accomplish what we deem necessary—whether the owner is willing to sell them or not—is that a few useless savages, who can do no good for the world at large, and little good even for themselves, must not stand in the way of the march of civilization; that God made the earth and all that is upon it for His own honor and glory, and that both they and we are but tenants at His will; and that it is His undoubted right, whenever in His good pleasure He sees fit, to eject those who in His estimation do Him no honor, and replace them by those who may contribute more to His glory, and that thus He is working out His great scheme conceived from the beginning of all time. I say, if we can but thus console ourselves that in what, to the superficial observer seems to be spoliations of the weak by the strong, we are but instruments in the hands of the Almighty to work out His great purposes and to execute His solemn decrees, then, indeed, we may feel that we have washed our hands in innocency. For myself, I have never been a very ardent believer in what is sometimes called special missions, and merely suggest this as the most plausible justification which I have ever been able to contrive. Still, I do believe that my old friends did not see it exactly in that light when they turned their backs upon Chicago, the scene of so many of their grave councils and of their happy gatherings

—when they looked for the last time upon the ever bright waters of the lake, and bent their slow and reluctant steps to a land of which they knew not, and in which they would be strangers; and yet there were old men among them—who could have told them that their fathers had with bloodier hands expelled another nation who had occupied the land before them, and that no doubt the title had been thus transferred many times, the conveyance always sealed by the blood of the last owner.

At this last gathering of the tribe at Chicago the total number of souls was about five thousand. While here they were well fed by the Government; and when they went they were removed by the Government under the charge of the late Captain Russell. By him they were transported to their new home on a reservation assigned them by the Government in Clay county, Missouri, opposite Fort Leavenworth. Almost from the beginning a feeling of hostility was manifested towards them by the citizens of Missouri, which finally resulted, at the end of two years, in another removal by the Government, when they were located in Iowa, near Council Bluffs. Here, again, their home was of short duration, and they were removed a third time by the Government to their present location in Kansas, where they have remained for over thirty years. This reservation, however, they have now sold, and are about to remove for a fourth time within little more than a third of a century. Their new location is in the Indian country south and west of Kansas. How long it will be before the pressure of advancing civilization will again push them on in search of a new home, we cannot certainly predict. We may safely say, however, that it cannot be very long. We may scarcely hope that they will ever find a quiet resting place above the earth.

In their Kansas home, the Indians of the woods have continued to manifest their greater adaptability to conform to the

habits of civilized life. They have there subsisted to a large extent by agriculture. Some progress has been made in teaching them in schools, and the influence of religion still exerts its sway over them, or at least their religious teachers still command their attention and respect. Out of seventeen hundred and fifty of which this band still consisted, according to the last report which I have seen, sixteen hundred are represented as subsisting by agriculture.

The prairie Indians yet remain as wild and untamable as ever. They are still averse to the labors of the field, and enjoy the life of indolence or else the excitement of the chase, by which and their annuities from the Government they eke out a scanty subsistence. The finger of fate seems to be pointed alike at the most civilized and the most savage. Final extinction is the end of the way down which all are swiftly rushing, and it would seem almost practicable to calculate with mathematical certainty, the day when they will live only in memory and in history.

They left Illinois thirty-five years ago with five thousand souls. At the date of the last report they had dwindled down to three thousand five hundred, and at this moment their numbers can scarcely exceed three thousand. From this each one may calculate for himself when the last day shall have passed—when there will be no living representative of that powerful people who but a century ago exterminated a nation at a single blow at Starved Rock. The last of the Pottawatomies will then have ceased to be.

I shall close this paper with an account of the great war dance which was performed by all the braves which could be mustered among the five thousand Indians here assembled. The number who joined in the dance was probably about eight hundred. Although I cannot give the precise day, it must

have occurred about the last of August, 1835. It was the last war dance ever performed *by the natives* on the ground where now stands this great city, though how many thousands had preceded it no one can tell. They appreciated that it was the last on their native soil—that it was a sort of funeral ceremony of old associations and memories, and nothing was omitted to lend to it all the grandeur and solemnity possible. Truly I thought it an impressive scene of which it is quite impossible to give an adequate idea by words alone.

They assembled at the council-house, near where the Lake House now stands, on the north side of the river. All were entirely naked, except a strip of cloth around the loins. Their bodies were covered all over with a great variety of brilliant paints. On their faces, particularly, they seemed to have exhausted their art of hideous decoration. Foreheads, cheeks, and noses, were covered with curved stripes of red or vermilion, which were edged with black points, and gave the appearance of a horrid grin over the entire countenance. The long, coarse, black hair, was gathered into scalp-locks on the tops of their heads, and decorated with a profusion of hawk's and eagle's feathers, some strung together so as to extend down the back nearly to the ground. They were principally armed with tomahawks and war clubs. They were led by what answered for a band of music, which created what may be termed a discordant din of hideous noises produced by beating on hollow vessels and striking sticks and clubs together. They advanced, not with a regular march, but a continued dance. Their actual progress was quite slow. They proceeded up and along the bank of the river, on the north side, stopping in front of every house they passed, where they performed some extra exploits. They crossed the North Branch on the old bridge, which stood near where the railroad bridge now stands, and thence proceeded south along the west side to the bridge across the South

Branch, which stood south of where Lake street bridge is now located, which was nearly in front and in full view from the parlor windows of the Sauganash hotel. At that time this was the rival hotel to the Tremont, and stood upon the same ground lately occupied by the great Republican wigwam where Mr. Lincoln was nominated for the presidency—on the corner of Lake and Market streets. It was then a fashionable boarding house, and quite a number of young married people had rooms there. The parlor was in the second story fronting west, from the windows of which the best view of the dance was to be obtained, and these were filled with ladies so soon as the dance commenced. From this point of view my own observations were principally made. Although the din and clatter had been heard for a considerable time, they did not come into view from this point of observation till they had proceeded so far west as to come on a line with the house, which was before they had reached the North Branch bridge. From that time on, they were in full view all the way to the South Branch bridge, which was nearly before us, the wild band, which was in front as they came upon the bridge, redoubling their blows to increase the noise, closely followed by the warriors, who had now wrought themselves into a perfect frenzy.

The morning was very warm, and the perspiration was pouring from them almost in streams. Their eyes were wild and blood-shot. Their countenances had assumed an expression of all the worst passions which can find a place in the breast of a savage—fierce anger, terrible hate, dire revenge, remorseless cruelty—all were expressed in their terrible features. Their muscles stood out in great hard knots, as if wrought to a tension which must burst them. Their tomahawks and clubs were thrown and brandished about in every direction, with the most

terrible ferocity, and with a force and energy which could only result from the highest excitement, and with every step and every gesture, they uttered the most frightful yells, in every imaginable key and note, though generally the highest and shrillest possible. The dance, which was ever continued, consisted of leaps and spasmodic steps, now forward and now back or sideways, with the whole body distorted into every imaginable unnatural position, most generally stooping forward, with the head and face thrown up, the back arched down, first one foot thrown far forward and then withdrawn, and the other similarly thrust out, frequently squatting quite to the ground, and all with a movement almost as quick as lightning. Their weapons were brandished as if they would slay a thousand enemies at every blow, while the yells and screams they uttered were broken up and multiplied and rendered all the more hideous by a rapid clapping of the mouth with the palm of the hand.

To see such an exhibition by a single individual would have been sufficient to excite a sense of fear in a person not over nervous. Eight hundred such, all under the influence of the strongest and wildest excitement, constituting a raging sea of dusky, painted, naked fiends, presented a spectacle absolutely appalling.

When the head of the column had reached the front of the hotel, leaping, dancing, gesticulating and screaming, while they looked up at the windows with hell itself depicted on their faces, at the "*chemokoman squaws*" with which they were filled, and brandishing their weapons as if they were about to make a real attack in deadly earnest, the rear was still on the other side of the river, two hundred yards off; and all the intervening space, including the bridge and its approaches, was covered with this raging savagery glistening in the sun, reeking with streamy sweat, fairly frothing at their mouths as with unaffected

rage, it seemed as if we had a picture of hell itself before us, and a carnival of the damned spirits there confined, whose pastimes we may suppose should present some such scenes as this.

At this stage of the spectacle, I was interested to observe the effect it had upon the different ladies who occupied the windows almost within reach of the war clubs in the hands of the excited savages just below them. Most of them had become accustomed to the sight of the naked savages during the several weeks they had occupied the town, and had ever seen them in the dance before, for several minor dances had been previously performed, but this far excelled in the horrid anything which they had previously witnessed. Others, however, had but just arrived in town, and had never seen an Indian before the last few days, and knew nothing of our wild western Indians but what they had learned of their savage butcheries and tortures in legends and in histories. To those most familiar with them, the scenes seemed actually appalling, and but few stood it through and met the fierce glare of the savage eyes below them without shrinking. It was a place to try the human nerves of even the stoutest, and all felt that one such sight was enough for a lifetime. The question forced itself on even those who had seen them most, what if they should, in their maddened frenzy, turn this sham warfare into a real attack? how easy it would be for them to massacre us all, and leave not a living soul to tell the story. Some such remark as this was often heard, and it was not strange if the cheeks of all paled at the thought of such a possibility. However, most of them stood it bravely, and saw the sight to the very end; but I think all felt relieved when the last had disappeared around the corner as they passed down Lake street, and only those horrid sounds which reached them told that the

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war dance was still progressing. They paused in their progress, for extra exploits, in front of Dr. Temple's house, on the corner of Lake and Franklin streets, then in front of the Exchange Coffee House, a little further east on Lake street; and then again in front of the Tremont, then situate on the north-west corner of Lake and Dearborn streets, where the appearance of the ladies in the windows again inspired them with new life and energy. From thence they passed down to Fort Dearborn, where they concluded their performance in the presence of the officers and soldiers of the garrison, where we will take a final leave of my old friends, with more good wishes for their future welfare than I really dare hope will be realized.

