The Palimpsest

NOVEMBER 1926

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH
Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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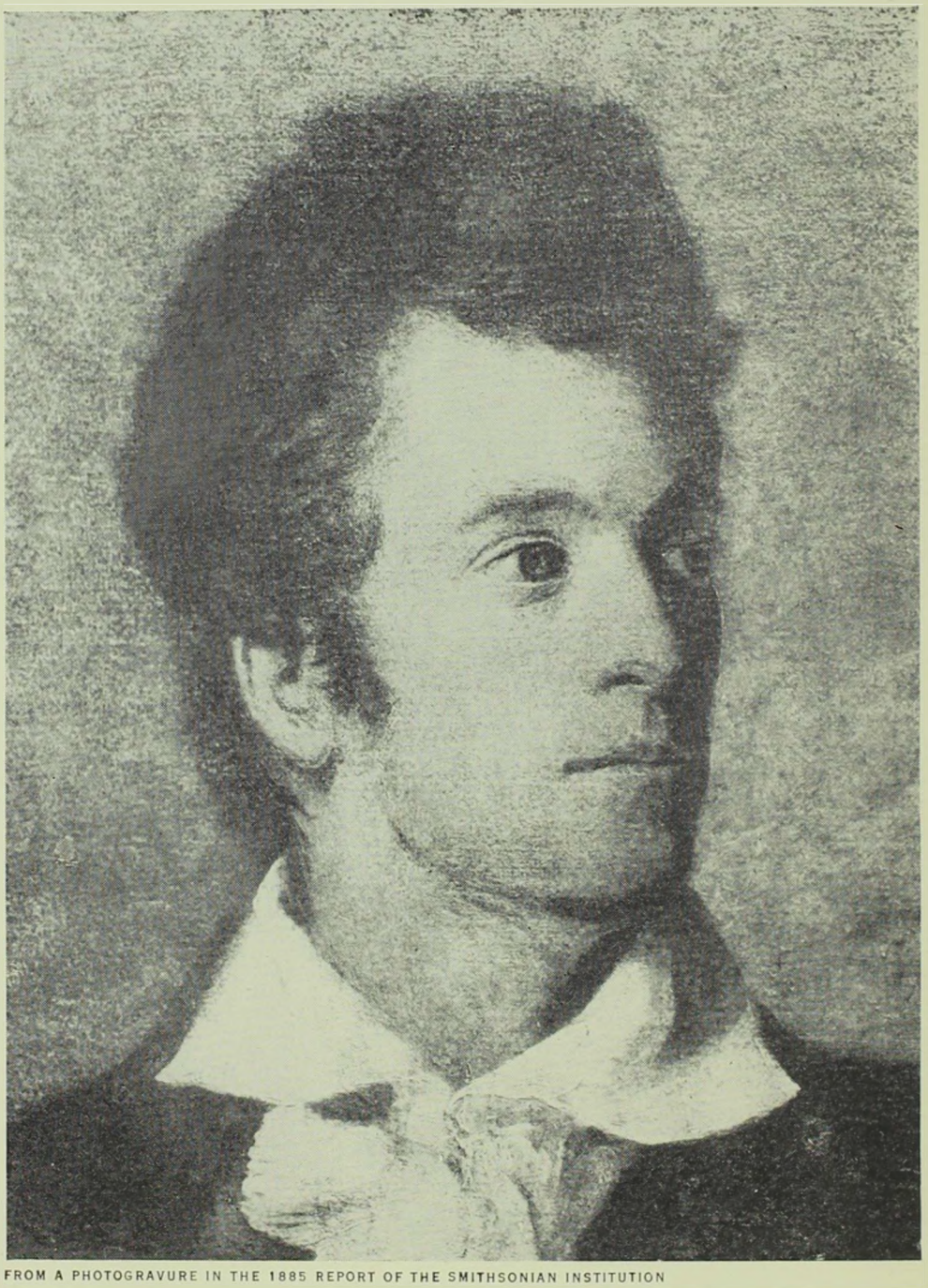


FROM A PHOTOGRAVURE IN THE 1885 REPORT OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

GEORGE CATLIN

PAINTED BY HIMSELF AT THE AGE OF TWENTY-EIGHT

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

VOL. VII ISSUED IN NOVEMBER 1926 NO. 11

The Grave of Sergeant Floyd

My voyage from the mouth of the Teton River to Fort Leavenworth during this autumn of 1832 has been the most rugged, yet the most delightful, of my whole Tour. Our canoe was generally landed at night on the point of some projecting barren sandbar, where we straightened our limbs on our buffalo robes, secure from the annoyance of mosquitos and out of the walks of Indians and grizzly bears. In addition to the opportunity which this descending Tour has afforded me of visiting all the tribes of Indians on the river, and leisurely filling my portfolio with the beautiful scenery which its shores present, the sportsman's fever was roused and satisfied. The swan, ducks, geese, and pelicans — the

[This description of the western border of Iowa, particularly in the vicinity of Sioux City, as it appeared to an artist nearly a hundred years ago, is here reprinted from George Catlin's *North American Indians*, Vol. II. The following incidents are likewise adapted for THE PALIMPSEST from the same source. —THE EDITOR]

deer, antelope, elk, and buffaloes were "*stretched*" by our rifles.

I often landed my skiff and mounted the green carpeted bluffs, whose soft grassy tops invited me to recline, where I was at once lost in contemplation. Soul melting scenery that was about me! A place where the mind could think volumes; but the tongue must be silent that would *speak*, and the hand palsied that would *write*. A place where a divine would confess that he never had fancied Paradise — where the painter's palette would lose its beautiful tints — the blood-stirring notes of eloquence would die in their utterance — and even the soft tones of sweet music would scarcely preserve a spark to light the soul again that had passed this sweet delirium. I mean the prairie, whose enamelled plains that lie beneath me in distance soften into sweetness, like an essence; whose thousand thousand velvet-covered hills (surely never formed by chance, but grouped in one of Nature's sportive moods) go tossing and leaping down with steep or graceful declivities to the river's edge, as if to grace its pictured shores and make it "a thing to look upon." I mean the prairie at *sunset*; when the green hilltops are turned into gold and their long shadows of melancholy are thrown over the valleys — when all the breathings of day are hushed, and nought but the soft notes of the retiring dove can be heard, or the still softer and more plaintive notes of the wolf, who sneaks through these scenes of enchantment and how—l—s, as if

mournfully lonesome and lost in the too beautiful quiet and stillness about him. I mean *this* prairie, where Heaven sheds its purest light and lends its richest tints — this *round-topped bluff*, where the foot treads soft and light, whose steep sides and lofty head rear me to the skies overlooking yonder pictured vale of beauty — this solitary *cedar post*, which tells a tale of grief — grief that was keenly felt, and tenderly, but long since softened in the march of time and lost. Oh, sad and tear-starting contemplation! Sole tenant of this stately mound, how solitary thy habitation! Here Heaven wrested from thee thy ambition, and made thee sleeping monarch of this land of silence.

Stranger! adieu. With streaming eyes I leave thee again, and thy fairy land, to peaceful solitude. My pencil has faithfully traced thy beautiful habitation; and long shall live in the world, and familiar, the name of "*Floyd's Grave.*"

Readers, pardon this digression. I have seated myself down, not on a prairie, but at my table, by a warm and cheering fire, with my journal before me to cull from it a few pages for your entertainment; and if there are spots of loveliness and beauty over which I have passed and whose images are occasionally beckoning me into digressions, you must forgive me.

Such is the spot I have just named. "Floyd's Grave" is a name given to one of the most lovely and imposing mounds or bluffs on the Missouri River,

about twelve hundred miles above Saint Louis, from the melancholy fate of Sergeant Floyd, who was of Lewis and Clark's expedition, who died on the way out in 1804, and whose body was taken to this beautiful hill and buried in its top, where now stands a cedar post bearing the initials of his name.

I landed my canoe in front of this grass-covered mound, and all hands being fatigued we encamped a couple of days at its base. I several times ascended it and sat upon his grave, overgrown with grass and the most delicate wild flowers, where I contemplated the solitude and stillness of this tenanted mound; and beheld from its top the windings infinite of the Missouri, and its thousand hills and domes of green, vanishing into blue in distance, when nought but the soft-breathing winds were heard to break the stillness and quietude of the scene. Not the chirping of bird or sound of cricket, nor soaring eagle's scream, were interposed 'tween God and man; nor aught to check man's whole surrender of his soul to his Creator. I could not *hunt* upon this ground, but I roamed from hilltop to hilltop, and culled wild flowers, and looked into the valley below me, both up the river and down, and contemplated the thousand hills and dales that are now carpeted with green; streaked as they *will* be with the plough and yellow with the harvest sheaf; spotted with lowing kine, with houses and fences, and groups of hamlets and villas. And I visioned these lovely hilltops ringing with the giddy din and maze,

or secret earnest whispers of lovesick swains of pristine simplicity and virtue; of wholesome and well-earned contentment and abundance; and again, of wealth and refinement, of idleness and luxury, of vice and its deformities, of fire and sword, and the vengeance of offended Heaven, wreaked in retributive destruction!

Many such scenes there are, and thousands, on the Missouri shores. My canoe has been stopped, and I have clambered up their grassy and flower-decked sides; and sighed all alone, as I have carefully traced and fastened them in colors on my canvas.

This voyage in my little canoe, amid the thousand islands and grass-covered bluffs that stud the shores of this mighty river, afforded me infinite pleasure, mingled with pains and privations which I never shall wish to forget. Gliding along from day to day, and tiring our eyes on the varying landscapes that were continually opening to our view, my merry *voyageurs* were continually chaunting their cheerful boat songs, and "every now and then," taking up their unerring rifles to bring down the stately elks or antelopes, which were often gazing at us from the shores of the river.

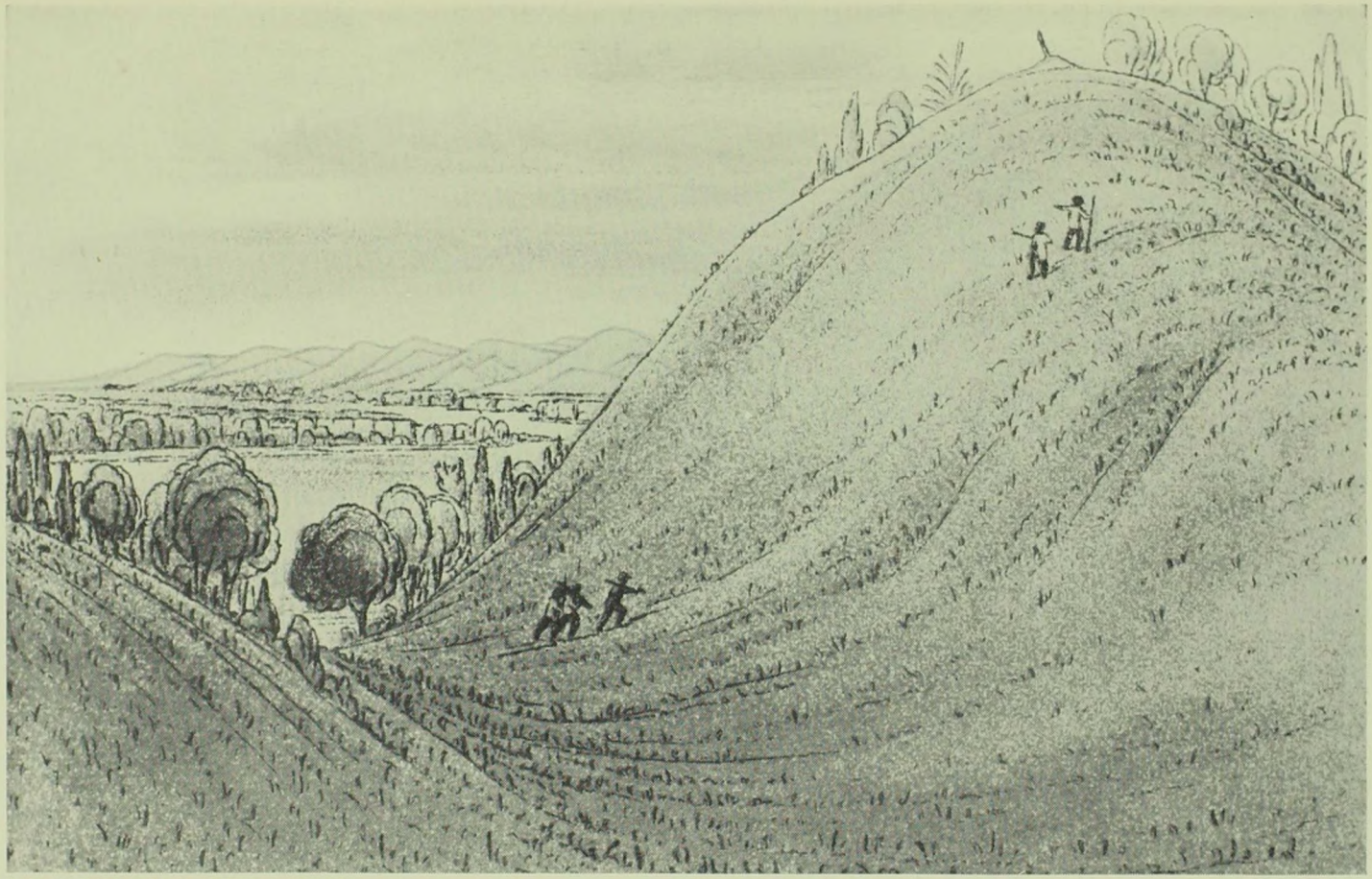
George Catlin

On the Upper Mississippi

The Upper Mississippi, like the Upper Missouri, must be approached to be appreciated; for all that can be seen below Saint Louis gives no hint of the magnificence of the scenes which are continually opening to the view of the traveller and riveting him to the deck of the steamer through sunshine, lightning, or rain, from the mouth of the Ouisconsin to the Fall of Saint Anthony. Each succeeding reach and turn in the river between Prairie du Chien and Lake Pepin presents a more immense and magnificent scene of beauty.

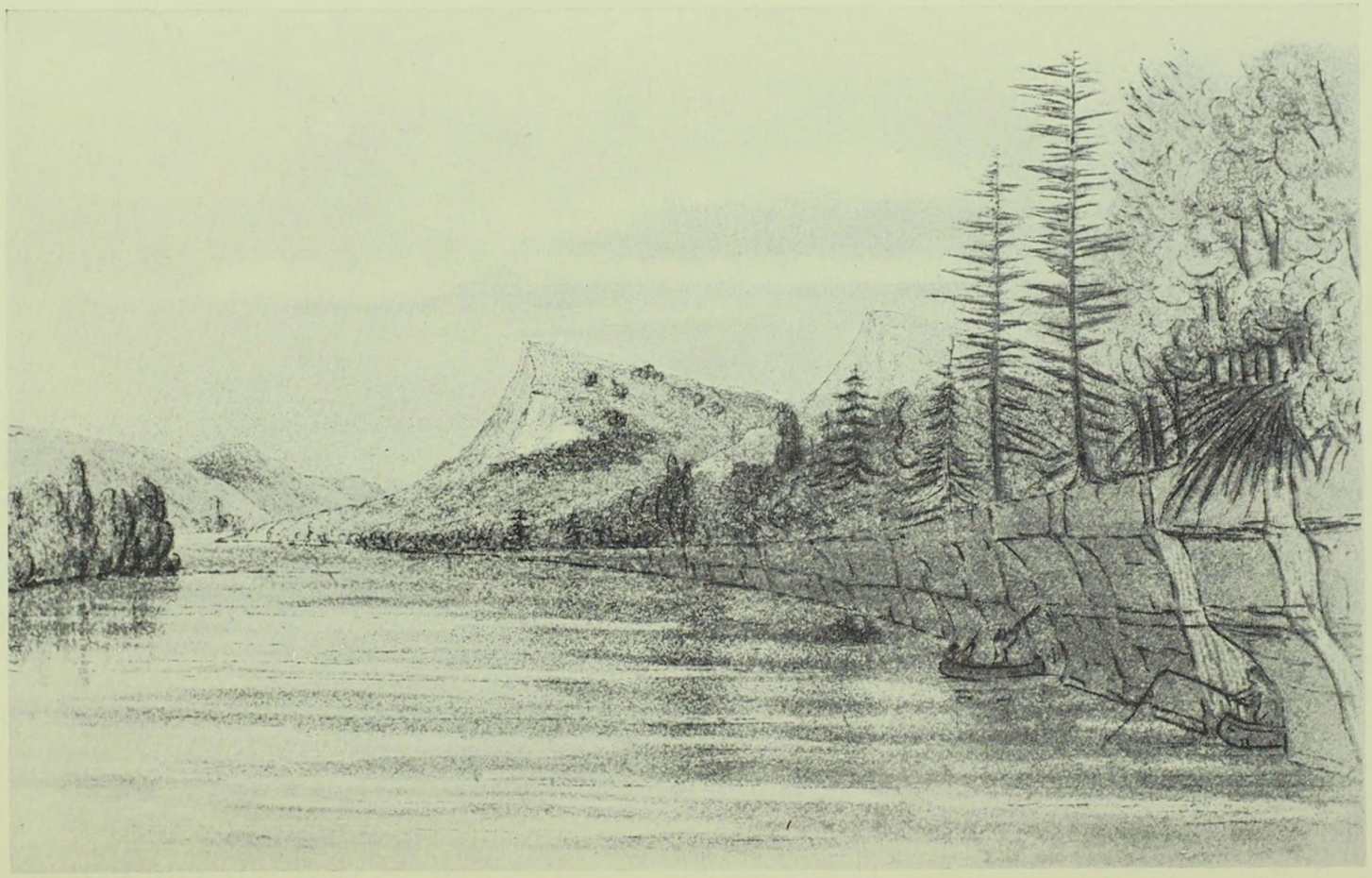
The whole face of the country is covered with a luxuriant growth of grass, whether there is timber or not; and the magnificent bluffs, studding the sides of the river and rising in the forms of immense cones, domes, and ramparts, give peculiar pleasure from the deep and soft green carpet of grass in which they are clad up their broad sides and to their extreme tops, with spots of timber of a deeper green apparently arranged by the hands of art.

After spending several weeks studying the Sioux and Chippeway Indians at Fort Snelling in the summer of 1835, I placed my wife on board the steamer bound for Prairie du Chien, while I embarked in a light bark canoe with Corporal Allen from the garrison, a young man of considerable taste who



FROM CATLIN'S NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

THE GRAVE OF SERGEANT FLOYD



FROM CATLIN'S NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

CORNICE ROCKS ON THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI

thought he would relish the transient scenes of such a voyage in company with a painter.

With stores laid in for a ten days' voyage and armed for any emergency, with sketch-book and colors prepared, we shoved off and swiftly glided away with paddles nimbly plied, resolved to see and relish every thing curious or beautiful that fell in our way as we lingered along among the scenes of grandeur which presented themselves amid the thousand bluffs.

Ducks, deer, and bass were our food. Our bed was generally on the grass at the foot of some towering bluff where, in the melancholy stillness of night, we were lulled to sleep by the liquid notes of the whip-poor-will; and after his warbling ceased, we were roused by the mournful complaints of the starving wolf or surprised by the startling interrogation, "who! who! who!" by the winged monarch of the dark.

When the morning's dew was shaken off, our coffee enjoyed, our light bark again launched upon the water, and the chill of the morning banished by the quick stroke of the paddle, our eyes were open to the scenes of romance that were about us. Our boat ran to every ledge, dodged into every slough, every mineral was examined, every cave explored, and almost every bluff of grandeur ascended. "Cap au l'ail" (Garlic Cape) about twenty miles above Prairie du Chien is a beautiful scene; and the "Cornice Rocks" on the west bank, where my little bark

rested two days till the corporal and I had taken bass from every nook and eddy about them, is a most picturesque ledge. At Prairie du Chien, which is near the mouth of the Ouisconsin River and six hundred miles above Saint Louis, I found my wife enjoying the hospitality of Mrs. Lockwood, who had been a schoolmate of mine in our childhood.

Prairie du Chien has been one of the earliest and principal trading posts of the Fur Company, and they now have a large establishment at that place, but are doing far less business than formerly, owing to the great mortality of the Indians in the vicinity and the destruction of the game which has almost entirely disappeared in those regions. The prairie is a beautiful elevation above the river, several miles in length and a mile or so in width, with a most picturesque range of grassy bluffs encompassing it in the rear. The Government have erected there a substantial Fort, in which are generally stationed three or four companies of men for the purpose of keeping the peace amongst the hostile tribes, and also of protecting the frontier inhabitants from the attacks of the excited savages.

About the place there is one continual scene of wretchedness and drunkenness and disease amongst the Indians, who come there to trade and to receive their annuities. When I was there, Wabesha's band of the Sioux came and remained several weeks. Their annuities fell far short of paying off their account, which the traders take good care to have

standing against them for goods furnished on a year's credit. However, whether they pay off or not, they can always get whiskey enough for a grand carouse which lasts for a week or two, and is almost sure to terminate the lives of some of their number.

At the end of one of these brawls a few days since, after the men had enjoyed their surfeit of whiskey and wanted a little more amusement, it was announced amongst them, and through the village, that the women were going to have a ball-play! For this purpose the men laid out a great quantity of ribbons and calicoes with other presents well adapted to the wants and desires of the women. These were hung on a pole resting on crotches, and guarded by an old man who was to be judge and umpire of the play. The women, who were divided into two equal parties, were to play a desperate game of ball for the valuable stakes that were hanging before them.

In this game the women have two balls attached to the ends of a string about a foot and a half long. Each woman has a short stick in each hand, on which she endeavors to catch the string with the two balls and throw them over the goal of her own party. The contest sometimes lasts for hours. Meanwhile the men, more than half drunk, take infinite pleasure in rolling about on the ground and laughing to excess, whilst the women are tumbling about in all attitudes and scuffling for the ball.

George Catlin

The Lead Mines of Dubuque

I hauled my canoe out of the water at Dubuque a few days later, where I joined my wife again in the society of kind and hospitable friends, and found myself amply repaid for a couple of weeks' time spent in the examination of the extensive lead mines; walking and creeping through caverns, some eighty or one hundred feet below the earth's surface, decked in nature's pure livery of stalactites and spar — with walls, and sometimes ceilings, of glistening massive lead. And I hold yet (and ever shall) in my mind the image of one of my companions, and the scene that at one time was about him. We were in "Lockwood's Cave," my wife and another lady were behind, and he advancing before me. *His* ribs, more elastic than mine, gave him entrance through a crevice, into a chamber yet unexplored; he dared the pool, for there was one of icy water, and translucent as the air itself. We stood luckless spectators, to gaze and envy, while he advanced. The lighted flambeau in his hand brought the splendid furniture of this tessellated palace into view; the surface of the jostled pool laved his sides as he advanced; and the rich stalagmites that grew up from the bottom reflected a golden light through the water, while the walls and ceiling were hung with stalactites which glittered like diamonds.

In this wise he stood in silent gaze, in awe and admiration of the hidden works of Nature; his figure, as high as the surface of the water, was magnified into a giant, and his head and shoulders not unfit for a cyclop. In fact, he was a perfect figure of Vulcan. The water in which he stood was a lake of liquid fire, he held a huge hammer in his right hand, and a flaming thunderbolt in his left, which he had just forged for Jupiter. There was but one thing wanting, it was the "sound of the hammer" which was soon given in peals upon the beautiful pendants of stalactite and spar, which sent back and through the cavern the hollow tones of thunder.

Dubuque's Grave is a place of great notoriety on this river, in consequence of its having been the residence and mining place of the first lead mining pioneer of these regions, by the name of Dubuque, who held his title under a grant from the Mexican Government (I think). He settled by the side of this huge bluff, on the pinnacle of which he erected the tomb to receive his own body and placed over it a cross with his own inscription on it. After his death, his body was placed within the tomb at his own request, lying in state (and uncovered except with his winding-sheet) upon a large flat stone, where it was exposed to the view, as his bones now are, to the gaze of every traveller who takes the pains to ascend this beautiful, grassy and lilly-covered mound to the top and peep through the gratings of two little windows which have admitted the eyes, but

stopped the sacrilegious hands, of thousands who have taken a walk to it.

A visit of a few days to Dubuque will be worth the while of every traveller, and for the speculator and man of enterprize it affords the finest field now open in our country. It is a small town of two hundred houses, built entirely within the last two years, on one of the most delightful sites on the river and in the heart of the richest and most productive parts of the mining region, having this advantage over most other mining countries, that immediately over the richest (and in fact all) of the lead mines the land on the surface produces the finest corn and all other vegetables that may be put into it. This is certainly the richest section of country on the continent, and those who live a few years to witness the result will be ready to sanction my assertion that it is to be the *mint of our country.*

George Catlin

A Visit to Keokuk's Village

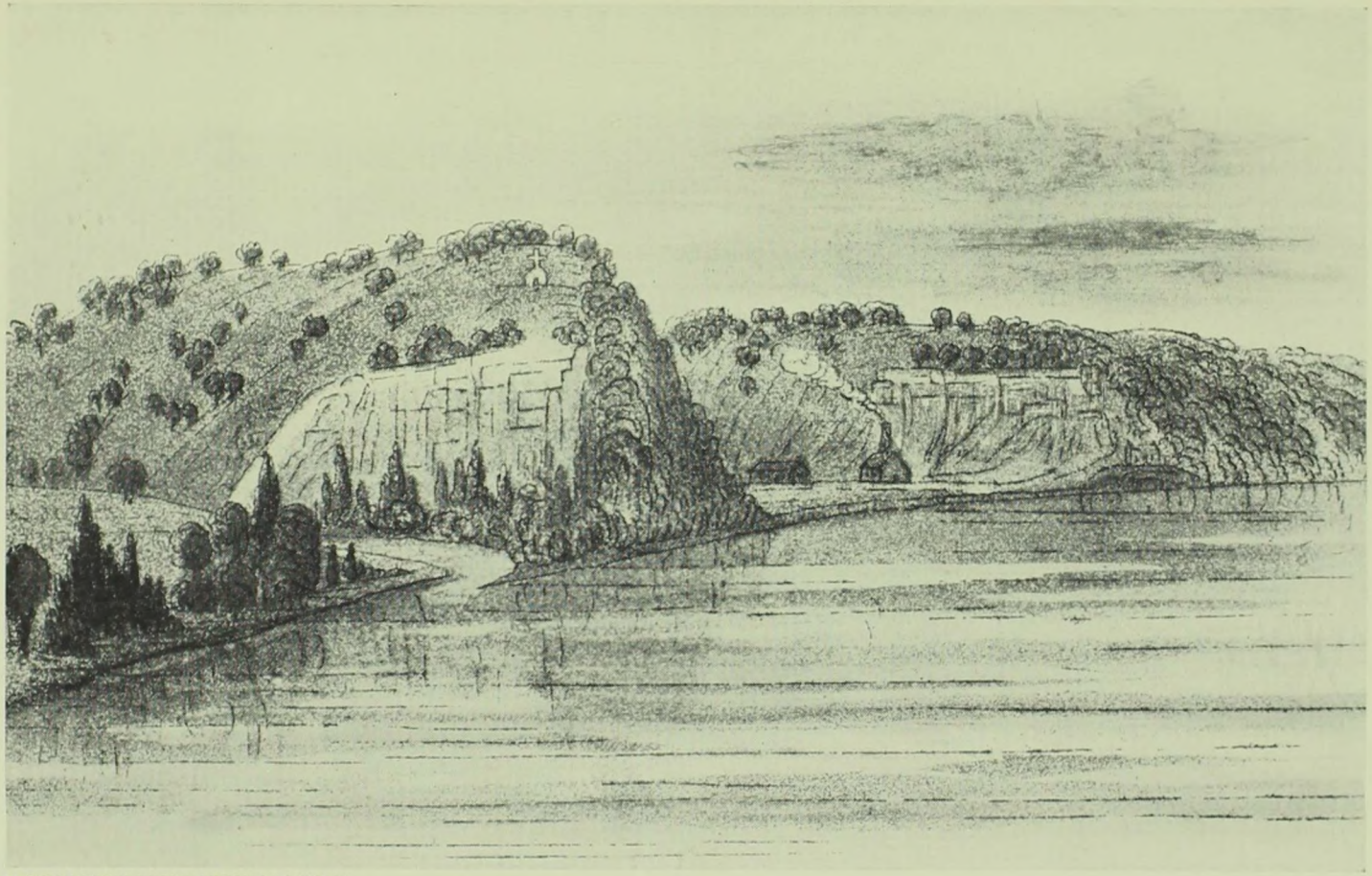
At Camp Des Moines I joined General Street, the Indian Agent, in a Tour to Keokuk's village of Sacs and Foxes. Colonel Kearney gave us a corporal's command of eight men with horses for the journey, and in two days we reached the village about sixty miles up the Des Moines River. The whole country that we passed over was like a garden, wanting only cultivation. Their village was beautifully situated on a large prairie on the bank of the Des Moines River, where they seemed to be well supplied with the necessaries of life and with some of its luxuries.

General Street had some documents from Washington to read, which Keokuk and his chiefs listened to with great patience; after which he placed before us good brandy and good wine and invited us to drink and to lodge with him. He then called up five of his runners, communicated to them in a low but emphatic tone the substance of the talk from the agent and of the letters read to him, and they started at full gallop — one of them proclaiming it through his village, and the others sent express to the other villages comprising the whole nation.

The Sacs and Foxes, who were once two separate tribes but with a language very similar have, at some period not very remote, united into one and are now an inseparable people, going by the amalgam

name of "Sacs and Foxes". These people shave and ornament their heads like the Osages and Pawnees. They have recently relinquished immense tracts of lands and retired west of the Mississippi River. While their numbers at present are not more than five or six thousand, they are yet a warlike and powerful tribe.

Keokuk (the running fox), is the present chief of the tribe, a dignified and proud man, with a good share of talent, and vanity enough to force into action all the wit and judgment he possesses in order to command the attention and respect of the world. At the close of the Black Hawk War in 1833, which had been waged with disastrous effects along the frontier, Keokuk was acknowledged chief of the Sacs and Foxes by General Scott in consequence of the friendly position he had taken during the war, holding two-thirds of the warriors neutral, which was no doubt the cause of the sudden and successful termination of the war and the means of saving much bloodshed. Black Hawk and his two sons, as well as his principal advisers and warriors, were taken to Saint Louis in chains. Keokuk has a fine portly figure, a good countenance, and great dignity and grace in his manners. There is no Indian chief on the frontier better known at this time, or more highly appreciated for his eloquence as a public speaker. He has repeatedly visited Washington and other Atlantic towns, and has spoken before thousands when contending for his people's rights as



FROM CATLIN'S NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

THE GRAVE OF JULIEN DUBUQUE

FROM CATLIN'S NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

CHIEF KEOKUK

stipulated in treaties with the United States Government.

When the official business had been concluded, Keokuk came in bringing all his costly wardrobe that I might select for his portrait such as suited me best; but at once he named of his own accord the costume that was purely Indian. In that he paraded for several days, and in it I painted him at full length precisely as he appeared, with his shield on his arm and his staff, the insignia of office, in his left hand.

After I had painted the portrait of this vain man at full length, he had the temerity to say to me that he made a fine appearance on horseback arrayed in all his gear and trappings, and that he wished me to paint him in that plight. So I prepared my canvass in the door of the hospital which I occupied in the dragoon cantonment, and he flourished about for a considerable part of the day in front of me, until the picture was completed. The dragoons and officers watched his display while I painted. The horse that he rode was a thoroughbred, one of the best on the frontier. He paid three hundred dollars for the animal, which he was quite able to do.

About two years later, while I was lecturing on the customs of the Indians in the Stuyvesant Institute in New York, Keokuk, his wife and son, and twenty more of the chiefs and warriors of his tribe visited New York on their way to Washington City and were present one evening at my lecture. I

placed a succession of portraits on my easel before the audience and they were successively recognized by the Indians as they were shown. At last I set this portrait of Keokuk before them, when they all sprang up and hailed it with a piercing yell. After the noise had subsided, Keokuk arose and addressed the audience in these words: "My friends, I hope you will pardon my men for making so much noise, as they were very much excited by seeing me on my favorite war-horse which they all recognized in a moment."

I had the satisfaction then of saying to the audience that this was very gratifying to me, inasmuch as many persons had questioned the correctness of the picture of the horse. Some had said that it was an imposition, that "no Indian on the frontier rode so good a horse." This was explained to Keokuk by the interpreter, whereupon he arose again, quite indignant at the thought that any one should doubt its correctness, and assured the audience that his men, a number of whom never had heard that the picture was painted, knew the horse the moment it was presented; and further, he wished to know why Keokuk could not ride as good a horse as any white man? He received a round of applause and the interpreter, Mr. Le Clair, arose and stated that he recognized the horse the moment it was shown, that it was a faithful portrait of the horse he had sold to Keokuk, and that it was the finest horse on the frontier belonging either to red or white man.

In a few minutes afterward I was exhibiting several of my paintings of buffalo hunts and describing the modes of slaying them with bows and arrows, when I made the assertion, which I had often been in the habit of making, that there were many instances where the arrow was thrown entirely through the buffalo's body and that I had several times witnessed this astonishing feat. I saw by the motions of my audience that many doubted the correctness of my assertion, so I appealed to Keokuk who rose up when the thing was explained to him and said that it had repeatedly happened amongst his tribe, and he believed that one of his young men by his side had done it. The young man instantly stepped up on the bench and took a bow from under his robe, with which he told the audience he had driven his arrow quite through a buffalo's body. There being forty of the Sioux from the Upper Missouri also present, the same question was put to them, when the chief arose and, addressing himself to the audience, said that it was very often done by the hunters in his tribe.

After finishing the portraits of Keokuk, I painted his favorite wife, the favored one of seven whom he had living, apparently quite comfortably and peaceably, in his wigwam. Although she is the oldest of the lot, she was the only one that could be painted, perhaps because she is the mother of Keokuk's favorite son. Her dress, which was of civilized stuffs, was fashioned and ornamented by herself,

and was truly a most splendid affair, the upper part of it being almost literally covered with silver broaches.

Eight or ten of the principal men of the tribe were also painted. Among them was Nahseuskuk (whirling thunder), the eldest son of Black Hawk and one of the finest looking Indians I ever saw. Another Pashepaho (little stabbing chief), a very old man. He has long been the civil chief of this tribe, but, as is generally the case in very old age, he has resigned the office to those who are younger and better qualified to do the duties of it.

The dances and other amusements amongst this tribe are exceedingly spirited and pleasing, and I have made sketches of a number of them. The slave dance is a picturesque scene, and the custom on which it is founded is very curious. The tribe has a society which they call the "slaves," composed of a number of the young men of the best families in the tribe, who volunteer to be slaves for the term of two years and subject to perform any menial service that the chief may order no matter how humiliating or how degrading it may be. Thereafter they are exempt for the rest of their lives, on war parties or other excursions or wherever they may be, from all labor or degrading occupations such as cooking and making fires. These young men elect one from their number to be their master, and all agree to obey his command which is given to him by one of the chiefs of the tribe. On a certain day or season of the year,

they have to themselves a great feast, and preparatory to it the slave dance.

Smoking horses is another of the peculiar and very curious customs of this tribe. When General Street and I arrived at Keokuk's village, we were just in time to see this amusing scene on the prairie a little back of his village. The Foxes, who were making up a war party to go against the Sioux and had not suitable horses enough by twenty, had sent word to the Sacs the day before (according to an ancient custom) that they were coming on that day at a certain hour to "smoke" that number of horses. At the appointed time the twenty young men who were beggars for horses were on the spot and seated themselves on the ground in a circle, where they went to smoking. The villagers flocked around them in a dense crowd, and soon after appeared on the prairie at half a mile distance an equal number of young men of the Sac tribe who had each agreed to give a horse and who were then galloping about them at full speed. Gradually they went around in a circuit, coming in nearer to the center, until they were at last close around the ring of young fellows seated on the ground. Whilst dashing about thus, each one, with a heavy whip in his hand, as he came within reach of the group on the ground, selected the one to whom he decided to present his horse, and as he passed gave him the most tremendous cut with his lash over his naked shoulders. As he darted around again he plied the whip as before, and again

and again, with a violent "crack!", until the blood could be seen trickling down over the naked shoulders of the Fox brave, whereupon the Sac instantly dismounted and placed the bridle and whip in his hands, saying, "Here, you are a beggar. I present you a horse, but you will carry my mark on your back." In this manner they were all in a little time "whipped up", and each had a good horse to ride home and into battle. Their necessity was such that they could afford to take the stripes and the scars as the price of the horse, and the giver could afford to make the present for the satisfaction of putting his mark upon the other and of boasting of his liberality, which he has always a right to do when going into the dance or on other important occasions.

The begging dance is a frequent amusement, and one that has been practiced with some considerable success at this time, whilst there have been so many distinguished and liberal visitors here. It is got up by a number of desperate and long winded fellows, who will dance and yell their visitors into liberality; or, if necessary, laugh them into it by their strange antics, singing a song of importunity and extending their hands for presents, which they allege are to gladden the hearts of the poor and ensure a blessing to the giver.

The discovery dance was exceedingly droll and picturesque, and acted out with a great deal of pantomimic effect — without music, or any other noise than the patting of their feet, which all came simul-

taneously on the ground in perfect time, whilst they were dancing forward two or four at a time, in a sulking posture, overlooking the country, and professing to announce the approach of animals or enemies which they have discovered, by giving the signals back to the leader of the dance.

At length, when I had finished my painting we took leave of the hospitable village. Keokuk and all of his men shook hands with me. The chief wished me well and gave me, as tokens of regard, the most valued article of his dress and a beautiful string of wampum, which he took from his wife's neck.

GEORGE CATLIN

Adventures in a Bark Canoe

After I had paddled my bark canoe through the Des Moines Rapids with my wife and others in it, and had put them on board a steamer for Saint Louis, I dragged my canoe up the east shore of the rapids, with a line, for a distance of four miles, when I stopped and spent half of the day in collecting some very interesting minerals. These I placed in the bottom of my canoe, ready to get on the first steamer passing up to take me again to Camp Des Moines at the head of the rapids.

At length, as I sat on the wild and wooded shore, waiting, I discovered a steamer several miles below me, advancing through the rapids. While it struggled up against the current, I set too and cleaned my fowling-piece and a noble pair of pistols which I had carried in a belt at my side through my buffalo and other sports of the West. Having put them in fine order and deposited them in the bottom of the canoe before me and taken my paddle in hand, with which my long practice had given me unlimited confidence, I put off from the shore to the middle of the river, which was there a mile and a half in width, to meet the steamer which was slowly stemming the opposing torrent. I made my signal as I neared the boat and desired my old friend, Captain Rogers, not to stop his engine, feeling full confidence that I

could, with an Indian touch of the paddle, toss my little bark around and gently grapple to the side of the steamer which was loaded down with her gunnels near to the water's edge. Oh, that my skill had been equal to my imagination, or that I could have had at that moment the balance and the skill of an Indian *woman*, for the sake of my little craft and what was in it!

I brought my canoe about with a master hand, but the waves of the rapids and the foaming of the waters from the sides of the steamer were too much for my peaceable adhesion. At the moment of wheeling to part company with her, a line, with sort of "laso throw", came from an awkard hand on the deck and, falling over my shoulder and around the end of my canoe with a simultaneous "haul" to it, sent me down head foremost to the bottom of the river. I went tumbling along with the rapid current over the huge rocks on the bottom, whilst my gun and pistols, which were emptied from my capsized boat, were taking their permanent position amongst the rocks, and my trunk, containing my notes of travel for several years and many other valuable things, was floating off upon the surface.

If I had drowned, my death would have been witnessed by at least an hundred ladies and gentlemen who were looking on. But I *did not*. I soon took a peep above the water, and for the first time in my life was "collared", and that by my friend, Captain Rogers, who undoubtedly saved me from making

further explorations on the river bottom by pulling me into the boat, to the amusement of all on deck, many of whom were my old acquaintances. Not knowing the preliminaries, they were as much astounded at my sudden appearance, as if I had been disgorged from a whale's belly. A small boat was sent off for my trunk, which was picked up about half a mile below and brought on board full of water. Clothes, sketch-books, and everything else were entirely wet through. My canoe was brought on board, which was several degrees dearer to me now than it had been for its long and faithful service; but my gun and pistols are there yet, and at the service of the lucky one who may find them.

I remained on board for several miles, till we were passing a wild and romantic rocky shore, on which the sun was shining warm. Launching my little boat into the water, with my trunk in it, I put off to the shore, where I soon had every paper and a hundred other things spread in the sun. My camp that night was at the mouth of a quiet little brook, where I caught some fine bass and fared well. A couple of hours paddling the next morning brought me back to Camp Des Moines.

A few days after this, I put my little canoe on the deck of a steamer ascending the river, and landed at Rock Island, ninety miles above, on some business with General Street, the Indian Agent. When I had finished that mission I "put off" in my little bark, descending the river alone to Camp Des Moines,

with a fine double-barrelled fowling-piece, which I had purchased at the garrison, lying in the canoe before me as the means of procuring wild fowl and other food on my passage.

I left Rock Island about eleven o'clock in the morning, and at half-past three on a pleasant afternoon in the cool month of October, 1835, ran my canoe to the shore of Mascotin Island, where I stepped out upon its beautiful pebbly beach with my paddle in my hand, having drawn the bow of my canoe, as usual, on to the beach, so as to hold it in its place. This beautiful island, so called from a band of the Illinois Indians of that name who once dwelt upon it, is twenty-five or thirty miles in length, without habitation on or in sight of it. The whole island is a lovely prairie covered with a high and luxuriant growth of grass. To the top of the high bank fronting the river I went with my paddle in my hand, quite innocently, just to range my eye over its surface and to see what might be seen.

In a minute or two I turned toward the river, and, to my almost annihilating surprise and vexation, I saw my little canoe twenty or thirty rods from the shore and some distance below me, with its head aiming across the river and steadily gliding along in that direction, where the wind was roguishly wafting it! What little swearing I had learned in the whole of my dealings with the *civilized* world seemed then to concentrate in two or three involuntary exclamations which exploded as I was running down

the beach and throwing off my garments one after the other. Dashing through the deep and boiling current in pursuit of the canoe, I swam some thirty rods in a desperate rage, resolving that this *must be* my remedy as there was no other mode; but at last I found, to my great mortification and alarm, that the canoe, having got so far from the shore, was more in the wind and travelling at a speed quite equal to my own, so that the only safe alternative was to turn and make for the shore with all possible despatch. This I did, and had but just strength to bring me where my feet could reach the bottom. I waded out with the appalling conviction that if I had swum one rod farther into the stream my strength would never have brought me to the shore, for it was in the fall of the year, and the water so cold as completely to have benumbed me and paralyzed my limbs. Hastening to pick up my clothes, which were dropped at intervals as I had run on the beach, and having adjusted them on my shivering limbs, I stepped to the top of the bank to take a deliberate view of my little canoe which was steadily making its way to the other shore — with my gun, with my provisions and fire apparatus, and my sleeping apparel, all snugly packed in it.

The river at that place is near a mile wide; and I watched the mischievous thing till it ran quite into a bunch of willows on the opposite shore, and out of sight. I walked the shore awhile, alone and solitary as a Zealand penguin. At last I sat down and

in one minute passed the following resolves from premises that were before me and too imperative to be evaded or unappreciated. "I am here on a desolate island, with nothing to eat, and destitute of the means of procuring anything: and if I pass the night, or half a dozen of them here, I shall have neither fire or clothes to make me comfortable: and nothing short of *having my canoe* will answer me at all."

For this object, the only alternative struck me, and I soon commenced upon it. An occasional log or limb of drift wood was seen along the beach and under the bank. These I commenced bringing together from all quarters, and some I had to lug half a mile or more, to form a raft to float me up and carry me across the river. As there was a great scarcity of materials, and I had no hatchet to cut anything, I had to use my scanty materials of all lengths and of all sizes and all shapes. At length I ventured upon the motley mass, with paddle in hand, and carefully shoved it off from the shore, finding it just sufficient to float me up.

I took a seat in its center on a bunch of barks which I had placed for a seat, and which, when I started, kept me a few inches above the water and consequently dry, whilst my feet were resting on the raft which in most parts was sunk a little below the surface. The only alternative was to go, for there was no more timber to be found; so I balanced myself in the middle and by reaching forward with my

paddle to a little space between the timbers of my raft, I had a small place to dip it where I could make but a feeble stroke, propelling me at a very slow rate *across* as I was floating rapidly *down* the current. I sat still and worked patiently, however, content with the little gain, and at last reached the opposite shore about three miles below the place of my embarkation, having passed close by several huge snags which I was lucky enough to escape.

My craft was unseaworthy when I started, and when I had got to the middle of the river, owing to the rotten wood with which a great part of it was made and which had now become saturated with water, it had sunk entirely under the surface, letting me down nearly to the waist in the water. In this critical way I moved slowly along, keeping the sticks together under me. At last, when I reached the shore, some of the long and awkward limbs projecting from my raft having reached it before me and being suddenly resisted by the bank gave the instant signal for its dissolution and my sudden debarkation. I gave one grand leap in the *direction* of the bank, yet some yards short of it, and into the water from head to foot. But I soon crawled out and wended my way a mile or two up the shore, where I found my canoe snugly and safely moored in the willows. I stepped into it and paddled back to the island at the same spot where my misfortunes commenced, to enjoy the exultations which were to flow from contrasting my present with my former situation.

The Island of Mascotin soon lost its horrors, and I strolled two days and encamped two nights upon its silent shores — with prairie hens and wild fowl in abundance for my meals. From this lovely ground, which shews the peaceful graves of hundreds of red men who have valued it before me, I paddled off in my light bark, and said, as I looked back, "Sleep there in peace, ye brave fellows, until the sacrilegious hands of white man, and the unsympathizing ploughshare shall turn thy bones from their quiet and beautiful resting-place!"

Two or three days of strolling brought me again to Camp Des Moines, and from thence, with my favorite little bark canoe placed upon the deck of the steamer, I embarked for Saint Louis. When I had landed from the steamer, *Warrior,* I left all other considerations to hasten and report to my dear wife, leaving my little canoe on deck and in the especial charge of the captain till I should return for it in the afternoon and remove it to safe storage with my other Indian articles to form an interesting part of my Museum. On my return to the steamer it was "*missing*", and by some *medicine* operation forever severed from my sight, though not from my recollections, where it will long remain, and also in a likeness which I made of it just after the trick it played me on the shore of the Mascotin Island.

George Catlin

In 1836 I made a second visit to the Fall of Saint Anthony with my English companion, Mr. Wood, steaming from Buffalo to Green Bay, ascending the Fox and descending the Ouisconsin rivers six hundred miles in a bark canoe to Prairie du Chien, and thence by canoe four hundred and fifty miles to the Fall of Saint Anthony. From there we ascended the Saint Peter's River to the "Pipe Stone Quarry" on the Côteau des Prairies, much against the wishes of the Indians who suspected that we were agents of the Government sent to determine the value of the sacred place. As the son of a chief stated the case, "We have seen always that the white people, when they see anything in our country that they want, send officers to value it, and then if they can't buy it, they will get it some other way."

I can put the people of the East at rest as to the hostile aspect of this part of the country, as I have just passed through the midst of these tribes and can assert that they are generally well-disposed toward the whites. There have been two companies of United States dragoons marched to Green Bay and three companies of infantry ordered from Prairie du Chien to Fort Winnebago, in anticipation of difficulties. But in all probability these maneuvers are without any real cause or necessity, for the

FROM CATLIN'S NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

KEOKUK ON HORSEBACK

FROM CATLIN'S NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

PASHEPAHO

Winnebago chief answered the officer who asked him if they wanted to fight, "that they *could* not, had they been so disposed; for," said he, "we have no guns, no ammunition, nor anything to eat, and, what is worst of all, one-half of our men are dying with the smallpox. If you will give us guns and ammunition, and pork, and flour, and feed and take care of our squaws and children, we will fight you. Nevertheless, we will *try* to fight if you want us to, as it is."

There is the most humble poverty and absolute necessity for peace among these people at present that can possibly be imagined. The smallpox, whose ravages have now pretty nearly subsided, has taken off a great many of the Winnebagoes and Sioux. The famous Wabesha, of the Sioux, and more than half of his band have fallen victims to it within a few weeks, and the remainder of them, blackened with its frightful distortions, look as if they had just emerged from the sulphurous regions below. At Prairie du Chien, a considerable number of the half-breeds, and French also, suffered death by this baneful disease. At that place I learned one fact, which may be of service to science, which was this: that in all cases of vaccination, which had been given several years ago, it was an efficient protection; but in those cases where the vaccine had been recent (and there were many of them) it had not the effect to protect, and in almost every instance of such, death ensued.

After having glutted our curiosity at the fountain

of the red pipe, we broke camp in September and rode back across the extended plain to Traverse des Sioux on the Saint Peter's. There our horses were left, and we committed our bodies and little travelling conveniences to the narrow compass of a modest canoe that must evidently have been dug out of the *wrong side of the log*. It required us and everything in it to be exactly in the bottom and then to look straight forward and speak from the *middle* of our *mouths* or it was t'other side up in an instant. In this way embarked, with our paddles used as balance-poles and propellers (after drilling awhile in shoal water till we could "get the hang of it"), we started off upon the bosom of the Saint Peter's for the Fall of Saint Anthony.

Sans accident we arrived at ten o'clock at night of the second day — and sans steamer (which we were in hopes to meet) we were obliged to trust to our little tremulous craft to carry us through the windings of the mighty Mississippi and Lake Pepin to Prairie du Chien, a distance of four hundred miles.

Oh! but we enjoyed those moments, those nights of our voyage, which ended days of peril and fatigue; when our larder was full, when our coffee was good, our mats spread, and our mosquito bars over us, which admitted the cool and freshness of night, but screened the dew, and bade defiance to the buzzing thousands of sharp-billed, winged torturers that were kicking and thumping for admission. I

speak now of fair weather, not of the nights of lightning and of rain! We'll pass them over. We had all kinds though, and as we loitered ten days on our way, we examined and experimented on many things for the benefit of mankind. We drew into our larder (in addition to bass and wild fowl) clams, snails, frogs, and rattlesnakes, the latter of which, when properly dressed and broiled, we found to be the most delicious food of the land. We at length arrived safe at Prairie du Chien, which was also *sans* steamer. We were moored again, thirty miles below, at the beautiful banks and bluffs of Cassville; which, too, was *sans steamer*. We dipped our paddles again and — here we are at Rock Island, six hundred miles below the Fall of Saint Anthony, where steamers pass daily.

We found the river, the shores, and the plains contiguous alive and vivid with plumes, with spears, and with war clubs of yelling red men. The whole nation of Sacs and Foxes have come to meet Governor Henry Dodge in treaty. We were just in time to behold the conclusion of the ceremonies. The treaty was signed yesterday. To-day of course is one of revel and amusements — shows of war, parades, and dances — the forms of a savage community transferring the rights and immunities of their natural soil to the insatiable grasp of pale-faced voracity.

The Sacs and Foxes, like all other Indians, are fond of living along the banks of rivers and streams;

and like all others, are expert swimmers and skilful canoemen. Their canoes, like those of the Sioux and many other tribes, are dug out from a log, and generally made extremely light. They can dart them through the coves and along the shores of the rivers with astonishing quickness. I was often amused at their freaks in their canoes whilst travelling; and I was induced to make a sketch of one which I frequently witnessed, that of sailing with the aid of their blankets. When the wind is fair, the men stand in the bow of the canoe and hold two corners with the other two under the foot or tied to the leg, while the women sit in the other end of the canoe and steer it with their paddles.

The Treaty itself, in all its forms, was a scene of interest. Keokuk was the principal speaker on the occasion, being recognized as the head chief of the tribe. He is a very subtle and dignified man, and well fitted to wield the destinies of his nation. The poor dethroned monarch, old Black Hawk, was present and looked an object of pity. With an old frock coat and brown hat on and a cane in his hand, he stood the whole time outside of the group in dumb and dismal silence, with his sons by the side of him, and also his quondam aide-de-camp, Nahpope, and the Prophet. They were not allowed to speak, nor even to sign the Treaty. Nahpope rose, however, and commenced a very earnest speech on the subject of *temperance*, but Governor Dodge ordered him to sit down as being out of order, which probably saved

him from a much more peremptory command from Keokuk who was rising at that moment with looks on his face that the Devil himself might have shrunk from.

These Indians have sold so much of their land lately that they have the luxuries of life to a considerable degree, and may be considered rich. Consequently they look elated and happy, carrying themselves much above the humbled manner of most of the semi-civilized tribes, whose heads are hanging and drooping in poverty and despair. They are already drawing a cash annuity of twenty-seven thousand dollars, for thirty years to come; and by the present treaty just concluded that amount will be increased to thirty-seven thousand dollars per annum in payment for a tract of land of two hundred and fifty-six thousand acres lying on the Ioway River, West of the Mississippi — a reserve which was made in the tract of land conveyed to the Government by treaty after the Black Hawk War.

It was proposed by Keokuk in his speech (and it is a fact worthy of being known, for such has been the proposition in every Indian Treaty that I ever attended) that the first preparatory stipulation on the part of the Government should be to pay the requisite sum of money to satisfy all their creditors who were then present and whose accounts were handed in, acknowledged, and admitted — in this instance amounting to about sixty thousand dollars. Of the remaining one hundred and thirty thousand

dollars, thirty thousand is to be paid next June and thereafter ten thousand dollars annually for ten years.

The price paid for Keokuk's reserve is liberal, comparatively speaking, for the usual price heretofore paid for Indian lands has been one and a half or three-quarter cents per acre, instead of seventy-five cents per acre as on this occasion. The Government in turn sells the land for ten shillings. Even one dollar per acre would not have been too much to have paid for this tract, for every acre of it can be sold in one year for ten shillings per acre to actual settlers, so desirable and so fertile is the region purchased. These very people sold to the Government a great part of the rich states of Illinois and Missouri at the low rates above mentioned; and this small tract being the last that they can ever part with, without throwing themselves back upon their natural enemies, it was no more than right that the Government should deal with them liberally.

As an evidence of the immediate value of that tract of land to the Government, and as a striking instance of the overwhelming torrent of emigration to the "Far West", I will relate the following occurrence which took place at the close of the Treaty. Governor Dodge addressed a few very judicious and admonitory sentences to the chiefs and braves which he concluded by requesting them to move their families and all their property from this tract within one month, to make room for the whites.

Considerable excitement was created among the chiefs and braves, by this suggestion, and a hearty laugh ensued, the cause of which was soon after explained by one of them. "My father," he said, "we have to laugh. We require no time to move; we have all left the lands already, and sold our wigwams to Chemokemons (white men) — some for one hundred and some for two hundred dollars, befor we came to this treaty. There are already four hundred Chemokemons on the land, and several hundred more on their way, moving in; and three days before we came away one Chemokemon sold his wigwam to another Chemokemon for two thousand dollars, to build a great town."

In this wise is this fair land filling up, one hundred miles or more west of the Mississippi — not with barbarians, but with people from the East, enlightened and intelligent, with industry and perseverance that will soon rear from the soil all the luxuries and add to the surface all the taste and comforts of Eastern refinement. I speak of the West — not the "Far West", for that is a phantom, travelling on its tireless wing — but the *West,* the simple West; the vast and vacant wilds which lie between the trodden haunts of present savage and civil life; the great and almost boundless garden-spot of earth, where the tomahawk sleeps with the bones of the savage as yet untouched by the trespassing ploughshare; the pictured land of silence which, in its melancholy, alternately echoes back-

ward and forward the plaintive yells of the vanished red men and the busy chaunts of the approaching pioneers. This splendid area, denominated the "Valley of the Mississippi", is embraced between the immutable barriers on either side, the Alleghany and Rocky Mountains, with the Gulf of Mexico on the south and the great string of lakes on the north. For the distance of four thousand miles the turbid waters of the mighty Mississippi roll through it. The broad plateaus covered almost entirely with the most fertile soil in the world and rich in lead, iron, and coal, are capable of supporting a population of one hundred millions. Twelve thousand miles of rivers navigable by steamers lie within its embrace, besides the coast on the south and the great expanse of lakes on the north. A population of five millions is already sprinkled over its nether half, and a greater part of the remainder of it is inviting the world to its possession — for one dollar and twenty-five cents (five shillings) per acre!

From Maine to Florida on the Atlantic coast, the forefathers of those hardy sons who are now stocking this fair land have, from necessity in a hard and stubborn soil, inured their hands to labor and their habits and taste of life to sobriety and economy which will ensure them success in the new world. This rich country which is now alluring the enterprising young men from the East, being commensurate with the whole Atlantic States, holds out the extraordinary inducement that every emigrant can

FROM CATLIN'S NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

THE DISCOVERY DANCE

FROM CATLIN'S NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS

SACS AND FOXES SAILING THEIR DUGOUT CANOES

enjoy a richer soil in his own native latitude. The sugar planter; the rice, cotton, and tobacco growers; the corn, rye, and wheat producers from Louisiana to Montreal have only to turn their faces to the West, and there are waiting for them the same atmosphere to breathe and green fields already cleared ready for the plough, too tempting to be overlooked or neglected.

As far west as the banks of the Mississippi, the great wave of emigration has rolled on, and already in its rear the valley is sprinkled with towns and cities with their thousand spires pointing to the skies. For several hundred miles west of the great river also have the daring pioneers ventured their lives and fortunes with their families, testing the means and luxuries of life which Nature has spread before them in the country where the buried tomahawk is scarce rusted and the war cry has scarcely died on the winds.

These settlers trace their own latitudes and carry with them their local peculiarities and prejudices. The mighty Mississippi, however, the great and everlasting highway on which these people are forever to intermingle their interests and manners, will effectually soften down those prejudices and eventually result in an amalgamation of feelings and customs from which this huge mass of population will take one new and general appellation. It is here that the true character of the *American* is to be formed — here where the peculiarities and in-

congruities which detract from his true character are surrendered for the free yet lofty principle that strikes between meanness and prodigality — between literal *democracy* and *aristocracy* — between low cunning and self-engendered ingenuousness. Such will be found to be the true character of the Americans when jostled awhile together until their local angles are worn off; and such may be found already pretty well formed in the genuine Kentuckian, the first brave and daring pioneer of the great West.

Such is the great valley of the Mississippi and Missouri, over almost every part of which I have extended my travels. And such is the character of the men and women who are coming to take possession of the vast expanse of Nature's loveliest fabrication. The future wealth and improvement of this amazing region is sublime to contemplate. Man's increase and the march of human civilization are as irresistible as the laws of nature. The sun is sure to look upon the grandeur of these enamelled hills and plains ornamented with fields of variegated green and countless painted villages, and we, perhaps, "may hear the tinkling from our graves." Adieu.

George Catlin

Comment by the Editor

HISTORY ON CANVAS

George Catlin had a splendid idea and acted upon it. Having pulled three years against the current of his inclination in the practice of law, he closed his office one day in 1823 and opened a studio. As a self-trained young artist of promise, his mind was "continually reaching for some branch or enterprise of the art on which to devote a whole lifetime of enthusiasm". In 1829, chancing to see a delegation of Indians "arrayed and equipped in all of their classic beauty," he formed the opinion that among the wild tribes of the West, untouched by the artificiality of civilization, he would find models equal in grace and symmetry to the Grecian youths of ancient Sparta. Then and there he resolved to devote his whole career to the worthy task of "rescuing from oblivion the looks and customs of the vanishing races of native man in America". He would be the pictorial historian of the Indians. From 1829 to the end of his life in 1871 he pursued his ambition with zealous singleness of purpose that never abated through years of danger, toil, and misfortune.

Beginning at the age of thirty-three, with slight pecuniary reward in prospect, Catlin spent eight years among the "wildest and most remarkable

tribes'' in North America, living in their villages, paddling his own canoe on the upper reaches of the Mississippi and Missouri, and marching with Leavenworth's dragoons far to the southwest along the trail to Santa Fé. From trading posts and army cantonments he wrote a series of letters which were published in the New York *Commercial Advertiser* and issued in 1841 as *Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Condition of the North American Indians.* His gallery of more than five hundred paintings and his museum of Indian relics, now in the National Museum at Washington, attracted wide attention and universal praise when exhibited in New York, London, Paris, and Brussels. Upon the suggestion of Alexander von Humboldt, who regarded Catlin's work of great ethnological value, he spent six years from 1852 to 1858 among the Indians in South America and the western part of North America from Alaska to Yucatan, adding many more pictures to his collection.

His various writings, profusely illustrated, were widely read and accepted as the most authentic and vivid portrayal of the character and customs of the aboriginal inhabitants of America. Forty years ago it was estimated that more than one hundred and twenty thousand volumes had been sold. His *North American Indians* has now become a classic. When Indian pictures have been needed for illustrative purposes, Catlin's paintings have been copied; while his experiences and descriptions have furnished the

setting for hundreds of Indian stories. Certainly no other artist or writer has had such a tremendous influence in molding the popular conception of the American Indian.

The explanation of his achievement is his steadfast purpose, his untiring enthusiasm, and his friendship for the vanishing red man. His early admiration and sympathy developed into abiding love for the people who always made him "welcome to the best they had", who "never raised a hand" against him or stole his property, who kept the Commandments "without ever having read them or heard them preached from the pulpit", who never "fought a battle with white men except on their own ground", and who did not "live for the love of money". And because Catlin dealt honestly with the Indians, and his painting fascinated them, they reciprocated his friendship. The only opposition he encountered was due to the magic "medicine" of his brush. A Sioux chief feared that his portrait would live after him to disturb his eternal sleep; another Indian, portrayed in profile, took offense when he thought the artist left out half of his face because it was no good; and an Omaha brave insisted upon being drawn with his eyes straight forward because he was not ashamed to look any one in the eye.

Catlin's abounding sympathy for the children of nature whose every-day life he exalted in his art and perpetuated in his writings colored both his canvas and his notes. He sincerely endeavored to

portray what he saw with absolute accuracy because he was working for posterity. Lest the authenticity of his painting be questioned in the future, he obtained certificates from reputable witnesses as to the truthfulness of his pictures. H. R. Schoolcraft declared that his sketches were trustworthy. Notwithstanding that his portraits were recognizable likenesses, they have been criticized as being neither finished works of art nor distinctive in features. As an English critic remarked, all of Catlin's Indians might have had the same parents. Like C. B. King, he idealized his subjects and lost the characteristics peculiar to Indian physiognomy that distinguish the work of Charles Bodmer.

His writing, much of it hastily scribbled in camp, is off-hand, diffuse, and rambling; yet the narrative has freshness and spontaneity that might have been lost in meticulous revision. A charming raconteur, he wrote as he spoke. With an eye ever alert for the picturesque and romantic, his pen no less than his brush was allowed to depicit whatever caught his fancy. No one has described Indian life in its pristine state more graphically than George Catlin — historian in colorful canvas as well as words.

J. E. B.

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