

## RECOLLECTIONS OF THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF NORTHWESTERN IOWA.

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(Continued from page 34.)

It was from the top of Floyd's Bluff, a distance of about two hundred feet, down into the muddy waters of the Missouri river below, almost perpendicular, that "Jo. Lean," a Canadian Frenchman, made a fearful leap on his pony, as related to me by a daughter of Judge Townsley, who, at the time of the occurrence, resided in Tompson town, at the foot of the bluff. Jo., while laboring under the exhilarating influence of sod-corn whisky, and, doubtless, thirsting for "Sam Patch" glory, made the fearful leap. My informant said that an eye-witness to the frightful scene at once informed her father's family of the occurrence, when she, with other members of the family, hastened to the spot, expecting to find the lifeless bodies of Jo. and pony, but, strange to say, the injuries received by both were only of a slight character; the pony was quietly feeding near the water's edge, and its reckless rider stretched out in the mud near by, resting upon his elbow, and ejaculating in broken French, "Me big man, God damn; me no hurt." Jo. was quite content with the experiment, and has not since that time manifested any desire to repeat it.

At the confluence of the Big Sioux and Missouri rivers is quite a high elevation, or bluff, on the Iowa side, overlooking much beautiful and fertile country for many miles. Upon this picturesque spot slumber the ashes of the once brave and sagacious Sioux chieftain, "War Eagle," with several members of his family. The Sioux have a very peculiar method of disposing of their dead. When one dies, the deceased is wrapped up in his blanket, or robe, and then laid up in a tree top, or placed upon a scaffold made of poles for that purpose. This is done, that there may be no obstruction to impede the spirit in its flight to the new hunting-grounds. War Eagle

was laid in a grave, as most of the notables of the tribe are. The grave was about four feet in depth; the corpse was wrapped in a blanket, and laid in without a coffin; sticks were then placed across the top of the grave and covered over with earth, leaving an open space at the head of the grave of about one foot square, that the spirit of the departed might have egress, as it winged its way to the celestial hunting-grounds on high.

War Eagle was a rare specimen of his race—tall, athletic, muscular, with massive forehead, bespeaking an amount of intelligence seldom found among his race. A few words of his burning eloquence was sufficient to arouse his people to war, and deeds of blood, or to bury the tomahawk, and sheath the scalping-knife, and retire to the shades of peace. He was zealous in the defense of the rights of his people, and against any encroachment upon that soil that nature, and nature's God, had given them an inalienable right to.

The love of country and people is not confined to civilized life alone, but swells the heart, and nerves the arm, of the untutored red man of the forest. War Eagle was, emphatically, one of nature's noblest children, upon whom she had bestowed much intellect and ability. In point of oratory, he was excelled by but few of the leading orators of his age. But, notwithstanding all his great natural abilities, and good qualities, like many of his people, he yielded to that baneful monster, alcohol, who is daily fastening his poisonous fangs upon the vitals of thousands, and with his fiery tail sweeping countless numbers from the stage of action. It was when in a beastly state of intoxication, he laid out upon the cold ground, with no covering but the starry-decked heavens, and, drenched with a heavy rain, he took a severe cold, from which he never recovered.

In the latter part of June, 1857, the steam ferryboat "Lewis Burns," that plied between Sioux<sup>v</sup>City and Covington, on the Nebraska side of the river, made an excursion trip up the Big Sioux river, to ascertain the extent of its navigation, quite a number of ladies and gentlemen of Sioux City accompanying

the excursion. About 8 o'clock A. M. all were summoned aboard (the writer of this sketch being among the number). We shoved off, and, after running about two miles, we left "Old Muddy" and soon found ourselves gliding upon the crystal waters of the Big Sioux. The beautiful scenery presented to the eye from our position in the pilot-house was of such striking beauty that it will never be erased from my memory. On the west of us was stretched out for miles the rich and fertile prairies of Dakota, covered with nature's green robes, embellished with fragrant flowers of every hue. On the east were spread out the broad and swelling prairies of Iowa, with here, rugged bluffs covered with the most beautiful foliage, the winged songsters of the air reveling amid the leafy boughs and warbling their sweetest strains, and there, a beautiful valley, of some crystal stream that wound its serpentine form through leafy groves, whilst its sparkling waters rushed on with impetuous bound, as if anxious to be lost in the bright bosom of the Sioux. Our bark would occasionally land, in order that the excursionists might enjoy a ramble in the groves, and pluck the beautiful flowers that were woven into wreaths and decorated our boat and the heads of our lady passengers, which gave the "Lewis Burns" somewhat the appearance of a flower garden. As our boat scudded along we frequently sounded the water, and found it not less than seven, nor more than sixteen, feet in depth. After running about forty miles without the least obstruction, the late hour of the day admonished us that it was time to retrace our steps, when we very reluctantly wheeled about our bark for home, while all were delighted with the excursion trip on the first boat that ever navigated the Big Sioux.

(To be continued.)

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