

ANNALS OF IOWA

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT

HISTORIC SITES SUBMERGED

In the leading article of the present issue of the ANNALS, Mr. J. P. Cruikshank of Fort Madison, Iowa, mentions important historic sites and objects that are about to be submerged in the Mississippi river. He instances places and environments about which cluster accounts of some of the earliest occurrences on Iowa soil among white people and the Indians. Those occurrences and the developments anticipated belong to two different eras. Those set forth by Mr. Cruikshank are full of interest, for they are as truth enwrapped in tradition. But they are not equal in importance to the changes he anticipates. That is, the epoch of the discovery and settlement of the shores of the Mississippi river along and for forty miles above the rapids of the Des Moines, great and important in the annals of the Middle West though that epoch is, can not equal in the final account of the Mississippi valley the epoch of the conversion of that ancient bar to navigation into an engine of economic power.

Totals in units of hydraulic or electric energy do not much interest the student of mere history nor so much enter into the historian's problems as do traditions and trends of thought. Even the conversion of great waste into the necessities and comforts of human life, being simply manufacture, has not been held in that high regard accorded changes in processes which alter the ratio of the quantity of production to that of need or enlarge the possibilities of human life.

So it is not the alteration of immense waste into useful energy we wish so much to note, although done at a cost of thirty times the ransom of a king, but rather the changes in



JOHNNY GREEN, A MUSQUAKIE CHIEF.

From a tintype presented by Sam G. Sloane to the State Historical Department of Iowa.

one lifetime of the processes by which there are now possible the new and greater achievements.

When Robert E. Lee and his engineering age surveyed the rapids and reported substantially all the physical conditions noted years later by Hugh L. Cooper in the preliminary phases of the problem of the rapids, there were used in discussions for solution only such terms as gunpowder, cut stone and lime mortar; directly connected shafts, gravity and the natural declivity of the river bed. Only mills and boats and growing crops on or adjoining streams were possible beneficiaries of any river current however modified by skill of man.

But Cooper and his age have thought and wrought in terms of dynamite. They rip up the banks and bottom of the Father of Waters and hurl the debris across the stream in form of monolith. They almost approach a Christian miracle by changing, not water into wine, but its force into that of another fluid, reversing its direction and delivering it in defiance of gravity through radii undreamed of by Lee.

The average historical student, more interested in traditions than in dividends, turns with something like emotion from the account of Mr. Cruikshank. One instinctively resents the disturbance of soil hallowed by important associations. Cultured souls the world over shuddered in contemplation of the impounded Nile backing her waters at Assuan into the temples of Philae. It took energy of thought to restore one's equilibrium and to accept the meaning of areas added to the bread bins of the ancient Hebrews, to comprehend that the waste to archaeology is compensated by a resulting boon to modern and future European life.

So the mind of the Iowa pioneer and that of the student of his life and times inclines to sadness in contemplation of the changes noted in the account of Mr. Cruikshank, the disappearance of the very setting of important scenes. A synonym for the impossible, used the length and breadth of the country, "You might as well try to dam the Mississippi," is rendered obsolete. And in witnessing all this, the sentimental mind has little pleasure until there is borne in on it the com-

prehension of the impending changes. Then the practical overcomes the sentimental. The sadness is displaced by indifference if not stimulated into eagerness for the demolition of what was for that which is to be. At this point the writer would have the Iowa public pause in its hurly-burly, stay the floods and torrents of interest in the new era, to rescue from the oncoming waters not the sites and scenes, but by mound and shaft and tablet retrieve the facts of which they speak. He would have the public go in sentiment with Cruikshank to mark these sites and then with Cooper in his course of progress to submerge them forever.

EARLY EXPLORATION OF NORTHERN IOWA.

Endeavoring to assemble in THE ANNALS as much of what students call Iowa source materials as we can, we reprint from the Missouri Historical Society *Collections* the journal of a trip in 1820 by Stephen Watts Kearny across lands now within the States of Iowa and Minnesota.

As a basis from which to better appreciate that article, we here present correspondence through Hon. Horace M. Towner, with the Department of War, disclosing information upon conditions adjoining our western border, nearly a century ago:

My Dear Mr Towner:

I observe in our files of the *Boston Weekly Messenger* for August 24th and for September 28th, 1820, references to conditions at Council Bluffs, and enclose copies of these references herewith. Will you ascertain whether the facts alluded to in these are set out in any report?

Sincerely yours,

EDGAR R. HARLAN.

Hon. Horace M. Towner,

House of Representatives, Washington, D. C.

(Copies of the references enclosed.)

FROM THE COUNCIL BLUFFS.

Extract of a letter from Council Bluffs, June 24th, 1820.

I am glad that the fact authorizes me to state, that the troops at this post are restored to perfect health. There are not in both

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