

MEMORIES OF THE "SOO."

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The recent notice of the death of Edward Ohshawano of the "Old Sault," with a sketch of his life, taken from the Sault Ste. Marie News, in a recent issue of The Herald is deserving of more than passing notice. His strange, sad life seems a fitting end of the modest dynasty of which he was the last, and his death breaks another link in history with the mysterious and most interesting race who were our predecessors in this fair land of Michigan.

Edward Ohshawano was a real and not a manufactured chieftain, being regularly descended from a line of chieftains, but he was a chief without a nation and without a country. He was one of the few of his race left in his native place.

When a boy, or perhaps a very young man, he with his brother, were for a time members of the boarding school of the Baptist mission of the Sault, placed there by his father, old Chief Shawano, a man of great natural intelligence and dignity of character, appreciating the white man's advantage in education, and who died so recently as to be still well remembered by very many of the present inhabitants. The old chief was the last who had any portion of the tribe to rule, and that, so small a portion as to make his rule hardly more than nominal.

¹ From the Grand Rapids Sunday Herald, Oct. 8, 1899.

But he was a man of influence among the few of his people and respected and treated with consideration by those paler faces who replaced his vanished subjects. I very well remember Edward Ohshawano as a bright and promising youth, capable, ambitious and proud, feeling his own capacity and his position as "crown prince;" but the circumstances of life were against him. "The man with the firewater" has had more to do with the vanishing of the Indians, than any seeming governmental injustice or the bullets of Indian fighting soldiers. That same man with the fire-water has been the most successful of all "missionaries to the Indians" in teaching them not only to vie with, but to excel their white brethren in the capacity of drink themselves to speedy and dishonorable death. The sister, Lizzie, became the wife of John Logan Chipman, well known in Michigan politics, who was therefore brother-in-law to Edward. A little incident connected with this marriage may not be out of place here, the parties to it being mostly gone. Lizzie lived with her parents in their romantic island home at the foot of the rapids of the St. Mary's river. Mr. Chipman, then a young man, was practicing law in the old town. He was bright and capable, but with not much there, to draw out his brilliant talents, and he, too, was struggling with the foe in the hands of "the man with the fire-water," and subject at times to great mental depression. One Saturday evening in the "long ago" he visited Lizzie and persuaded her to become his wife, and started out for a parson to perform the ceremony at once. He found the Methodist minister, who was, if I mistake not, the Rev. Mr. Pitezel, now an old man, if living, and a "superannuated" of the Michigan Methodist conference. Mr. Pitezel hesitated, trying to persuade him to change his purpose, thinking it would be a matter of life-long regret, but without avail. "I asked you to marry me, not to advise me, and if you will not, someone else will," he said. Seeing reasoning was useless, the clergyman performed the marriage ceremony, and Mr. Chipman for a while took up his abode with the old chief on Shawano's island. On Sunday evening there was a little underhand commotion among the group of young people and friends assembled at the chapel service in the Baptist mission, where Mr. Chipman and his comrades usually attended. A young West Point lieutenant, now a grave, retired general of the army, secretly passed a slip of paper among the members of the choir on which were written these words: "Chip has married the chief's daughter." After service there was a gathering together, and gossiping over the news, and much regret was expressed for his hasty action, but, to his credit be it said,

he stood by it loyally and honorably, showed his wife every courteous attention and interested himself greatly in the welfare of her family. It was undoubtedly to his efforts that Edward, the brother-in-law, owed his educational opportunities and his ambition to rise, which, but for his misfortune, might have made him a unique figure in Indian history.

Old Chief Shawano lived to an honorable and respected old age. In an article prepared for another occasion is the following description of a visit to his romantic home a few years ago by some well-known Grand Rapids people:

At the foot of the rapids, near the American shore, but still in the swirl and foam of the falls, is a small island covered with green of balsams and cedars. It stands like an emerald in a setting of white; nothing could be more picturesque. Above, and at one side, a magnificent background, rises the river higher and higher, the water quickly descending, a great slope of rushing, tumbling, dashing white foam, emblem of intensest life. Below, the deep blue of the broad river, settling into calm after its wild frolic, moving majestically on. At the other side of the great ship-canals, emblem of man's power and force. On this romantic spot, when the Indians were removed from the reservation on "The Pointe," old Chief Shawano, the last of the petty chieftains of that region, built a home. It was not a palace, but it was comfortable. He kept a birch-bark canoe to bridge the narrow channel between the island and the shore. Shawano was a man of medium height, with a fine, intelligent face, a grand "Websterian head" with a shock of iron-gray hair. His manner was courtly, his speech grave and dignified, with a tinge of sadness. Here, with his old wife, he lived for years, and here, I presume, he died.

One lovely summer evening, just before sunset, a party of guests at the quaint, old-time hotel set out for a call on old Chief Shawano. There were ohs! and ahs! and little feminine shrieks as the uninitiated stepped into the swaying, tipping canoe in the swirling water, but the dark hand guiding it was steady and sure. The old gentleman received his guests with courteous hospitality. One of the party the chief had known as a child, who, familiar with his language, acted as interpreter for the rest. He was glad to see her and to meet her friends, spoke feelingly of the time long past when he knew her father and mother, of the school, the religious services at her father's "mission," especially the singing there, of which he was very fond, mentioning some of the hymns, and occasionally using an English word. Someone asked if he would not like to hear again one of the old hymns in his

own tongue. Assenting, the song began, when instantly the old chief removed his hat, reverently bowed his head and stood in impressive silence while the hymn was sung. It was another rendering of Millet's "Angelus," and the eyes of more than one in the group were suspiciously moist. Bidding them farewell, he still stood with bared head as they went down the narrow path through the sweet scented firs and cedars to the bank. Turning for a last look, no one of that party will ever forget the picture presented to view.

The sun was setting in brilliant hues right into the high background of white foaming waters; the sunset sky was rarely beautiful even for that country of lovely sunsets; the green island amid the boiling waves, the winding path leading up to the little house, and there in the sunlight, the "grand old man" with the Websterian head and iron-grey hair, hat in hand, kingly in manner, waving his last farewell.

What were his thoughts. Were these his guests, his friends or his foes? Was he glad that he stood there in the sunset of his life and of his race? And was there a crown for that noble head waiting in the "happy hunting grounds" beyond the glowing sunset?

Edward Obshawano was buried in the new Riverside cemetery of the city of Sault Ste. Marie among his pale-faced contemporaries; but near the spot where his father lived so long, and through which the great ship channels were built, was the Indian burying-ground where were laid the remains of his dark-faced ancestors. The first shaft of the first canal, was sunk right down through their bones, to the great distress of the surviving Indians, to whom this spot had been reserved forever by treaty with the government. Another chief, Shegud, a man of noble presence, of unusually intelligent mind, of great oratorical power, eloquent, impassioned in speech, on that sorrowful day when he saw the first shaft sunk, went to the missionary, who was also his pastor, and in never to be forgotten words expressing his deep feeling, asked if Mr. Bingham would go with him to the "great father at Washington" to remonstrate against the desecration, and claimed fulfillment of government promise. The matter was thoroughly discussed, and unjust as it seemed, it was decided, protest was useless. The car of progress like the car of Juggernaut, does not pause or turn aside in its relentless march, lest dead men's bones be crushed, or living hearts be broken. The saddest face I ever saw, was the dark face of that native nobleman as he yielded to the inevitable.

With the mention of these names, characters and scenes of this ancient city by the great waterway, are recalled many others, whose writ-

ten lives would read like the masterpieces of fiction, and whose curious histories should not be allowed to be lost in the dim, hushed past.

It is said that with the passing away of every human life, is irrecoverably lost some portion of important or interesting history. No one having any imagination or any depth of feeling, can wander through any old cemetery without "reading between the lines" on the old tombstones, and without the thought that could the quiet sleepers arise and tell the real story of their lives it would prove anew, "Truth is stranger than fiction." Even if thus many wrongs might be righted, it is best that the "seal of silence" is fast set upon the grave.

In the old town of Sault Ste. Marie there was a burial place first used probably over two centuries ago by the early French Jesuit missionaries, explorers and fur-traders who penetrated this then wild region, inhabited only by numerous wandering tribes of savage Indians at war with each other. It was directly on the bank of the noble river, shaded by magnificent forest trees. It has been obliterated well on toward a century, levelled and built over as far back perhaps as the memory of the present "oldest inhabitant," its locality and existence almost forgotten. A most interesting relic found not long ago in an excavation there is a little crucifix made in France, exquisitely wrought in iron or silver, much discolored but otherwise perfect, buried who knows when with some faithful French priest of the Roman Catholic church.

How quietly the sleepers have lain there on the bank of the river, unmindful of the changes passing by—summer and winter; the swift flowing water, and the solid ice; the wild war-whoops of savages in fierce, deadly combat, and the planting of the cross and intoning of chants of the Christian church; birch canoes flying past with quick sharp strokes of the paddle, accompanied by shouts yells and weird songs inspiring enough to send the light canoe over the waters without hands; batteaux of the fur-traders from Montreal and Quebec with their *voyageurs* keeping time to their oars with their quaint Canadian boat songs; the patient gliding of sail vessels with their modest freights; the little high-pressure steamboat puffing its way up in great importance at stated periods; the larger steamers in occasional trips with their loads of tourists, until in the march of civilization the birch-canoe with its paddle, the batteaux with their *voyageurs* have given place to floating palaces and immense "whalebacks" carrying rich cargoes—and still, the "fathers" sleep on by the river side while the modern world rushes past unmindful, too, of them.

Three burial places were in use during the past century, one by the conglomerate citizens of the town, one by the military when Fort Brady was established, and one by the Indians on the point of land jutting into the rapids. The first two have been removed to the same range of hills south of the city to which Fort Brady has been removed more recently. It was in these old cemeteries that I wandered with my childhood companions, reading and hearing the inscribed and uninscribed histories of the sleepers lying there.

In the military grounds civilians were sometimes buried. On the most imposing marble there, was a long elaborate inscription; name, John Johnstone;¹ age, eighty; native land, Ireland; rank, noble. By his side the wife of his youth and age, a princess of the Ojibway tribe of North American Indians. About this couple hovers romance enough for the wildest fancy, and a mine of wealth for the "founded on fact" novelist. Far separated as were the places of their birth, they were connected by a wonderful waterway, a chain of unequal but unbroken links. Lake Superior, St. Mary's river, Lake Huron, St. Clair river, Lake St. Clair, Detroit river, Lake Erie, Niagara river, Lake Ontario, St. Lawrence river, Gulf of St. Lawrence and the broad Atlantic.

Somewhere about one hundred and twenty-five years ago (1792), John Johnstone, a young Irishman of rank and fortune, left his home for the wilds of North America. There is a story extant of fraternal treachery and scheming to get him away never to return for the brother's advantage in place and power. However that may be, Cupid called him, though he knew it not. Brave little Cupid! Beside the Indian maiden in her forest home he had bent his bow and sent his arrow straight to its mark in the heart of the young noble far away in the Emerald Isle. There is yet in the family an elegant gold watch brought by John Johnstone when he left home, and closely fitted into the inner case is still the bit of fine tissue paper, skillfully cut into hearts and doves and cupids, placed there by the "girl he left behind him," as was the custom then for gentle maidens to do.

Mr. Johnstone's business in America was with the Hudson Bay Fur company. He landed in Canada and took the birch canoe and paddle line to the far interior, where the royal dusky maiden unconsciously awaited his coming. They met, and loved, and married, "Indian fashion," rearing a large family of sons and daughters.

Retiring finally from active business, Mr. Johnstone settled at the Sault de Ste. Marie and built a large house near the site of the old

¹For portraits of the Johnstone family see Vol. 32, p. 305. Mrs. Gilbert spells this name Johnstone; Schoolcraft and other authorities give it Johnston.

cemetery on the river bank, and just below where old Fort Brady was built later on. The house was elegant for its time, and has become historic. The modern purchaser encased it with clapboards to preserve the original, and in alteration for his own occupancy left it as nearly as possible of the old design—the large parlor and dining-room in the center, at the east end a large kitchen, at the west end and in the rear the sleeping rooms.

In the "Tale of Two Cities"¹ written 1899 for the "Pioneers" is this description: "A long, low, well built log-house in a beautiful old-fashioned garden, roses in perfection, lilacs, sweet-williams, bachelor-buttons, marigolds and other flowers of long ago grew luxuriantly in front, while back of the house was a kitchen-garden, where long rows of currant bushes hung full of rich-colored fruit, the taste of which lingers in memory yet. Here had gathered from away back many notable people, and here was kept up all possible of the state and ceremony of a noble house of Ireland; the presiding genius a dignified and stately woman, daughter of a noted Ojibway chief. The sons and daughters of the house were sent away to school, but trained at home to the strict conventionalities of the social life in which their father was reared. Some were sent to Ireland to be educated. On the great sideboard in the dining-room were arranged many pieces of solid silver service brought from Ireland, and always exactly in the same places. On the walls were old portraits, and about the rooms many foreign articles, exciting in our childish minds great wonder and admiration."

Of the daughters one married Henry R. Schoolcraft, Indian agent for the government, once known in that "upper country" as "Uncle Sam's pet," who lived in Washington many years. It was Schoolcraft's book on the Indians from which the poet Longfellow drew for information in "Hiawatha," in which Longfellow's absolutely correct use of the Indian words is very remarkable. Another sister married a brother, James Schoolcraft, a very handsome man, and she a very handsome and elegant woman. When a child I used to think that if ever I grew up and could sweep the train of my gown in the same grand fashion Mrs. James Schoolcraft did as she walked with stately tread up the aisle of the little mission chapel, life would be worth living. She wore mostly black, brightened with rich red, as most becoming to her fine brunette complexion and the rich red of her cheek. It was her husband's murder at the old homestead which gave the town its great tragedy of July 6, 1846, called the "Tanner summer." He had spent

¹ Published in Vol. 29, p. 322.

Saturday, the "glorious Fourth," with a gay party of friends in Canada at the Hudson Bay company's station, of whom Major Julius Kingsbury, in command at Fort Brady, was one. The daughter of Major Kingsbury was the first wife of General Simon Bolliver Buckner, late candidate for vice-president on the gold democrat ticket. They stayed late and both had rested until Monday afternoon, when Mr. Schoolcraft went for a walk in the above mentioned garden, going on a little into the near woods, when he was shot through the heart from the ambush of a near tree and fell forward dead. That is a long tale by itself, with a mystery still unsolved. Mrs. Schoolcraft's children had complexions as fair and veins as blue as though no drop of Indian blood coursed through them.

Another sister, also an elegant and charming woman, married the Rev. William McMurray of the Episcopal church, afterward a long and well-known bishop of Canada. When the Rev. Abel Bingham first went to the Sault as missionary to both whites and Indians, Mrs. McMurray sat by his side in the Sabbath afternoon service and interpreted his sermon into the musical phrases of her mother tongue, and he always retained for her a most tender regard. It was a granddaughter of Mrs. McMurray, living in St. Louis, who not long ago married Farrer Cobb, son of the Rev. Sanford H. Cobb, recently of this city.

The eldest sister, "Miss Eliza," never married, and was the most picturesque of this famous family. She delighted in her lineage, kept a maid, a young Indian girl named Equa-zhan-shis, who followed her everywhere at a stated, respectful distance, and was as picturesque and familiar a figure as her mistress.

In winter "Miss Eliza" wore a long blue pellise, or cloak with wing-like capes, a square of plaited folds at the back trimmed with black velvet; a copper-colored satin bonnet with round, high crown and broad front; a long green barege veil tied over the front with a ribbon, always drawn to one side, and held back by her right arm. In summer she wore a "blue-black silk" gown, a bonnet with a heavily embroidered black lace veil, drawn over the face and reaching nearly to the feet, or a large green silk calash made like the top of a covered buggy, with rattan cords shirred in, to fold up or let down, managed by a ribbon attached to one side. In Quebec there is a carriage called calash in common use. Whether the carriage gave the name to the bonnet or the bonnet to the carriage, I cannot say.

"Miss Eliza" never changed her style of dress. In season she always carried a sprig of sweet-scented green, like eglandine, or a fragrant bud

or blossom, which she twirled in one hand, while with the other she carried a blue-headed bag. Exactng due consideration, she was kindness itself; and when left alone in the great homestead it was a great resort for "us children," who were fascinated with its air of state, the wonderful stories told with her own peculiar language, intonation and pride, and the sponge cake no one else could make so deliciously delicate as she. They were all famous cooks.

The last time I saw her she lay on her bed waiting for death—eighty years old—home, family, fortune gone. Dear "Miss Eliza!" After these many years she stands out a clear cut, unique memory of a happy childhood.

Mrs. Johnstone, the Indian mother, was a strong character and of great influence with her people. She it was who discovered, and by skillful maneuver prevented, the intended massacre of the government party at the time of the treaty with General Cass when he purchased the land for the government. Uneducated in books, reared among a savage people in the wilds of forest life, she possessed that innate dignity, intelligence, self-respect and courage which "rises to occasion," superior to circumstance.

She wonderfully adapted herself to her strange position; was the head of the household, loved by her family, meeting on equal terms guests of the house from palace or wigwam.

I have described these women in detail because they were fine types of a class that has vanished. What is said of them may be said with equal truth of many other dames similarly situated at the old Sault de Ste. Marie. The "grand dames" and lovely "daughters" of America have not all been fair of face or descended from Pilgrim or Puritan.

Of the sons, George Johnstone was a very well educated man, conventional and very ceremonious in manner, uniting in himself very noticeably, the studied manners of his "rank" in both nations, the Irish and the Indian. He frequently held government positions and was for several years stationed by the government on Traverse bay, somewhere near what is now called Old Mission. He was a great reader and gave his brother-in-law, Henry R. Schoolcraft, valuable assistance in researches among the Indians in compiling his books. In Schoolcraft's "Characteristics of the Red Race of America" will be found a chapter by him. His first wife was an Indian woman, who left two sons and a daughter, one a fine looking girl. For his second wife he married Miss Mary Rice of Boston, Mass., a member of the Baptist mission. She was a very bright, capable, energetic woman, holding up the failing for-

tunes of the family as long as she lived. Her three sons, Ben, Jamie and Sam, all died in the army I think, during the Civil war. Her daughter, "Miss Eliza" the second, the only one left, lives with her mother's relatives in Boston. The last and youngest of the original family, John Johnstone, Jr., died only a few years ago, a fine looking, venerable man of three score and ten, whose life, so strangely blended and mingled with varying conditions, gave him an endless fund of wonderfully interesting stories. He was educated at a school in New York state, I think in Fredonia, and for a long time acted as interpreter for the Rev. Abel Bingham at the mission.

With both of these men have died much of great interest to the student of early Michigan history and Indian lore. That generation has about all passed away. A very few remain who can from natural intelligence, education and personal experience, give reliable and interesting information concerning the curious conditions of this frontier country, or do its more curious people justice, during the earlier years of the century now so near its end.

One man, not very old, still lives on Sugar Island, near the Sault, whose life has been an eventful one. Many years ago the Rev. Abel Bingham, in one of his trips with snowshoes and dog trains to the winter camps of the Indians, went to Gouley's bay, on the north shore. He found that dreaded scourge, smallpox, raging in the little colony, which had nearly depopulated the settlement. Whole families had been swept away, and many dying. One little Indian boy of four years had pluckily lived it through, his face a mass of scars, while his whole family had died, leaving him with hardly a relative in the world. He had no clothing but rags, and nowhere to go. Mr. Bingham begged a man's old coat, in which he wrapped the naked little body, tucked him up in the blankets and furs of his toboggan and took him home to the mission-house. Here he was put into a tub and scrubbed, his head close shaved, the old coat burned, and "Little Moses," newly clothed, stood out with his twinkling black eyes, his round, laughing face, well started on the road in his new life. "Little Moses" will never be forgotten by those who knew him. He was uncommonly bright; in school he learned easily, was capable in almost every way, and with a bit of quick, fiery temper which sometimes brought him into trouble. He lived to young manhood at the mission, and then went forth to shift for himself, being abundantly able to earn his own living. For many years he carried the United States mails in winter over the snows and ice, having many strange experiences and narrow escapes, sometimes going along

through the dense wild forests. During the Civil war he enlisted in the army and fought bravely for the Union. It was said his courage not only never failed, but was an inspiration to others, and that he made an uncommonly fine soldier. Moses Greenbird, the "veteran," has his own little home and receives a modest pension from the government. The scars on his still expressive face have faded with the years, and his life is not all romance, but "Moses" will walk many miles through any stress of weather to look once more upon the face of any of the mission family who may wander northward to the childhood home.

Mrs. Dr. J. C. Buchanan returned a short time ago from a hasty visit to the "Old Sault." Edward Ohshawano and Moses Greenbird, hearing she was there, came many miles to see her and to grasp her hand; indeed, could hardly lose sight of her during her short stay. It was less than a fortnight before Edward's death, and he was apparently well. He was elegantly dressed and very gentlemanly in manner. "Moses" was "Moses" still, and his warm heart showed in his still twinkling eyes.

John Gurnoe and wife, who celebrated their golden wedding a few weeks ago; William Shaw and wife, old residents, and Lewis Cadotte and some few others of the French and Indians of olden time, still live as connecting links between the modern "Soo" and the old Sault de Ste. Marie; but soon these, too, will reach the boundary line and "pass on," and the old familiar names will belong only to unfamiliar people, modern, like the city, and the curious past will be "A tale that is told."