

ADDRESS AT THE FARMERS' PICNIC, DEVIL'S LAKE, AUGUST 22, 1883.

BY F. A. DEWEY.

It is a beautiful custom, handed down to us from the earliest ages, to set apart certain days to festive gatherings; and thus on the Michigan calendar

we find that such days have been celebrated on these admired grounds for many years. We welcome you to-day, friends, neighbors, and early settlers of Lenawee and adjoining counties. This day is set apart that we may take a retrospective view of the past, and to serve as a reminder of the early days of those who settled this fertile and beautiful State of Michigan. To-day we meet as pioneers met, all standing on the platform of equality, forgetting and forgiving all differences that may have arisen during the years gone by. In this busy, bustling time of railroading and steamboating, the latter even on this clear, rippling lake, with hospitable and independent farmers on all sections, it seems appropriate to spend a day, free from toil and anxiety, away from the noise and confusion of shops and cities, that we may renew kind and generous friendships.

I have thought that it may not be out of place to present a brief sketch of the dusky sons of the forest, who were the former owners of these lands. It is a little more than forty-nine years since my wanderings in this unexcelled county first led my footsteps to the banks of this lovely lake. It was a beautiful summer's evening when my eyes first surveyed its peaceful and admired waters. Here and there a light canoe, impelled by the strong hands of Indians, flashed across its smooth surface. On the banks were many rude cabins made of bark, poles constituting the frames, in which were the habitations of the Indians, their squaws, and a retinue of youngsters, all quiet and seemingly peaceful. I shall never forget the piercing glances cast toward me—a stranger in their camp—for I was but twenty-three years of age, and took particular pains to witness their habits and mode of life.

We remember very well in those days the valleys and plains of the openings formed a paradise, full of flowers and beautiful birds; the fox, the wolf, the bear, the deer, roamed their native forests; cool, sweet waters flowed, while refreshing breezes came at each change of the season.

Mitteau and Bawbese were the chiefs of the Pottawattomie tribe. The former was a bold, active brave, whose residence in this county and Hillsdale was often changed. On the rich alluvial lands corn was planted and harvested by the squaws. Here also they were bountifully provided with fish, duck, venison, grouse, bear-meat, and honey. Mitteau had a particular taste for whisky, and would exchange his last blanket or his useful tomahawk for the poisonous drug. When I first knew him his age was about fifty; strong and vigorous in personal appearance; tall, well-formed, with a clear, sharp, black eye, and a general bearing that reminded one of a prince of the forest. It is recorded that "fire-water" was the cause of this brave chief's death. He had been to a town, where whisky was sold freely, on a cold winter day, and while returning to his wigwam the slumbering which knows no waking laid him low in his forest hunting ground. Thus this noble red man died alone in the vast wilderness he loved so well.

It is said of Chief Bawbese, that, when but seventeen years of age, his abilities, especially his activity in the chase, and his remarkably tenacious memory, attracted the esteem and admiration of the tribe. Bawbese came upon the theater of active life when the power of his tribe had declined, and its extinction was threatened, as the white man was advancing, with gigantic strides. It is with peculiar feelings of remembrance that I look back to the time when I first met this chief of the forest, just fifty-four years ago this season. It was on the trail in the timbered lands, about two miles from the old Tecum-

seh camping ground. A number of braves and squaws, with about twenty ponies, were *en route* for Canada. I shall never forget the noble countenance, gallant bearing and deliberate voice of that red man. He was then between thirty and forty years of age, a brave of magnificent appearance, filled to the brim with restless and active energy; the pride of a true warrior, dearly beloved by his tribe, and remarkably successful as chief of the Pottawattomies, the finest specimen of Indian character I ever knew. As a speaker his language was beautiful and figurative, as the Indian language always is, and it was delivered with the greatest ease and fluency. His voice was distinct and clear, and he always spoke with good degree of animation. Bawbese had for his wife a most excellent, brave and gifted woman, who was loved by her husband with a devotion beautiful to behold. She was a tender, winning, beautiful woman. Long shall we remember the quick step and graceful manner of that queen of the forest, the mother of three active yet dutiful children, true descendants of a faithful father and a devoted mother. Thus Bawbese, with a remnant of the Pottawattomie tribe, passed the larger part of their lives in the forests of Southern Michigan. In the year 1840 these Indians were hunted and driven from their homes and cherished hunting-grounds and removed by the Government to the far West; although many, as we afterwards learned, rather than be bound to a reservation, removed to the wilds of Canada. There, in the pine forests, near the shores of the Georgian Bay, the noble Bawbese was laid to rest.

The writer has hundreds of times met the valiant braves and their squaws in the sublime solitude of the primeval forest, and at their wigwams, far from the white settlers' houses. He was always treated with generous friendship and true Indian hospitality, which consisted in the freely giving of the best of their provisions, and of a welcome shelter in the wigwam. The Indians have sometimes been judged unjustly; but in their native homes they were brave, yet kind-hearted, and without the grosser vices of many of our own race. It has been said that they are dirty and miserable because they are scantily covered and fed. Although their dwelling places are rude habitations, yet they contain all the comforts that their simple mode of life requires; chairs and tables are not needed by them, while silver ice pitchers, knives and forks, china and glassware would be superfluous luxuries indeed. They were most strictly temperate and frugal until the "fire-water" was introduced by the white people, who were called *civilized* traders. The savage admires those qualities which are peculiar to his mode of life and are most practically useful in the vicissitudes to which it is incident. Courage, strength, swiftness and cunning are indispensable in the constantly recurring scenes of the battle and the chase; while the most patient fortitude is required in the endurance of pain, hunger, and exposure to all extremes of climate to which he is continually subjected. They have but few intellectual wants or endowments which are not combined with the art of a warrior. To this rule, eloquence forms a notable exception.

In the war of 1812-14 all of the tribes of Michigan were paid allies of the British Government. The Pottawattomies went with their brave chieftain, Mitteau, and were as barbarous as the other tribes, murdering their captives, burning, scalping, and disfiguring the body in every part, as was clearly proved in the great massacre at Monroe. I will here state what is an undeniable fact, that in the great battle and the bloody scene which followed the

disastrous morning of the defeat of Gen. Winchester, January 22, 1813, at the River Raisin massacre, the most blood-thirsty allies of the British (General Proctor's brigade) were the Indians of the Pottawattomic tribe. They received for every scalp \$1, in addition to their annual June pension, the latter being paid in Malden, Canada, from the year 1811 until 1832, when the British stopped payment to the United States Indians.

Here, among the majestic forests and innumerable clear lakes, under the blue Michigan skies, the Indian built his wigwam and was "monarch of all he surveyed." All seemed then, as it is somewhat now, a land of ethereal loveliness. Then surely the forest openings, the sloping hills, the admirable lakes with their many picturesque islands, capes and promontories, the unsurpassed brooks, creeks, and rivers, the cautious deer coming down to drink, and here and there the smoke curling up from the camp-fire, made up a scene of entrancing beauty. Here the natives from time immemorial enjoyed the summer breezes and withstood the winter's cold. Here also it is said the red men held their celebrations, their annual sacred feasts and their war dances; here was practiced the old traditional rite to appease the Great Spirit—the killing and burning of the snow white dog. And perhaps on this very spot, which we may call monumental ground, the mound builders held their reunions thousands of years ago. Here, a little more than fifty years ago, the Indians in their barbarous majesty held sway. Civilization is here now and the increasing millions are marching west to the Pacific slope.

How changed is all since my first visit to the environs of this beautiful wild wood and water scenery, a little more than fifty-four years ago. Stately and prosperous homes now are seen on every quarter section, while villages and cities have sprung up as if by magic. It is a privilege to have lived and to behold what our eyes have seen.

It is difficult to separate and to distinguish the character and influence that may be operating in the propelling forces of human society, but the history of the world has no instance of a great civilization where there has not been intellectual development; and in all nations of the earth which have come and gone, when the intellect has failed, the day of their doom has commenced. The fate of the American Indian and his intercourse with the white man are sad reminiscences of the proud and powerful race who once controlled and inhabited this whole continent from ocean to ocean, from sea to sea. They have everywhere been made to give way to the onward march of the white people. Where now are their wigwams, warriors, and youth? They have perished and are consumed. The winds of heaven fan not a single region which the American aborigines can now permanently call *their own*; their look is *onward*; they have passed the *fatal* stream; it never shall be repassed by them, *never*. They know and feel that there is for them still one removal farther, not distant nor unseen. It is to the general and final burying ground of their race,—the Indian's happy hunting grounds.

I will now refer you for a few minutes longer, to the names of several of those who were the first white inhabitants that settled within a short distance of this healthy and admired watering place. I will briefly borrow several notes from the historian of Rollin. Mr. Nicholas A. Page relates that in the spring, 1833, Joseph Beal and his son William were the first to explore the township for mill privileges. Also, for the same purpose, Orson

Green and Joseph Beal camped over night on the bank of the lake here, but the first log house was built by Mr. Lapham and Levi Thompson, who were the first residents. Shortly afterward David Steer, Erastus Aldrich, Joseph Beal and Porter, his son, and Mathew Bennet, Warner Aydsworth, with some others, came. It was said when James Sloan built his log house near this romantic grove in the year 1834, there were but nine men in town and all attended the raising. In this relation I will say a few words about our esteemed friend, one of the first settlers of Rollin, Joseph Beal, whom many of the residents here to-day will remember with grateful recollections, for we all knew him as a true citizen. It was his chief wish to have the township settled with families of genuine industry, also to have the water privileges on the noted Bean creek occupied with good mills, and he understood the plan of laying out and erecting them; he aided largely with his means in building mills in this town. His home during the latter part of his diligent and exemplary life was with his sons Porter and William. I remember, some thirty years ago, attending a dinner party at Wm. Beal's residence in honor of his father's birthday. We look back to that day with admiration and cheerfulness. Joseph Beal died in Rollin, January 22, 1877, aged ninety-nine years. A monumental column has gone down to the silent tomb. We have reason long to cherish the memory of his wisdom and solid virtues. A good man, rich in faith and in good works, a genuine pioneer of the fertile lands of the township of Rollin.

Permit me to say one word more of the early settlers of Rollin. Dr. Nathan Town, the second physician of the township, was born July 15, 1792, in Berkshire, Mass. When a young man he studied medicine, then removed to Canada, commenced practice, and was a successful physician. In 1836 and 1837 the doctor was largely interested in favor of the patriot rebellion in Canada; then came the downfall. A number of influential men were arrested on charge of treason and by the supreme laws of the British possessions, sentenced to be hanged. Nathan Town's name was on the death roll, but a few days before the time set for the execution, that excellent and genuine woman, Queen Victoria, sent a pardon. One of the conditions was that all of the outlaws should leave Canada and never return. In May, 1839, our Canada friend bought land on the shore of Round Lake and erected a house, where he lived until his death, October 28, 1854, aged sixty-two years. He was married to Miss Irene Tomkins, March, 25, 1813. She was known to many of us here to-day as a virtuous, dutiful wife and mother. Her kindly ministrations and charitable donations were widely known in this beautiful region. She quietly, with a resigned will, went down to the tomb July, 1859. Dr. Town, as a physician, was skillful, prompt, self-denying, and always ready at call, day or night, in cold or heat. He was noted for his unbounded hospitality; the latch string was ever hanging out at his door. He exemplified that great precept of religion, beneficence toward his fellow men.

Now let me say, in conclusion, these pioneers were seemingly well qualified for the new country, and if a single fault was found with either during life, there is a mantle of charity, with us who survive, broad as the sky, and white as the snow, to cover all in the darkened shades of oblivion.

I will now state a few facts as related to me by men with whom we were well acquainted more than fifty years ago. In the summer of 1826 a party of four men, residents of Tecumseh, who had been to Cary Mission, Indiana, on

horseback by the Indian trail, on their return camped in the grove here, between the two lakes, over night. Thus we can safely say they were the first white residents of the county who lodged over night in the forest home by the waters of this lake. Their names were Horace Wolcott, Dr. Caleb A. Ormsby, Gen. J. W. Brown and Musgrove Evans. The last named built the first house in Lenawee county, and was the first resident. They are all gone to the land from whence there is no return. Then over the lake, on the boundary line, Charles McVenzie bought what he considered eighty acres of land, but which proved something over seventy acres of water. There, in the vicinity of the safe shipping port, he built a log house. With his genial way all things were commodious and convenient for travelers. I will not omit saying a few words about our pioneer friend, before his residence here at the lake. He was a volunteer in the Invincible Brigade which marched from this county to the far West, St. Joseph river, and beyond, in the year 1832, as a part of the great army of the Black Hawk campaign, in which the writer was an officer. I remember very well seeing him standing in the dauntless ranks of his warriors on that memorable midnight battle which was fought on the historic plains of Coldwater fifty-one years ago last May. There were then encamped in the environs of the battle field over five hundred men with thirty teams, loaded with provisions, ammunition and muskets, to drive back the hostile chief, Black Hawk, with his numerous bands of Indian fighters. Also, in the year 1835, he was in the rank and file of soldiers in the great Toledo war. In both of these campaigns he was noted for his everyday cheerfulness and bravery. Mr. McVenzie had the honor of naming the township of Woodstock; was a captain in marshalling soldiers into line in the war of the Southern Rebellion. He died at his pleasant and cherished home at Adrian, November, 1871, aged seventy-one years.

There was Joseph Walworth, well known to me as a trapper, hunter and Indian trader, on the banks of the lake, who could most surely tell in the early morning, by signs in the horizon and direction of the wind, if it would be a good day for fishing. Here one cold, dreary night in December, his matchless Indian pony was killed by wolves. It rather took the starch from the bold hunter to have his only team eaten up. But what was left of the pony meat he took to his shanty. Then he set his bear trap on the ground where the pony was slain and baited four hooks to bent saplings five feet from the ground. Then one morning, after a wild storm, there was one wolf in the trap and two hung by baited hooks, so you see there were experienced trappers on the wild shore of the "lake of evil spirits" many years ago. Mr. Walworth has gone to that country from which there is no return.

We do not wish to omit in these hasty notes our well-remembered friend, Thomas Brownwell, who lived near the lake. His brother Elijah was the first resident minister of this county, at Raisin Valley, fifty-five years ago. Thomas was a medical examiner, a philosopher and trader with the Indians. One cold winter, nearly fifty years ago, he bought of the Indians, in the month of January, twenty deers which had been killed, also a variety of furs. On the first of February, a cold, severe morning, two Indian ponies might have been seen harnessed to a "jumper" made of hickory saplings, loaded with venison and a valuable cargo of furs, following the marked trees to Lake Erie, and crossing on the ice. This team and load, guided and cared for by our friend and relative, Thomas Brownell, were bound for

the unsurpassed city of narrow, crooked, yet wealthy streets of Boston, which were reached in safety about the first of March. With his jumper load backed up to the great market place, near Faneuil Hall, then, for the first time in the history of Massachusetts, fresh venison meat was brought from the forests of Michigan to the grand old port of Boston Bay. It was a wonder how this load was conveyed on saplings with such a team nearly a thousand miles, and yet remained in good order. The man was examined to ascertain if he was related or belonged to the Salem witches of olden times. The venison and furs were sold at good prices. Mr. Brownell returned home with a two-wheeled carry-all; thus you will note what a man of great perseverance he was. He died at Clyde, Cloud county, Kansas, in the year 1874, aged seventy years.

Then, my dear friends, we have a long catalogue of most excellent, amiable and dutiful women, besides the many strong and intellectual men, who were residents of the forests that were here many years ago. We shall, however, defer describing any more of the veterans of the county until another opportunity brings the cheerful, healthy citizens together for a socially good time. Then we hope a historian of this neighborhood will recount some of the tragic occurrences near this admired and historic lake, with the beautiful and the sentimental grouped together.

We do well to celebrate this day. It is right for the farmers with their families to have a social gathering, for they make up the wealth and intelligence of the world. We will repeat, under the sturdy strokes of our fathers the forest melted away and let in the sunshine to the patches of wheat and potatoes, the music of the flails kept time with joyous hearts as the golden grain of the first crop was beaten out, the tin bakers before the great fireplace stood ready to turn out first-class loaves of bread. Not only did these mothers know how to make good bread and butter; they would even make the spinning wheels sing with virtuous cheerfulness. When we speak of our fathers and mothers we also eulogize the noble men and women who first settled the State. They were the rank and file in the grand march of progress that gave to Michigan the grand position she to-day occupies. Her hundreds of thousands of acres of corn, in its emerald luxuriousness, are moving millions and millions of banners to-day, and they are banners of peace and plenty. Standing here to-day with successful farmers on all sides, to celebrate with thankful hearts the ending of another bountiful harvest, we recognize the fact that the sun of Michigan's prosperity has not yet advanced to mid-day. This State is bountiful in scenery and fertility. We may glory in her network of railroads, her humane, benevolent and charitable institutions, her schools, her colleges and her University. The great hope of her future, in all that goes to make up a good record of an advanced civilization, is the educated and enlightened masses who have developed the resources of the State. Our common school system, which was established by the provisions of the Constitution, is one of the best and richest gifts ever conferred upon the people of Michigan. That eminent, talented and educated judge, Hezekiah G. Wells, says: "May that system be continued through time, and over the portals of all the school-houses of Michigan let it be marked in letters never to be effaced: *Our common school system is to last forever.*" Let us all assent and agree that it is the main stay of good government. Good and educated citizens are to-day and years to come the hope of humanity and of the world.