

NARRATIVE OF WALKING CLOUD.

IN AN INTERVIEW WITH THE EDITOR.¹

My name is Mauchhewemahnigo (Walking Cloud). I was born on the Wisconsin River. I was about ten years of age when the treaty was held at Prairie du Chien,² where they fixed the boundaries between the Winnebagoes and the Chippewas and our cousins the Sioux. I went with my father to that treaty. My squaw's name is Champchekeriwinke (Flash of Lightning). Her uncle was Hootschope (Four Legs).³ She was born at his village on Lake Winnebago.

During the Black Hawk War, my father had his lodge near La Crosse. I did not go to the war; I was too young. But my brother did. His name was Seeorouspinka. General Dodge sent a messenger down to Prairie du Chien, and said he wanted the Winnebagoes to go into the war and help the Great Father punish the Sacs. Our

¹ The interview took place May 18, 1887, at the Winnebago settlement in the town of Albion, Jackson county. Moses Paquette was the interpreter, and afterwards revised the MS. of the narrative, which I have given as nearly as possible as it fell from Walking Cloud's lips. As with that given by Spoon Decorah, this story has ethnographical rather than historical importance. I think that these two narratives are the last of any value which may be obtained from the Winnebagoes of Wisconsin, for the reason that the younger generation of men have no traditions to which we can attach any scientific importance. Spoon and Walking Cloud were regarded by their fellows as practically "the last of the Mohicans," and their offspring are allowing the old tales to die with them. Spoon died in 1889, but Moses Paquette writes me (Black River Falls, Nov. 6, 1895) that Walking Cloud still lives; his squaw, however, is dead.—Ed.

² Aug. 19, 1825.—Ed.

³ Wis. Hist. Colls., x., p. 114, note; *Was. Bun* (1856), p. 85.—Ed.

people, who were named in this call, did not want to go to war. But the messenger, after we had all arrived in Prairie du Chien, picked out Winnebago Black Hawk (my father), and my brother, and they went up the Wisconsin River with a party of white soldiers and officers from Fort Crawford. They met a number of Sacs coming down on a raft made of canoes tied together. The Winnebagoes and the whites killed most of the Sacs in this party.¹ Winnebago Black Hawk was the guide of this expedition.

After the battle of the Bad Ax, the Winnebagoes went on their fall hunt. My father, Winnebago Black Hawk, had a hunting village on the La Crosse River, near where Bangor now is.² There were about eighteen hunters in the camp. One day a party of young men were on the chase, having gone up one of the branches of the La Crosse River, towards the head of the Kickapoo. On their return, they came across the camp of the Sac chief, near a little lake. There was much excitement among the hunters. They knew the Great Father had ordered all Winnebagoes to capture the head man of the Sacs, and they did not at first know what to do. They concluded, without talking to the Sacs, to go to their village and report to Winnebago Black Hawk. There was a council held that night in the Winnebago village. It lasted all night and all next day. I remember this council very well. Both Red Wing, here, and I were young men and stood by while the old men talked. The day after the council was over, Winnebago Black Hawk asked three young men to go to the Sac chief, Black Hawk, and tell him that the Winnebagoes had been ordered by General Street, the agent at Prairie du Chien, to take him whenever they saw him and bring him in to Fort Crawford. The three young men were Neno-

¹ During this interview, an old Winnebago named Red Wing was present. He said that he took part in this affair, and killed four Sacs. In the recital of his alleged achievement, he seemed to take a lively satisfaction. See reference to this butchery, in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xli., pp. 254, 255.—Ed.

² Cf. Spoon Decorah, *ante*, p. 454.—Ed.

hamphega (Lighting the Water), Wakuntschapinka (Good Thunder), and Ohatschunka (Wave). Wave was an interpreter, being one-half Sac and one-half Winnebago. These three went through the woods to the camp of the Sac Black Hawk, and delivered to him the speech of Winnebago Black Hawk. They advised the Sac chief to go peaceably to Prairie du Chien, and doubtless he would not be harmed. The Sac chief said: "You want us to be killed by the whites; as you so wish it, we will go."

So the Sac Black Hawk, and those who were with him, were brought back to our village; and a number of our warriors went down to Prairie du Chien with them, and delivered them up to General Street. One-eyed Decorah was not of this party. I am positive of it.¹ He remained at our village all the time. He was not a good man, and not then a chief. After the treaty and the payment, he was made a chief through the influence of the American Fur Company and the Indian agent, General Street. The agents and traders had a way of putting aside old chiefs, for

¹ Cf. Karrymaunee's statement in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, vii., p. 332; Clark's statement in viii., p. 316; and Dr. Draper's note on the last citation. Indian Agent J. M. Street made official report that upon Aug. 27, 1832, at 11 a. m., "Black Hawk and the Prophet were delivered * * * by the One-eyed Decorah and Chetar, Winnebagoes, belonging to this agency." Official contemporaneous documents are our only reliable sources of information. Indians are phenomenal boasters, and when an act of importance, that may win white men's favor, has been achieved by any of them, there are not lacking those who claim a share in the proceeding. It does not take long among the aborigines for an historical event to pass into shadowy tradition, fit material for any story-teller among them who has an active imagination. Thus it has come about, for instance, that there are as many burial-places of the Sac Black Hawk, in Wisconsin, as Homer had native towns; and any well-informed Winnebago can show you, in his neighborhood, some cave or bluff or ravine where Black Hawk hid during his flight. White historians are thoroughly informed as to the burial place of Black Hawk, in Iowa; but the unlettered savage tale-bearers are as mystified over him and his deeds as though he were a tenth-century hero. I have been surprised, in visiting among old Wisconsin Winnebagoes, to find that only a few of them seem to remember having heard anything about the Prophet, one of the most marked characters in the tragedy of 1832.—Ed.

new ones whom they had gained to their interest. After the Black Hawk War, One-eyed Decorah married two women, and then went off and started a village of his own, on the Black River. He was always afraid somebody would entice his women away. He was ugly and jealous.¹

H. M. Rice got me [in 1850, or 1851] and many of my friends to go to Long Prairie, Minn., and make up our minds about that country.² We were to see if we would like it as a home. We went there and did not like it, so returned home that same fall.

Captain Hunt got us [in 1873] to go to Nebraska. He promised me a span of horses, a wagon, and \$200; and said I should get them when I arrived in Nebraska. But I never received them. We soon came back.³

I have been living for thirteen years on my present homestead, in the town of Albion, Jackson County.

The Winnebagoes came from the sky, the old Indians say. They settled first at the Red Banks. They first met the French, who came in large boats to trade with them, near Green Bay. The French were always our good friends. We never had any trouble with them.

All of the other tribes of Indians have tried to kill off the Winnebagoes. The Sioux were the most ugly towards us, though I am told they are our cousins. In old times we had much fighting with the Chippewas, but not in my recollection. We have been at peace with everybody, since the Great Father at Washington commanded us to be at peace or he would take away all our guns. The Menomonees have always been our good friends.

Our fathers used to fast and pray, that the spirits might appear to them. Sometimes they would pray that the water spirit might come and wet the corn-fields. This he would do when he was in good humor; but when he was in bad humor he would bring a good deal of water on the

¹ Cf. Spoon Decorah, on the One-eyed Decorah (Big Canoe), *ante*.—Ed.

² Cf. Moses Paquette in *Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xii., pp. 407-409.—Ed.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 412-414.—Ed.

land and make a flood. The water spirit, I am told, has a long tail winding around his body, and has two horns. But in my day he has not appeared to any of our people, and we no longer pray to him.

You ask me about a future life. I cannot see how a person may be taken to another world and come back and tell about it. Old people used to tell us that the dead, when washed clean by the Great Spirit, could be sent back to earth. And some believe this, even now.

One thing is certain. The body rests in the earth four days. During that time we take food and place it on the grave, that the body [soul] may not starve. After four days, the body rises and starts out alone, to the happy hunting-ground. A spirit comes to guide the body on its way, unseen. They come to a swift-running stream. They must cross it on a slender pole. If the body is that of a bad Indian, it sinks in the river and never lives more. If it is a good Indian, it walks steadily and crosses the pole. A woman stands on the farther bank, and receives the new comer. The woman asks the stranger his name. When she receives it, she says: "You are good; you shall always live in the happy hunting-ground." This woman is neither old nor young, nor will she ever be old; for the Great Spirit placed her there at the beginning of the world, and she has always looked the same.¹

¹ Cf. Schoolcraft, *History of Indian Tribes*, ii., p. 48.—Ed.