

PIONEER DAYS IN KALAMAZOO AND VAN BUREN.

BY EDWIN S. SMITH.

In the fall of 1830, at the age of three years, the writer was brought to Michigan. Emigrating to such a wilderness as the whole country west of Detroit was at that early date, and the dangers and privations attending it, was an undertaking but few ventured to encounter. Scarcely any of the incidents of the trip are remembered. Our company consisted of an old Scotchman, by the name of Scott, and family, Anthony Cooley, an uncle of mine by marriage, and family, and ourselves, father, mother and two boys. Traveling with ox teams all the way from Detroit, fording all the water-courses, eating in the open air when weather permitted, under wagon covers when stormy, where we also slept, with an occasional killing of a wolf or deer, constitute, in the main, the incidents of the trip that I can call to mind. But occurrences following the arrival at our destination on the west border of Prairie Ronde were more thoroughly impressed upon my mind, and the recollection of many of them is as vivid as though they were the happenings of yesterday. There our troubles began. We had not only to contend with the encroachments of wild animals, but the Indians as well, who, more numerous than the whites, besides being nearly as wild and uncontrollable as the wild beasts, were troublesome enough. Wolves, bears, wildcats and deer were everywhere more plentiful than rabbits are now. Hearing the little pigs squeal at night (if we were fortunate in having a few) was evidence that bears were making preparations for a feast. One North American panther was seen by Mrs. Cooley, a sister of my mother, a year or two after our arrival. The writer remembers hearing what was said to be

his scream, on one or two occasions. The shriek they make is similar to that made by a woman in distress or fear. When seen, he was taking noonday meal, near uncle's house, from the carcass of a calf, either he or some other animal had killed and feasted from the night before. After satisfying his hunger he retired quietly and was seen no more.

What is now the city of Kalamazoo was at that time a wilderness, and what are now celery beds, just north of the city, was an impassable marsh and tamarack swamp, covered with water the year round. Only two houses, and those log huts merely, covered with shakes, marked the location of the present city, while Schoolcraft boasted of quite a number of dwellings, a store or two and a "tavern," entitling it to the distinction of being the oldest town.

Up to that time the Indians knew very little what it was to have to pay for what they had, and had become beggars from habit. Besides recognizing no rights to the country but theirs, and viewing the whites as trespassers, made them bold to demand anything we brought with us, or produced, that they coveted, particularly when under the influence of "sco-ta-wa-boo" (fire-water), which traders were not restrained from selling them, and did sell them, both for the profit and influence gained thereby. The Indian will never molest anyone who furnishes him with liquor for a price, great or small. Once started on a debauch, he will as soon pay a dollar for a drink as five cents. But while the trader was safe enough, other people were subjected to all sorts of annoyances, to say nothing of our constant fear of being butchered by them, as a pastime.

The regulation Mackinaw blanket, cotton shirt and cloth leggings, moccasins, a piece of blanket wrapped around the feet for socks, and a sort of turban, made by twisting a red cotton handkerchief or small plaided shawl and tying it around the head, between which and the head, on public days, were stuck some eagle feathers, constituted the apparel of the Indian, while to that of the squaw was added a skirt of calico, or blue broadcloth, on occasion, which could not be too high colored and gay, and in place of the shirt, a calico waist.

The men, particularly those of any note, wore huge silver rings in the nose and ears, and a large plate made from the same material pinned to their shirt front. Every full grown Indian was owner of a rifle and knew how to use it, which, with a tomahawk and butcher knife carried under a broad leather belt, constituted his implements of offense and defense, besides affording the means of obtaining about all the meat used. Occasionally, for a change, they would "swap" with us "suck-see-we-os" for "cook-coosh" (venison for pork, pound for pound). At times their offensive demonstra-

tions were anything but pleasant, requiring courage and the steadiest nerve to face. They came and went at all hours, frequently at midnight, intoxicated, demanding shelter and food, and, believing that to refuse them anything asked for was to invite their hostility, their demands were invariably acceded to. An incident in this connection is well remembered and will serve to illustrate the terror we were in for a number of years. The next fall after our arrival father had sold his claim on Prairie Ronde and with the proceeds located a larger tract on an adjoining Genesee prairie, where we had permanently settled. Our house was a low, one room log shanty, having but one window and one door. A full curtain our means would not afford, consequently only the lower half of the twelve-light window was curtained at night. This was at the time of the historical "Black Hawk" war, and fearing an attack at any time by the home tribes it will be readily imagined how trifling a circumstance would frighten the scattered settlers. On this particular day father had gone to Schoolcraft to learn what was to be done to repel any demonstration that might be made by the Indians, and not returning at night as was intended, mother had a large log fire built in the fire place, affording both heat and our only light. With father away, the family consisted of mother, her young sister and us two little boys, aged four and seven years respectively. All had retired and were asleep except mother; she stood guard over the family. About midnight she was startled by hearing the tramp of feet and talk in low tones outside, and horses crunching vegetables in the garden. Presently the head and shoulders of a tall Indian appeared at the upper sash of the window above the curtain. Very much frightened, but making little outward show of it, mother awoke her sister and putting it as mildly as possible informed her that Indians were about. With remarkable tact she managed to quiet the nervousness of her sister, then confronting the Indian at the window demanded what was wanted. Having picked up a few words of English he replied, "Me come in, me sneep" (sleep), to which mother answered "che-mo-ko-man (white man) gone, you mar-chee" (travel or go away). Noticing her fear, which was not wholly concealed, he would turn and converse with someone, then come to the window and renew the demand for admittance. Seeing the futility of an attempt to keep them out, the room being brilliantly lighted by the big open fire, enabling them to see every object within and to shoot us through the window if so disposed, decided mother to admit them. Whether it was by that wise course we were indebted for not being molested will never be known, but at any rate they were apparently friendly and intended us no harm, only wanting shelter for the night, and to be satiated with such provisions as we happened to have. The group consisted of an

Indian, squaw and two papposes. Having blankets of their own they spread them on the floor and soon retired, leaving their ponies free to roam at will outside and continue the demolition of our little garden, which by morning was effectually accomplished. Just before day, however, we were given another little scare by the Indian getting up and departing with one of the ponies, leaving squaw and children, as mother imagined, to guard us till his return, perhaps with reinforcements. But that like the first was only a scare. He returned about sunrise, bringing the carcass of a deer he had killed the day before and hung up in the woods. Before leaving they cut out and presented us with a venison ham for our trouble.

Old "Shavehead," so named by the whites because, like many of his ancestors, he kept the hair clipped from a portion of his scalp, will never be forgotten. As a noted warrior of the Pottawattomies, and feared by them as well as the whites, boasting openly of the scalps of men, women and children he had lifted, he was the terror of the country. One son of his rearing, who was of similar type, a few years later was sent from Kalamazoo to State prison, under a life sentence, for the murder of a man by the name of Wizner, on Sturgis prairie. The life of an Indian in solitary confinement is short, and he survived but a year or two.

On a trip with father to Flourfield, with a grist of corn to have ground, I recollect seeing "Old Shavehead," with about three hundred braves in their war paint, congregated at Schoolcraft, holding a "council of war" to arrange it was said, for going to meet and join "Black Hawk," who was reported on the march from the west with his forces, to drive out or exterminate the settlers from Michigan. Our people began at once recruiting to organize a company to intercept them; but the affair proved a scare only, as did several others that followed, growing out of the irritability and discontented condition of the tribes on account of a treaty effected with them by the government, stipulating that all non-freeholders should remove to reservations west of the Mississippi river, for the signing of which, without their approval, they butchered their chief, "Sau-go-ma," an excellent man for an Indian; whose body, it was said, was literally chopped in pieces by squaws, with tomahawks. The bulk of them, however, notwithstanding their show of resistance, had to go; but not liking the open prairie country of the west, many of them sooner or later straggled back, who finally, as settlers became more numerous, were again, at a good deal of expense and trouble to the government, collected and returned to their western home.

"Sau-go-ma" was succeeded by a son, "Show-a-na-ba," unlike his father, a drunken brute, possessing too little ability, and his habits being too low to afford him any influence over his people, their condition was not improved

by the change. By the terms of the treaty, the few that were permitted to remain in Michigan were to receive a pro rata proportion of the stipulated annuity of money, blankets, utensils, etc.; but for seven years, from some cause, that part of the contract was not complied with by the government, and the Indians were forced to rely on what they could beg and the proceeds from hunting, trapping, sugar and basket making, and a few cranberries, "po-ka-min," they were able to dispose of in their season. Finally, however, payment of the annuity was resumed, after which, for a few days once each year, they were happy in the possession of a few dollars in coin that they were at liberty to dispose of in their own peculiar way. But the small amount received by each family soon vanished, and having little or nothing to show for it they were as dependent as before. Becoming discontented and restive under the chiefship of Show-a-na-ba they divided up into small bands, locating at Silver Creek, Cass county, under "Leo. Po-ka-gon," at Paw Paw and Deerfield, Van Buren county, under "Pe-pe-yah" and "Sin-e-go-wa" as chiefs.

Passing over the events of the next few years finds the writer, at Paw Paw, in the fall of 1844, in the employ of Isaac W. Willard, the pioneer merchant and miller of that place. Here he learned the language to a limited extent, which was of great service in business intercourse with the Indians. For those located in Van Buren county and their visitors from away, Paw Paw was headquarters. Furs, pelts, venison, maple sugar, baskets, berries and what not that they had to dispose of for the lack of any other trading post, came to us. Berry time was an important event. Indians, squaws and papposes with dogs and ponies, and the entire paraphernalia of tents, blankets, "mokuks" (an oblong basket made of birch bark) and cooking utensils, flocked to the swamps, and for a few weeks on alternate days trade was lively. The merchant or clerk who could talk or understand their language had the advantage of those who could not. Ponies, pack-saddles and "mokuks" were their means of transportation from the swamp; in fact, for the lack of wagon roads, were indispensable. It was not unusual to see twenty and thirty ponies bearing their loads of two mokuks of berries, holding one to one and a half bushels each, and generally a squaw and a pappoose or two on top, wending their way single file, at a slow gait into town, arriving about noon, and from that hour till nearly night we had our hands full. Later on, when there were roads through the woods, we frequently made excursions to the swamps with teams, carrying in goods and provisions, and brought away the berries. But as a rule they preferred the old way, for coming to town "was a necessity" and "time not money" with the Indian. The practice of dropping everything else and going to the

swamps annually to gather berries for market is kept up to the present day, but owing to the growth of the country and frequency of market places, Paw Paw has less of the deal.

On annual pay days, when the government commissioner made his appearance, and their little stipend was paid them, there was a general scramble among our people for their money, and merchants had a harvest while the Indians remained in town. It was a holiday looked forward to by the Indian with as much interest as Independence Day ever was by our people, and they made the most of it, the young Indians and squaws by squandering their money for nicknacks and drink by day and making the night hideous with their whoops and yells, and having a high time generally, the older and sober ones by purchasing clothing and other supplies, far as the money went, having a day or two in town and seeing the sights.

The impression, however, that generally obtains with our people, that all Indians in liquor are dangerous, is to some extent erroneous. Their dispositions vary the same as in other people, but lacking moral culture, they naturally show out their propensities, and knowing no law at so early a date, and there being no restraint, through fear of the consequences from that source, those that were inclined to be ugly were to be feared the same as the wild beasts. Although very reticent when sober, all are very talkative, and some absolutely silly, under the influence of intoxicants. Such is their propensity to talk, when drunk, that a continual jabbering is kept up, whether alone or with others, showing that the human is temporarily out of their construction, and that liquor and the animal have possession. The quarrelsome ones were usually disarmed, and if too troublesome, were bound hand and foot, by their Indian friends, and laid away to sober up. Kac-kac and Wap-seh were of the silly kind and notably the jolliest of fellows in liquor. No amount of tantalizing ever ruffled them, and nothing short of the sobering up process would remove the broad grin from their faces. Wap-seh was a member of the Sin-e-go-wa band, and still lives, notwithstanding his intemperate abuse of himself. Kac-kac was a brother of Mrs. Pe-pe-yah, and with his family shared their abode till consumption did its worst.

Finally the different bands joined in an effort to effect a settlement with the government and have the whole amount due them paid at one time, which through the persistency of an educated Chip-pa-wa, who married a squaw of the Po-ka-gon band, was accomplished, and an agreement was made by which they were paid \$39,000 in full settlement of a claim amounting to about \$25,000. At first the Indians tamely refused to ratify the agreement, setting up the claim that it was made without authority and the amount too small; but when the commissioner came to make the distribution

and each head of a family or individual of the required age saw their portion counted out, and were asked to touch the pen, which was equivalent to signing their names, there was no hesitation. That soon went the way of all moneys they had received from time to time, and having "sold their birth-right," they were again forced to rely upon themselves.

Sin-e-go-wa and Pe-pe-yah were both fine types of their race, possessing more than an average amount of intelligence, setting examples of morality and thrift that would have been better for their people to have followed, but which but few of them did. While living those chiefs succeeded in keeping their bands together, visiting backwards and forwards, and enjoying life reasonably well. But following their death there seemed to be no head or system to their management, and a steady depletion of their numbers was the result, until now, of the Sin-e-go-wa band but few families, and of the Pe-pe-yah band none are left on the old grounds. Of a roving disposition by nature, the few who have not succumbed to disease are scattered. The land occupied by Pe-pe-yah and his people, one and a half miles southwest of Paw Paw, is now a fine farm, owned by Mrs. J. R. Baker, purchased by her husband from the widow of Pe-pe-yah for a consideration of about \$3,000, which through her indulgence to a thriftless grandson was soon squandered, and she died at a ripe old age, an object of charity among relatives at Nottawa, in Calhoun county.

"Pe-pe-yah" was succeeded by an only son "Na-na-qui-ba," also a good Indian, as Indians go, but lacking the energy and influence of his father. He died young of consumption, the prevailing disease of the red man.

"White-wolf," the English definition of the name of an old Indian of the original stock, father of Mrs. Pe-pe-yah, was a character never to be forgotten. He and his squaw never varied the habits and customs of their ancestors. With a few others they strictly adhered to the old style of dress, namely, the blanket, leggins and moccasins; preferring a bark wigwam also, to a more modern house. The young men and squaws latterly donned the dress of the whites and now an Indian cannot be told by his dress. "White-wolf," than whom a more honest man never lived, retained through life a strong hold upon the affections of both Indians and whites. In his young days, it was said, he was intemperate and very ugly when drunk. An incident is told of him, that at one time, under the influence of liquor, he quarreled with Joseph Woodman—well known by all pioneers in VanBuren county, as a quiet, well to do farmer, near Paw Paw—who, in order to control him, resorted to the horse-whip, giving Mr. "White-wolf" a sound thrashing, after which he was never known to drink. Money would not hire him to taste of liquor, fearing if he did, that revenge would get the

mastery, and the killing of Woodman might be the result. Another incident will illustrate his honesty. When near his death he sent his aged squaw to pay the writer a debt of 75 cents for a field hoe sold him six months before. The moment the government annuity was received in the fall, there was no rest for him till every debt was cancelled.

Another conspicuous character, claiming identity with the tribes, was an eccentric old Frenchman by the name of "De-ro-sha," called by the Indians "Ke-no-sha;" his wife a Pottowattomic squaw. Speaking both the Indian and English languages fluently, made his services as interpreter on annual pay days indispensable. His squaw and half breed boy, drawing their little stipend with the others, were recognized members of the band. His home was on the bank of the river, about a mile north of Paw Paw; known by the early settlers as the old French trading post, where he lived in the same log hut, faithful to his squaw wife till he died. Personally he leaned to the habits of the whites, yet tolerating his wife's adherence to all the ways of her people. He mingled but little with the Indians outside of his family, except on occasion.

Another old Canada Frenchman, called by the Indians, "Moo-saw," but whose real name was "Joseph Lash-ua," having for a wife a deaf mute squaw, with whom and their half breed papposes he was always present, was also looked upon by the Indians as one of them; but being more filthy and degraded, in most respects, than his associates he commanded little respect from them, and less from the whites. His vocabulary was about half and half, Indian and Canada French, with a sprinkling of English, which was with difficulty understood. His habits were more Indian, of the lowest order, than otherwise, on account of which what he brought to market did not meet with ready sale. His berries were not picked nicely, his maple sugar was dirty and splenied against, and he was shunned largely on that account. Whether his presence for a few years in the "happy hunting grounds" has improved him is scarcely credited by the writer.

In politics all Canada Frenchmen known to the writer were democrats, and Moosaw was not an exception unless he was mistaken, and never failed to be present on election day, to "cast a vote for Gen. Jackson." No insult was more keenly felt than to be charged with lack of fealty to the "old party," although it was well understood that the last man to give him a ballot and the longest plug of tobacco secured his vote, provided he went with him to the polls and saw it deposited. In those times the government had not made it a crime to buy votes and they were cheaper than now. All Indians of course were, by nationality, entitled to the right of suffrage, but they seldom took advantage of it. Their knowledge of the importance of

the ballot was very limited and as a rule they manifested but little interest in politics, in fact were hardly ever seen at elections unless looked after by some one having influence enough (always purchased) to induce them to go. In religion they were either Catholics or Methodists. Sin-e-go-wa's people were of the former faith and from the Toledo and South Haven railroad cars, in passing Rush lake between Covert and Hartford, can be seen their church and schoolhouse, near which, here and there, were their homes. J. R. Baker, himself leaning to Catholicism, was their adviser and largely through his influence they were induced to engage quite earnestly in religious matters. Being a democrat also, Baker's influence, when brought to bear, never failed to secure their support of that ticket.

The time is close at hand when we shall have lost both sight and remembrance of the "noble red man." Their numbers are already depleted to an insignificant remnant, with no organization as bands, scattered here and there among the whites, and the present generation will probably see them nearly wiped out from Michigan.