

## Note on Hole-in-the-Day

Gen. Cass relates an interesting incident of which the hero was a Sioux Chief whose name, unfortunately, is not preserved. "The Chippewas and Sioux," says Gen. Cass, "are hereditary enemies, and Charlevoix says they were at war when the French first reached the Mississippi. I endeavored, when among them, to learn the cause which first excited them to war, and the time when it commenced. But they can give no rational account. An intelligent Chippewa Chief informed me that the disputed boundary between them was a subject of little importance, and that the question respecting it could be easily adjusted. He appeared to think that they fought because their fathers fought before them. This war has been waged with various success, and, in its prosecution, instances of courage and self-devotion have occurred, within a few years, which would not have disgraced the pages of Grecian or Roman history. Some years since, mutually weary of hostilities, the Chiefs of both nations met and agreed upon a truce. But the Sioux, disregarding the solemn compact which they had formed, and actuated by some sudden impulse, attacked the Chippewas, and murdered a number of them. Ba-be-si-kun-dab-i, the Chippewa Chief, who descended the Mississippi with us [in 1820], was present upon this occasion, and his life was saved by the intrepidity and self-devotion of a Sioux Chief. This man entreated, and remonstrated, and threatened. He urged his countrymen, by every motive, to abstain from any violation of their faith, and when he found his remonstrances useless, he attached himself to this Chippewa Chief, and avowed his determination of saving, or perishing with him. Awed by his intrepidity, the Sioux finally agreed that he should ransom the Chippewas, and he accordingly applied to this object all the property he owned. He then accompanied the Chippewa on his journey, until he considered him safe from any parties of the Sioux who might be disposed to follow him."

This noted Chippewa Chief, whom Schoolcraft calls Ke-che-Ba-be-se-gun-dab-a, or *Big Curly Head*, was at the head of the lower and more hardy bands of the Chippewas, and three times had led his warriors successfully against the Sioux, and each time returned with bloody knives and reeking scalps. He and Flat Mouth led the Chippewas in the noted fight at Long Prairie. *Big Curly Head* has been aptly spoken of, as the vanguard or bulwark of his tribe.

In an interesting paper on the traditional history of the Chippewas, by Wm. W. Warren, an educated descendant of that nation, given in the 2d vol. of Schoolcraft's *History of the Indian Tribes*, some notice is given of Bug-on-a-ke-shig, the elder Hole-in-the-day and his elder brother Song-uk-um-eg, or *Strong Ground*. Bug-on-a-ke-shig, says Warren, literally means hole-in-the-sky; and the war-song of this chief was addressed to this guardian spirit, *seen through a hole in the sky*. These two brothers, Strong Ground and Hole-in-the-day, were in their youth, pipe bearers of Curly Head, and waited on him till the day of his death, which was on the road returning from the treaty at Prairie Du Chien, in 1825, which both *Big Curly Head* and *Hole-in-the-day* signed; and just before the old Chief expired, he counselled these two young men on their future course of life and left in their charge his Mississippi bands, and this circumstance laid the foundation of the Chieftainship of these two afterwards noted brothers.

In the words of one of the principal Chippewas: "Big Curly Head was a father to our fathers, who looked on him as a parent: His lightest wish was quickly obeyed: His lodge was ever hung with meat: The traders vied with each other who should treat him best: His hand was open, and when he had plenty, our fathers wanted not." He was noted not only for his charity and goodness of heart, but also for the strength of it for bravery and heroic adventure.

Such was the character of *Big-Curly-Head*, who early led forth young *Strong Ground* and *Hole-in-the-Day* on the war-path, and instructed them in all the precepts and wisdom of his people. These young chiefs distinguished themselves in the warfare of their tribe with the Sioux, and by their deeds of valor