

The Pictured Cave of La Crosse Valley¹

By Rev. Edward Brown

The subject of Indian pictography is an interesting one, and has been more or less treated by Schoolcraft and other American archæologists. These pictorial or symbolical representations constitute one of the earliest observed traits in the customs and arts of the American aborigines. The best specimens have been found among the Toltecs and Aztecs of Mexico. Picture writing, Schoolcraft informs us, is very limited among the Sioux; the most they use is by warriors denoting feats of bravery, representing wounds, prisoners, and killed—this is about all the picture writing they have. The rude representations here given, found in the La Crosse Valley pictured cave, and doubtless made by the Sioux, serve to corroborate Mr. Schoolcraft's statement.

Of the general subject of Indian pictography, Mr. Schoolcraft very aptly remarks: "The topic is certainly illustrative of the Indian mind. By picking up and preserving to future time his wild pictographic jottings and notations, the inquirer is put in possession of the means of judging of the wild, dark, and incoherent images that pass through the Indian mind. It could hardly otherwise be judged how vague, and utterly distracted in its mental and moral garniture, is the grade of his thoughts, theories and opinions."

L. C. D.

This curious cavern is situated on the farm of David Samuel, in the town of Barre, four miles from West Salem, and eight miles from La Crosse, on the north-west quarter of section twenty, of township sixteen, range six. It was discovered in October, 1878, by Frank Samuel, a son of the owner of the land, eighteen years of age, who had set a trap for raccoons at a hole of considerable size in the hill. Finding that he could, with a little difficulty, crawl into the aperture, which had been dug by wild animals through a land-slide, at the foot of a cliff of Potsdam sandstone, he entered, and finding that it opened into a spacious cavern, he procured lights, and with two older brothers and a

¹ Near West Salem, Wisconsin.