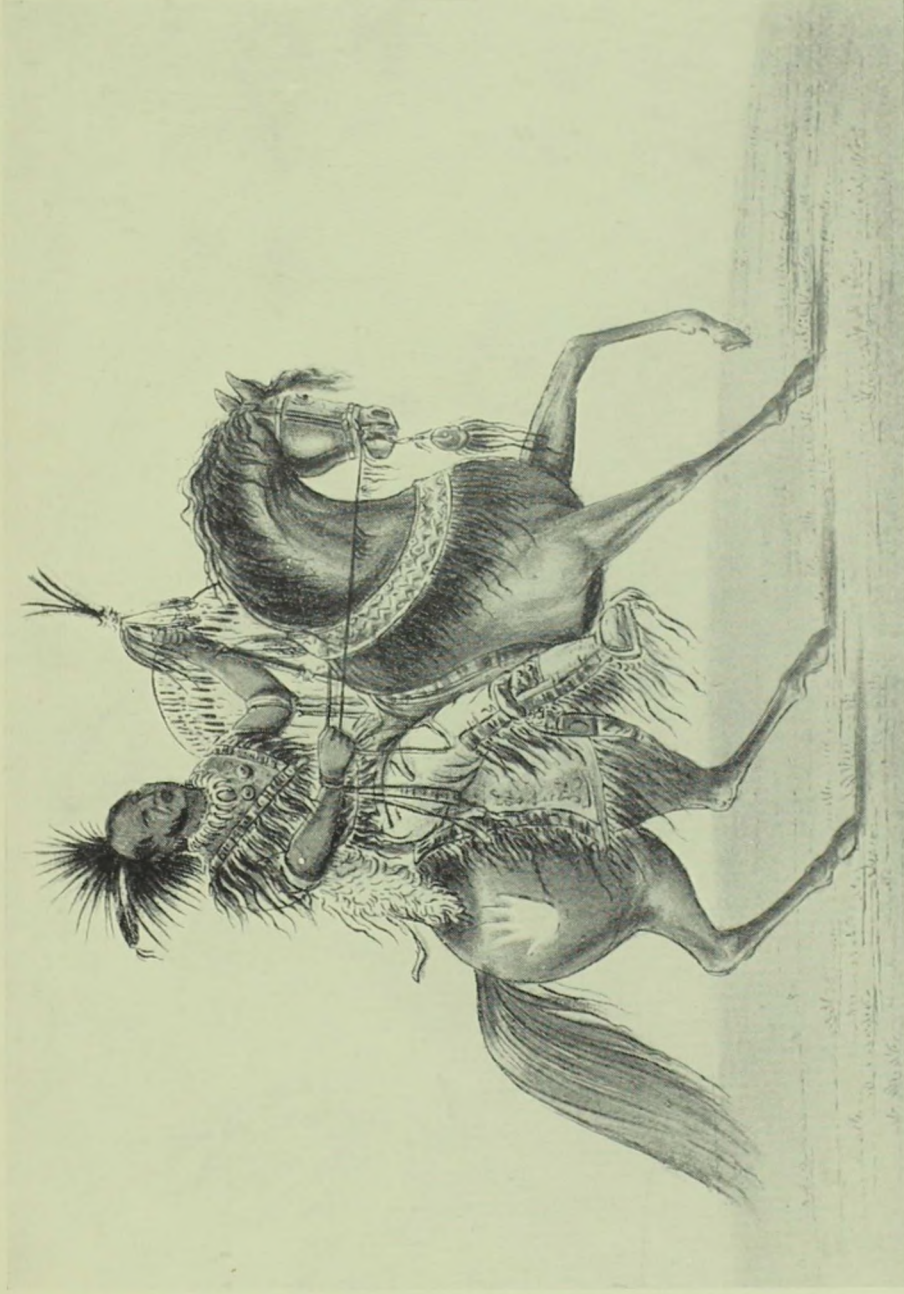


The Course of Empire

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 traveling 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.

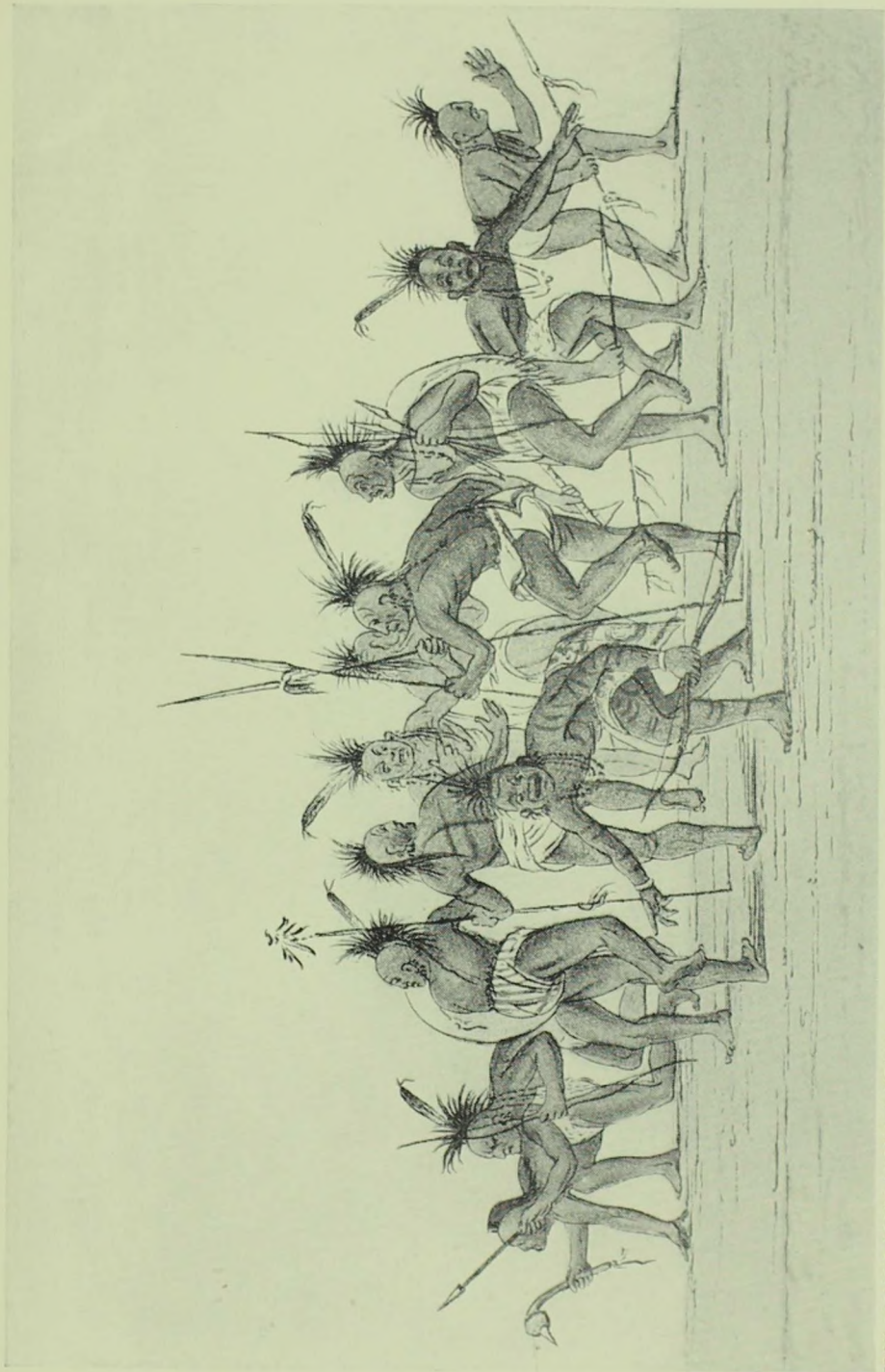
As an evidence of the immediate value of that tract of land to the Government, and as a striking instance of the overwhelming torrent of emigration to the "Far West", I will relate the following occurrence which took place at the close of the Treaty. Governor Dodge addressed a few very judicious and 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, before 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