

HISTORY

OF THE

OTTAWA AND CHIPPEWA INDIANS

OF MICHIGAN;

A GRAMMAR OF THEIR LANGUAGE,

AND PERSONAL AND FAMILY HISTORY OF THE AUTHOR,

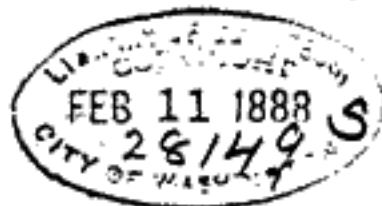
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YPSILANTI, MICH.:

THE YPSILANTIAN JOB PRINTING HOUSE.

1887.



to say, and that he was appointed to preach to other birds, to tell them to be happy, to be thankful for the blessings they enjoy among the summer green branches of the forest, and the plenty of wild fruits to eat. The larger boys used to amuse themselves by playing a ball called Paw-kaw-do-way, foot-racing, wrestling, bow-arrow shooting, and trying to beat one another shooting the greatest number of chipmunks and squirrels in a day, etc.

I never heard any boy or any grown person utter any bad language, even if they were out of patience with anything. Swearing or profanity was never heard among the Ottawa and Chippewa tribes of Indians, and not even found in their language. Scarcely any drunkenness, only once in a great while the old folks used to have a kind of short spree, particularly when there was any special occasion of a great feast going on. But all the young folks did not drink intoxicating liquors as a beverage in those days. And we always rested in perfect safety at night in our dwellings, and the doorways of our lodges had no fastenings to them, but simply a frail mat or a blanket was hung over our doorways which might be easily pushed or thrown one side without any noise if theft or any other mischief was intended. But we were not afraid for any such thing to happen us, because we knew that every child of the forest was observing and living under the precepts which their forefathers taught them, and the children were taught almost daily by their parents from infancy unto manhood and womanhood, or until they were separated from their families.

These precepts or moral commandments by which the Ottawa and Chippewa nations of Indians were governed in their primitive state, were almost the same as the ten commandments which the God Almighty himself delivered to Moses on Mount Sinai on tables of stone. Very few of these divine precepts are not found among the precepts of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, except with regard to the Sabbath day to keep it holy; almost every other commandment can be found, only there are more,

as there were about twenty of these "uncivilized" precepts. They also believed, in their primitive state, that the eye of this Great Being is the sun by day, and by night the moon and stars, and, therefore, that God or the Great Spirit sees all things everywhere, night and day, and it would be impossible to hide our actions, either good or bad, from the eye of this Great Being. Even the very threshold or crevice of your wigwam will be a witness against you, if you should commit any criminal action when no human eye could observe your criminal doings, but surely your criminal actions will be revealed in some future time to your disgrace and shame. These were continual inculcations to the children by their parents, and in every feast and council, by the "Instructors of the Precepts" to the people or to the audience of the council. For these reasons the Ottawas and Chippewas in their primitive state were strictly honest and upright in their dealings with their fellow-beings. Their word of promise was as good as a promissory note, even better, as these notes sometimes are neglected and not performed according to their promises; but the Indian promise was very sure and punctual, although, as they had no timepieces, they measured their time by the sun. If an Indian promised to execute a certain obligation at such time, at so many days, and at such height of the sun, when that time comes he would be there punctually to fulfill this obligation. This was formerly the character of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan. But now, our living is altogether different, as we are continually suffering under great anxiety and perplexity, and continually being robbed and cheated in various ways. Our houses have been forcibly entered for thieving purposes and murder; people have been knocked down and robbed; great safes have been blown open with powder in our little town and their contents carried away, and even children of the Caucasian race are heard cursing and blaspheming the name of their Great Creator, upon whose pleasure we depended for our existence.

According to my recollection of the mode of living in our

village, so soon as darkness came in the evening, the young boys and girls were not allowed to be out of their lodges. Every one of them must be called in to his own lodge for the rest of the night. And this rule of the Indians in their wild state was implicitly observed.

Ottawa and Chippewa Indians were not what we would call entirely infidels and idolaters; for they believed that there is a Supreme Ruler of the Universe, the Creator of all things, the Great Spirit, to which they offer worship and sacrifices in a certain form. It was customary among them, every spring of the year, to gather all the cast off garments that had been worn during the winter and rear them up on a long pole while they were having festivals and jubilees to the Great Spirit. The object of doing this was that the Great Spirit might look down from heaven and have compassion on his red children. Only this, that they foolishly believe that there are certain deities all over the lands who to a certain extent govern or preside over certain places, as a deity who presides over this river, over this lake, or this mountain, or island, or country, and they were careful not to express anything which might displease such deities; but that they were not supreme rulers, only to a certain extent they had power over the land where they presided. These deities were supposed to be governed by the Great Spirit above.

CHAPTER II.

Cases of Murders Among the Ottawas and Chippewas Exceedingly Scarce—Ceding the Grand Traverse Region to the Chippewas on Account of Murder—Immorality Among the Ottawas not Common—Marriage in Former Times.

The murders in cold blood among the Ottawa and Chippewa nations of Indians in their primitive state were exceedingly few, at least there was only one account in our old tradition where a murder had been committed, a young Ottawa having stabbed a young Chippewa while in dispute over their nets when they were fishing for herrings on the Straits of Mackinac. This nearly caused a terrible bloody war between the two powerful tribes of Indians (as they were numerous then) so closely related. The tradition says they had council after council upon this subject, and many speeches were delivered on both sides. The Chippewas proposed war to settle the question of murder, while the Ottawas proposed compromise and restitution for the murder. Finally the Ottawas succeeded in settling the difficulty by ceding part of their country to the Chippewa nation, which is now known and distinguished as the Grand Traverse Region. A strip of land which I believe to have extended from a point near Sleeping Bear, down to the eastern shore of the Grand Traverse Bay, some thirty or forty miles wide, thence between two parallel lines running southeasterly until they strike the head waters of Muskegon River, which empties into Lake Michigan not very far below Grand Haven. They were also allowed access to all the rivers and streams in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan, to trap the beavers, minks, otters and muskrats. The Indians used their furs in former times for garments and blankets. This is the reason that to this day the Odjebwes (Chippewas) are found in that section of the country.

It may be said, this is not true; it is a mistake. We have known several cases of murders among the Ottawas and Chippewas. I admit it to be true, that there have been cases of murders among the Ottawas and Chippewas since the white people knew them. But these cases of murders occurred some time after they came in contact with the white races in their country; but I am speaking now of the primitive condition of Indians, particularly of the Ottawas and Chippewas, and I believe most of those cases of murders were brought on through the bad influence of white men, by introducing into the tribes this great destroyer of mankind, soul and body, intoxicating liquors! Yet, during sixty years of my existence among the Ottawas and Chippewas, I have never witnessed one case of murder of this kind, but I heard there were a few cases in other parts of the country, when in their fury from the influence of intoxicating liquors.

There was one case of sober murder happened about fifty years ago at Arbor Croche, where one young man disposed of his lover by killing, which no Indian ever knew the actual cause of. He was arrested and committed to the Council and tried according to the Indian style; and after a long council, or trial, it was determined the murderer should be banished from the tribe. Therefore, he was banished. Also, about this time, one case of sober murder transpired among the Chippewas of Sault Ste. Marie, committed by one of the young Chippewas whose name was Wau-bau-ne-me-kee (White-thunder), who might have been released if he had been properly tried and impartial judgment exercised over the case, but we believe it was not. This Indian killed a white man, when he was perfectly sober, by stabbing. He was arrested, of course, and tried and sentenced to be hung at the Island of Mackinac. I distinctly remember the time. This poor Indian was very happy when he was about to be hung on the gallows. He told the people that he was very happy to die, for he felt that he was innocent. He did not deny killing the man, but he thought he was justifiable in the sight of the

Great Spirit, as such wicked monsters ought to be killed from off the earth; as this white man came to the Indian's wigwam in the dead of night, and dragged the mother of his children from his very bosom for licentious purpose. He remonstrated, but his remonstrances were not heeded, as this ruffian was encouraged by others who stood around his wigwam, and ready to fall upon this poor Indian and help their fellow-ruffian; and he therefore stabbed the principal party, in defence of his beloved wife, for which cause the white man died. If an Indian should go to the white man's house and commit that crime, he would be killed; and what man is there who would say that is too bad, this Indian to be killed in that manner? But every man will say amen, only he ought to have been tortured before he was killed; and let the man who killed this bad and wicked Indian be rewarded! This is what would be the result if the Indian would have done the same thing as this white man did.

The Ottawas and Chippewas were quite virtuous in their primitive state, as there were no illegitimate children reported in our old traditions. But very lately this evil came to exist among the Ottawas—so lately that the second case among the Ottawas of Arbor Croche is yet living. And from that time this evil came to be quite frequent, for immorality has been introduced among these people by evil white persons who bring their vices into the tribes.

In the former times or before the Indians were christianized, when a young man came to be a fit age to get married, he did not trouble himself about what girl he should have for his wife; but the parents of the young man did this part of the business. When the parents thought best that their son should be separated from their family by marriage, it was their business to decide what woman their son should have as his wife; and after selecting some particular girl among their neighbors, they would make up quite large package of presents and then go to the parents of the girl and demand the daughter for their son's wife,

at the same time delivering the presents to the parents of the girl. If the old folks say yes, then they would fetch the girl right along to their son and tell him, We have brought this girl as your wife so long as you live; now take her, cherish her, and be kind to her so long as you live. The young man and girl did not dare to say aught against it, as it was the law and custom amongst their people, but all they had to do was to take each other as man and wife. This was all the rules and ceremony of getting married in former times among the Ottawas and Chippewas of Michigan: they must not marry their cousins nor second cousins.