

NOONDAY, THE OTTAWA CHIEF. HE WAS IN THE BATTLE OF THE THAMES,
AND SEES COL. R. M. JOHNSON SHOOT TECUMSEH, WHOM
HE CARRIES OFF THE BATTLE FIELD.

Rev. Leonard Slater established a mission among the Indians at Grand Rapids sometime in 1826. Here he first met the Ottawa chief, Noonday. And it was here that the old chief was converted to christianity some time in 1830 or '31, with a number of other Indians of his tribe. Deacon Edwin Mason, of Richland, from whom I received most of the facts in this sketch, first saw the chief, Noonday, in 1832, on Gull prairie, as he, with his Indians, was on his way to Malden to get their annual presents. The early settlers of Gull prairie were then just in the midst of the excitement over the rumors that Black Hawk and his Indians were coming into Michigan to murder them all. Deacon Mason had a talk with Noonday and among other things asked him which side he would take in case Black Hawk did come into the territory. He replied: "Me and my Indians will help the white folks if they need us."

Mr. Slater established his mission in Prairieville, Barry county, some one and one half miles from Richland, in 1836. He bought several hundred acres of land of Luther Hill for the use of the Indians. Deacon M—— remembers that in November of 1832 Elder Merrill came on horseback to his log cabin inquiring the way to Grand Rapids, whither he was going to organize a Baptist church, and to baptize Noonday and the converted Indians. The elder on his return told Deacon M—— that he had to sleep in the

woods one night both going to and coming from Grand Rapids. Noonday was an old man long before he came to Gull. He occasionally visited the settlement on the prairie, but was always the same taciturn, dignified, commanding person. Though the settlers now and then talked with him, through an interpreter, few of them knew that he had ever done an act that had caught the ear of fame. Yet the redman's Clio, the penless scribe tradition, whose function was to keep alive the memory of famous deeds, had often told the braves around the council fire, and they had told their children that Noonday had fought bravely on the British side in one of the memorable battles of our second war with England. It is well known that both the Chippewa and Ottawa tribes fought with the English in the war of 1812. Noonday had a wife and family. After his conversion he lived a true christian life, never failing to hold family worship, gathering all the inmates of his household about the family altar morning and evening. I do not know whether he had children of his own, but he had several adopted children. He took great interest in the mission work, and especially in the school in which, through his influence, all the children of his tribe were gathered. He was looked upon by all his people not only as their counsellor, but as the wise patriarch who was to look after their temporal and spiritual wants. Miss Susan Parker, Amasa Parker's sister, was the first teacher in this school which was organized in 1838. She afterwards married Rev. Mr. Davis, and died at Ann Arbor, a number of years ago. The next teacher was Rev. Leonard Slater's daughter, Frances, who became the wife of Cornelius Mason. She, too, is dead. Noonday, when visiting the school, would never let a wrong or improper act go unrebuked or unpunished, often chastising a refractory pupil for the teacher.

Mr. Slater always preached to the Indians in their language, with which he had made himself familiar. He had early sought instruction from Noonday in the Ottawa dialect. He would first deliver his sermon to the old chief, in order to get his criticism as to its correct Indian, before he preached it to the rude worshipers in the chapel. The mission lasted some ten years. Noonday died when some one hundred years old in 1845 or '46, and is buried near the spot where the old mission house stood. A plain slab marks the grave where the old patriarch of the Slater mission sleeps. His wife at her death was laid beside him.

Noonday never learned to talk English, but always spoke to his white friends through an interpreter, who usually was Mr. Slater. From an article by D. B. Cook, editor of the Niles Mirror, published in the Century Magazine of June, 1885, I get the following historical facts concerning Noonday: Mr. Cook's father, Phineas Cook, was an early settler in the region near Gull

prairie. He says: "I had in 1838 an interview with Noonday, chief of the Ottawa tribe. The chief was six feet high, broad shouldered, well proportioned, with broad, high cheek bones, piercing black eyes, and coarse black hair which hung down on his shoulders. He possessed wonderful muscular power. He was converted to christianity by Rev. Leonard Slater, missionary at the Slater mission at Grand Rapids, and afterwards came with his friend and pastor to the new mission near Gull prairie. Noonday was at the battle of the Thames." Mr. Cook's diary runs thus: "After rehearsing the speech which Tecumseh made to his warriors previous to the engagement, and how all felt that they fought to defend Tecumseh more than for the British, he was asked:

"Were you near Tecumseh when he fell?"

"Yes, directly on his right."

"Who killed him?"

"Richard M. Johnson."

"Give us the circumstances."

"He was on a horse and the horse fell over a log, and Tecumseh with uplifted tomahawk, was about to dispatch him, when he drew a pistol from his holster and shot him in the breast and he fell dead on his face. I seized him at once and with the assistance of Saginaw, bore him from the field. When he fell the Indians stopped fighting and the battle ended. We laid him down on a blanket in a wigwam, and we all wept, we loved him so much. I took his hat and tomahawk."

"Where are they now?"

"I have his tomahawk and Saginaw his hat."

"Could I get them?"

"No; Indian keep them!"

"How did you know it was Johnson who killed him?"

"General Cass took me to see the Great Father, Van Buren, at Washington. I went to the great wigwam, and when I went in I saw the same man I see in battle, the same man I see kill Tecumseh. I had never seen him since, but I knew it was him. I look him in the face and said: 'Kene kin-a-poo Tecumseh,' that is, you kill Tecumseh. Johnson replied that he never knew who it was, but a powerful Indian approached him and he shot him with his pistol. "That was Tecumseh; I see you do it."

Noonday finished his story of Tecumseh by telling of his noble traits, the tears meanwhile trickling down his cheeks. There is no doubt of the truth of his unvarnished tale.

It was believed by some people that Noonday was at the burning of Buffalo. But Rev. Leonard Slater's son George, now living in Richland, assures us

that Noonday told him just before his death that he was not at the burning of Buffalo.

Wash-ta succeeded Noonday as chief of the tribe; but in a short time after the chief's death he went north with the few Indians at the old mission. Lewis Gen-ro* was an Indian well known on Gull prairie at this time. He, when living at Grand Rapids, had been sent to state's prison for "holding his wife's father in the fire till he burned to death." This was done when Gen-ro was drunk. After serving his time in prison he came to Gull prairie. He had learned the shoemaker's trade in prison. Rev. L. Slater built him a shop, and furnished him with an outfit for his trade. But, Indian like, he worked by "fits and starts," and finally went north with the rest of his band.