LIFE OF A WOMAN PIONEER

AS ILLUSTRATED IN THE LIFE OF
ELSIE STRAWN ARMSTRONG 1789-1871

PART ONE

HER PERSONAL HISTORY TAKEN
FROM A VOLUME OF RHYMES COMPOSED BY HER

PART TWO

SHORT ACCOUNTS
OF IMPORTANT EVENTS IN
PIONEER TIMES IN WHICH HER SONS
TOOK AN IMPORTANT PART

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ELSIE STRAWN ARMSTRONG

1789-1871

"The Woman Pioneer"

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PREFACE

This little volume was inspired over sixty years ago, when, as a boy of from ten to fifteen years old I was very much impressed by the accounts my grandmother, Elsie Strawn Armstrong, recited to me from time to time of her early life in pioneer days of Pennsylvania, Ohio and Illinois. She called her stanzas poetry and I supposed they ranked well with those of Longfellow and Whittier. I was impressed too, with her ability to recall her lines verbatim if given a word or two to start off on any event of her life story.

I also soon learned after she came to live at my father's home that if I wished to play on the grass I must find a place remote from the house, for if seen on the lawn in front of her window, there would be a tap, tap on the glass and I would have to go to her room and sew carpet rags or thread, what seemed to me, a hundred needles.

My father instructed me that I must wait on her and run errands for her whenever needed and that seemed to me to be most of the time. Nevertheless I recognized that she was deserving of attention for she was nearly blind when she first came to live with us in 1861, so I served her as cheerfully as a boy of that age could be expected to do. I kept her wood-box filled with firewood, carried out the ashes and worst of all, I had to pull out her stumps of eye-lashes as often as they were long enough to be grasped by the tweezers.

I do not recall whether it was her suggestion or my own, that some time, I should publish her rhymes so that her book might be sold in the shops as other books of poetry were. At any rate I carried that intention in mind several years. At last when a complete type-written copy of all her rhymes was prepared by one of my brothers, I thought I would now begin the long deferred task and prepare a copy for the printer, but I soon saw that to correct her English would destroy the rhythm and rhymes. I spent some time trying to do the impossible and then gave it up for another series of years.

Finally I decided that the life of a pioneer in an age when machinery was nearly unknown, would be of

sufficient interest to readers of today to warrant culling from her story those parts that would show the conditions of life at that time. So now, after a century from the time she was deciding the course to follow for the future of her boys, one of her grandsons is presenting this little volume that others may realize the advantages we have over the pioneers of that time.

We call them pioneers, but a fair question is, will not our descendants, a century hence, look upon us as pioneers of their time just as we do the early settlers of Illinois?

J. E. A., Chicago, Ill., 1930.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes hereby to express his gratitude to Dr. Mark E. Penney for valuable suggestions about the material that should be added to the mere life of the subject of this narrative in order to furnish more of a background for appreciation of the contributions she made to the pioneer life of Illinois and especially those of La Salle County.

My thanks are also due to the many relatives who have supplied me with information and interesting episodes in the life of the subject of this sketch, and especially to the authors of the books which I have drawn upon for facts, and quoted in their places.

Also to Robert Prucha, Artist, for the cut on the Frontispiece.

JAMES ELDER ARMSTRONG.

AUTHORITIES CONSULTED

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ILLUSTRATIONS

PART ONE

PERSONAL HISTORY

CHAPTER ONE

BEGINNING OF HER LIFE TOLD IN RHYME

Many books and magazine accounts have been written to tell of the hardships, trials, dangers and heroic lives of men who are recognized as the pioneers among the first settlers of the Northwest, while seldom has an account been written of a woman pioneer.

No claim is made that the subject of the sketch deserves mention for service to the public unless it is for bringing to Illinois under very trying circumstances, a family of eight boys, all under twenty-one years of age, several of whom have subsequently rendered valuable service to the state during long lives of usefullness. Most men would have failed under conditions she had to meet, and the fact that she made the journey with a five horse team and covered wagon from Ohio to Illinois against the advice of her best friends and relatives who felt that she and all her children would perish of hunger or be massacred by the Indians, makes her case stronger still.

In spite of all these threatening prophecies, she set out with her flock of little boys to give them a better chance for a living on the fertile plains of Illinois. This can only be appreciated when it becomes known that where she lived in Ohio, the timber had to be cleared from the land and that was a tedious process, especially for her flock of little boys. She recognized the advantages these boys would have in beginning their careers on the broad, open prairies of Illinois. Four of her brothers had already taken up claims there, so she knew what the advantages would be and she was determined to give those boys all the help she could. Besides, there were some other detrimental circumstancs which had wrecked the life of her husband and from which she wished her sons to escape. The more to her credit is the fact that she appreciated the evil of the use of strong drink at a time when it was considered necessary by most people, to use alcoholic beverages.

Industry and frugality were so ingrained into her nature from childhood that she never ceased from hard, constant application until old age, even when she had saved enough to meet all her wants. When so nearly blind that she could not see to use her needle, she composed her autobiography in rhyme, relating in minute detail all the trials and difficulties of her eventful life and had some of her grandchildren write them down for her. She had but little education, for in those strenuous pioneer days, little attention was paid to the schools and in fact the chief education considered necessary was to learn how to grow food, preserve what they raised, spin and weave and make their clothing, build their log cabins, and protect themselves from Indians and wild beasts. In her rhymes, she tells that the only books they had at school were the Thomas Dilworth spelling book and the Bible. The spelling book, however, was a kind of a universal education book, for it contained some arithmetic, and such tales of moral conduct as they thought the youth should know; such stories as later appeared in Weam's "Life of George Washington" with stories of impossible acts for children, far beyond their powers of comprehension. It was not a matter of selecting Bible stories that might have appealed to children, but in taking everything as it came, for it would have been considered sacrilegious to omit anything of the Sacred Book. She admits that although it was not customary to give the girls as much education as they gave the boys, she was given an extra education and to substantiate this says she was "taught arithmetic as far as the single rule of three". She began school at the age of four.

Throughout her account of her life in rhymes, she shows remarkable knowledge of the use of words, for to write a biography in rhyme, the greatest difficulty is to find words that rhyme and that will also convey the right meaning. If she had had a knowledge of grammar and rhetoric, she could have written stanzas that would have been classed as literary gems. She probably never read a novel nor a poem, except what might be found in a hymn-book or in the Psalms, and yet in some instances her stanzas seem inspired by a well read literary genius.

The data for this narrative are taken from her own account of her life in rhymes and in many instances

her lines are copied verbatim not only for the facts so clearly set forth by her, but to show her genius for telling in rhymes and minute detail of her life carried in memory for half a century. Her life as a pioneer was too busy to spend in writing what she could so easily carry in memory, so only in old age when her sight was so dim that she could not see to work, did she take time to dictate her life story for some one else to write down for her.

She traces her ancestry back to her grandfather in these lines:

"My grandfather came from England
When he was ten years old,
Came with a widowed mother,
An only son I'm told."

"In seventeen twenty-nine
This family crossed the sea,
And settled near Philadelphia
In this country."

She then tells of his marriage and their twelve children and names the nine states to which they finally migrated. She dismisses the others except her father, with this stanza:

"And if you meet a Strawn,
In city, town, or lawn,
He is the house of Jacob,
That same orphan, Jacob Strawn."

Her father, Isaiah Strawn, was the eighth in the family of twelve children of that "orphan Jacob Strawn". He was born in 1758 in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and when grown up, moved to Somerset County, Pennsylvania where he married Rachel Reed and they reared six children of which Elsie was the third. They were strict Quakers in religion, dress and customs. She tells graphically of their all going to church Sundays, each dressed in homespun clothing, sitting on large sheaves of rye straw "bound with three ties" and covered with a homespun coverlet. She praises her mother's voice for singing with a back compliment to her own by these lines:

"Her hat was very pretty
Made of the finest fur.
And she could sing most sweetly,
I learned to sing from her."

"My father, too, could sing,
But not as well as mother,
But in family worship
We all did sing together."

"The Preachers too, taught me to sing,
When I was very young.
They told me I must sing for them,
And so for them I sung."

"They taught me many tunes
And verses about Heaven,
That I could sing for them
Before I was seven."

She adored her father and nothing pleased her more than to be required to go with him to pull flax, or to build the loads of hay on the wagon. She says of him:

"He planted his corn and he mowed his hay
When he was eighty-four.
Few men can do so much work
After they are four score."

She boasts of his lifting the end of a green log at a barn raising where no one but he could lift it from the ground. Then he had a man sit on the log and he lifted both man and log.

In speaking of the fact that her father and brother were very long-lived people, she tells of seeing four generations out in the field mowing. Her father, Joel her oldest brother, Joel's son Jacob, and Jacob's son.

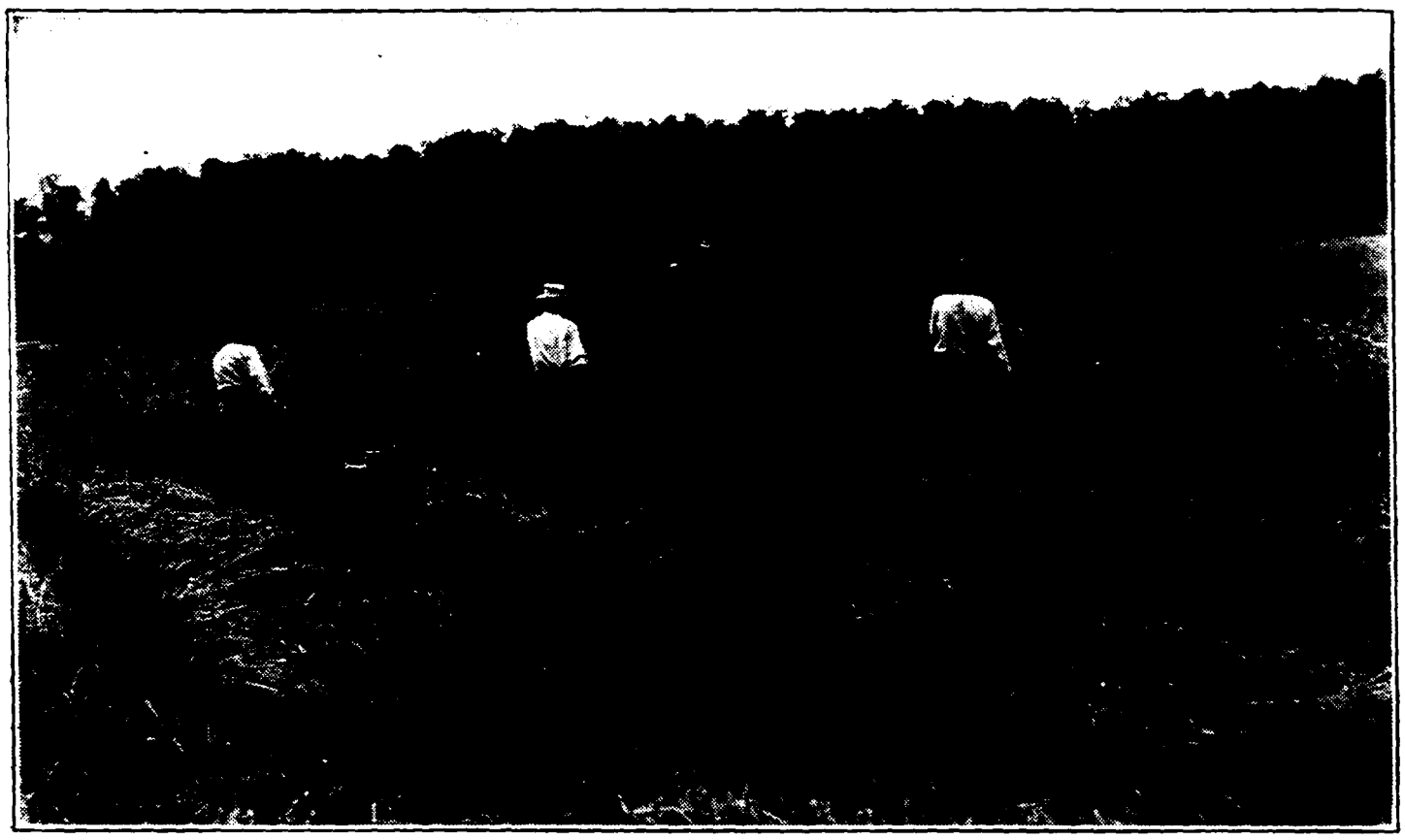
Her father died at eighty-five, his son Joel at eighty-two and the great majority of the family and their descendants pass the age of eighty. When he passed away she says:

"But now that blessed father,
Has gone home to his rest.
And of all the living men
He was one of the best."

At a time when suffering with severe pain from sore eyes, she wrote of her mother as follows:

"And O! that blessed mother
If she were here today,
I think she'd cure my eyes
And that without delay."

"No matter what did ail me
In body or in mind,
She was the greatest help
That ever I did find."



MOWING WHEAT WITH CRADLES

Before McCormick invented the reaper in 1831 the cradle was the most efficient means of cutting grain. This implement was introduced in America about 1776, according to Professor Brewer of Yale, and was the common instrument of grain harvesting as late as 1840. In cradling grain, two acres was considered a day's work.

—*From the Chicago Principals' Club Reporter.*

"She taught us that we should sing
But prayer or psalm of praise,
And now among the joyful choir
Her voice doth sweetly raise."

In another place she wrote that:

"She kept a sharp lookout
That all the work went on.
Her presence was the axle
That business turned upon."

"Where she was most needed,
There she was the most seen.
And a superior woman
My mother sure has been."

In most respects Elsie resembled her mother, for all of her family recognized the fact that she was "the axle that business turned upon". Her mother, before she died, weighed over two hundred and thirty pounds while her daughter Elsie weighed less than one hundred, but what she lacked in weight she made up in energy.

While but a child of fifteen, she was able to weave nine yards of cloth a day. She worked in the field doing all kinds of work her brothers did and besides she carded and spun flax and wool and bleached and dyed cloth. Then all the clothes for the family were cut out and sewed by hand. In the spring before the frost was out of the ground, she collected the sap from the maple trees, made sugar and syrup. She tended the poultry and plucked the geese for feather beds and pillows. In speaking of the cloth she wove when a girl she wrote:

"And still I have some specimens
Of what we used to do,
And if you wish to see them
Call in and I'll show you."

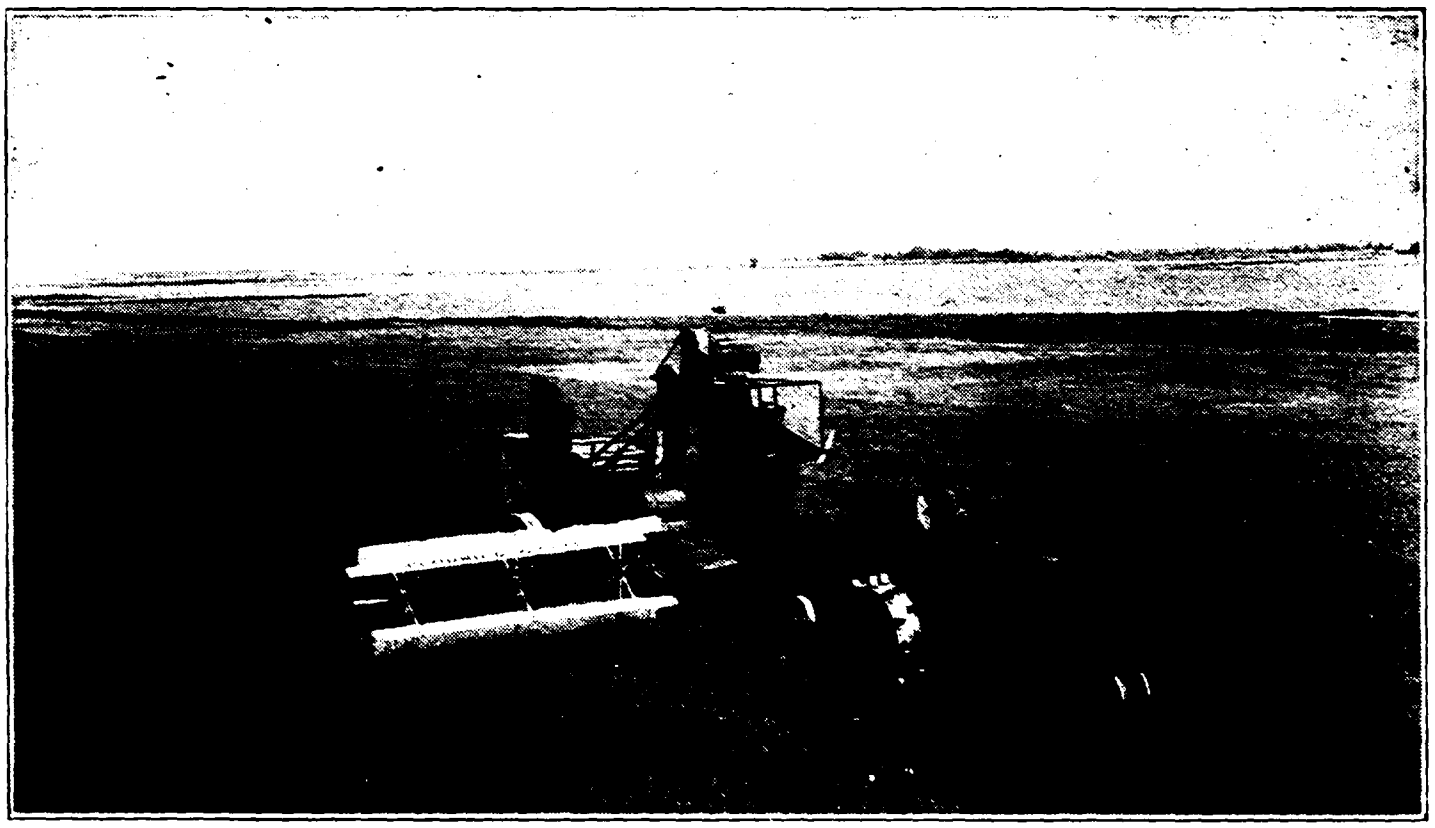
"I have the sheets and counterpanes
And double coverlets,
And table cloths and towels,
And curtains for my beds."

"The dresses and the aprons,
And kerchiefs for my neck,
All the good old homespuns,
In which I still can deck."

In some stanzas written for her grandchildren, she tells of a visit she made to the old homestead she left some sixty years before, in which she goes into minute

detail in describing the surroundings. Of the most interest to her grandchildren is the description of the milk house and its contents. A cool stream of water ran through it from a spring and the crocks of milk and butter were kept standing in it. Then there were barrels of salted beef, pork and mutton, barrels of apples and vegetables, pickles and honey. Nearby was the smoke house where hams and bacon hung. Then this stream of water as it left the milk house, furnished means for washing and dipping flax and wool and farther on for tanning leather for shoes and harness. She tells of the bread, pies and cakes that she carried to the milk house from the outdoor oven where they were baked. This oven consisted of a thick walled chamber of stone and clay or mortar with its chimney and draft dampers. It was first filled with wood which was kept burning until the walls were thoroughly heated. The ashes were then swept out and pans of dough, pies and cakes were set in and the doors and dampers closed. This was done in the evening, and by morning everything would be thoroughly cooked. One oven full furnished all the bread and pastry needed for the week. Only meat and vegetables had to be cooked over the fireplace for the meals the rest of the week. This outdoor oven is the fore-runner of the Aladdin Oven or the fireless cooker.

How difficult it must be for her great grandchildren of today to comprehend how people could live under such conditions. They lived in houses that were made of logs and were covered with thin slabs of split logs. The floors were logs flattened on one side and laid close together. The house was heated by an open fireplace, and their food, if not cooked outside in a stone chamber or on a camp-fire, was cooked over the open fire in the fireplace. Their knives and forks were steel, and their spoons were pewter. The land was plowed by an ox team, and laboriously planted by hand and tilled by a single shovel plow and drawn by one horse, or by hand with a hoe. The grain and hay were cut by a scythe or by a special kind of a scythe called a "cradle". The wheat was separated from the straw by beating it with a short stick tied to a longer stick by a leathern string. This was called a flail. The wheat was separated from the chaff by tossing it or pouring it so that the wind could blow the lighter material away. The grain was ground into flour by a



THE COMBINE

This machine drawn by a tractor cuts a swath 10 feet wide, threshes out the grain, puts it in bags, leaving the straw on the ground. It has brought the cost of harvesting wheat down from 25c a bushel to 5c a bushel. Two men with this machine can reap 35 or 40 acres in a ten-hour day.

—*From the Chicago Principals' Club Reporter.*

mill run by horse power and the bran sifted out through a coarsely woven cloth. The clothing was all made from cloth woven at home, the wool and flax grown at home and prepared by an elaborate process they learned from their ancestors. The wood for fires was cut with an ax during the winter, from logs cut the right length. There was no want that could not be supplied at home.

What a contrast with the conditions of today. Her great grandchildren possibly know that mother orders what they eat over the telephone or maybe they sit at a restaurant table where their choices of dainties are set before them by a smiling waiter. As to their breakfast, the oranges come from California or Florida, cereals from Minnesota, milk and cream from Wisconsin, sugar from Cuba, coffee from Brazil or tea from China, bacon from the packing house made from hogs raised in Texas.

The house is now made of brick and heated by steam, the clothing made by an ingenius machine that seems almost human. The tractor has displaced the ox team and the horse. Steam, gasoline or water power furnishes the energy that drives the machinery and that transports all that was done by muscular power two generations ago. Elsie Strawn Armstrong would have considered any one insane if he could have told her the facts recited in this paragraph and yet they are simple facts compared with others that might be added.

It is hard to believe that during the lifetime of the grandchildren of these pioneers, the machine age could go so far as it has in substituting the tractor for the ox team, the steam car for the swiftest horse, the automobile and the aeroplane for the spring wagon, the telegraph and the radio for messages transmitted by a man on horseback, and the electric lamp for tallow-dip candle. Yet these and countless other inventions have all come in the lifetime of the writer, one of the grandchildren of this pioneer.

We naturally think such another experience cannot be crowded into the lifetime experience of our grandchildren.

CHAPTER TWO

HER EARLY EDUCATION, COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE TO JOSEPH ARMSTRONG

She begins her personal history by these lines:

"I was born in Pennsylvania
In the year of eighty-nine,
And was brought up by parents
Under strictest discipline."

Then she tells that she helped milk the cows when five and six, so her brothers could be in the fields plowing; commenced knitting mittens and stockings at seven and eight. When ten years old she worked in the fields at harvest and haying time; worked in the garden hoeing, and fed the geese and the chickens.

"And away to weaving I would hie
To bang the loom and make the shuttle fly
And more than fifty years ago."

"A pleasant sight was seen,
Three hundred yards of linen
Lay bleaching on the green."

This was an education of which modern youth cannot boast and no degree was offered for its completion except the ability to care for ones self and family under the hardest conditions of life. It was this kind of education that made it possible for her parents to start their children with greater advantages than they themselves had enjoyed, for she says:

"And when we left our parents
We had everyone a farm
With horses, sheep and cattle
That we might be fed and warm."

When she was nineteen years old, she went to a wedding, some thirty miles from home and there she met a young man named Joseph Armstrong. He soon came to see her and in a short ime proposed marriage. He was reported rich and her family advised her to marry him. Their courtship was so brief an acquaintanceship that neither had a chance to learn the tastes and aims of the other. They were as far apart as two individuals could be. He was well educated and fond of company. He would like to have her go with him

into society. He told her he did not want her to work because he could afford servants for that purpose. He was a good mixer and attracted people wherever he went by engaging them in conversation. He used brandy freely, which was customary and not considered detrimental. He had a good knowledge of affairs of state and of law making.

She on the other hand had but little education from books but so keen a mind that she was a match for him in intellect. She had mastered all the practical arts of life known to the common people and a will power that knew no such thing as defeat in carrying out the high ideals of a useful, moral life.

The only amusements that she had ever known were the work parties where a group of young people met to harvest wheat or flax or to do any kind of work that a group of boys and girls could do together, and the friendly contests of doing the most work in a given time furnished all the interest and excitement she craved.

As she looked back on her wedding after fifty years she wrote:

"So the nineteenth day of May
The fatal knot was tied,
And in the month September
We took a horseback ride."

They were married May 19th, 1808.

It was four months later, however, when that wedding tour was made on horseback to Licking County, Ohio. She prevailed upon him to make the trip to see the two hundred acres of land her father had bought for her, near the land he had previously bought for her brother Joel and sister Mary, both of whom were married and living there.

Both she and her husband were delighted with what they found; he with the splendid site for a factory run by water power on a fork of the Licking River, and she with the deep rich soil and the wonderful timber that would furnish logs to build a house and fuel for their fires. So they decided to go home and sell their property and come back to Ohio and establish their new home there.

It took two years to dispose of their houses, land and brewery, and his friends did what they could to dissuade him. She saw too, by this time, how his love for company and liquor would ruin his life, so with

her stronger personality, and persistent urging, she succeeded in getting him to lower his prices and sell his possessions. She wrote later:

"So we left Pennsylvania
In the year of eleven
The fifteenth day of April
And now it's fifty-seven."

Their first son, John, was now over a year old and there were no Pullman coaches and diners where they could sleep and get their meals. Instead of these modern necessities, they set out with a covered wagon drawn by five horses. She had the same good riding horse that she rode on her wedding trip, but as she had a fear that the hired man would let the cows that they were taking along get away, she walked a good deal, carrying her yearling son and drove the cows. The third day the man who was charged with the oversight of the cows and her horse while she took a rest riding in the wagon, allowed the horse to escape, and so from that time on she walked, carrying her baby most of the time fearing she might lose her cows too. She said:

"I do not think I rode
Ten miles of that long way,
But I walked and drove my cows
With my child from day to day."

There were no hard roads in those days and so it was no easy task for her husband to guide his team over the hills and through the gullies. So his chief attention had to be on his team and wagon heavily loaded with what they would need of household goods, farming implements, and food for horses and themselves. She rode in the wagon only when too nearly exhausted to go further, and at night she frequently had a "night-mare" that the wagon was tipping over and so she would be awakened with fright.

At last their tedious journey of three hundred miles was over, and they were worn out and discouraged. He would have been willing, however, to turn around and retrace their path, back to what to him was home and comfort rather than begin the strenuous tasks he now realized were before him. She was far more plucky however than he, and although we now admit she had the greater cause for discouragement, she replied to his entreaties:

"I never can go back,
It would be such a shame,
When we've spent our time and money,
And I'd have to take the blame."

He got some lumber from a saw mill, and built a rude shelter and left her and the baby there in the forest where trees were so tall and close together that the sun could scarcely shine in upon them at all and went forty miles to a grist mill to get flour. It took him four days to make the trip, and he had the misfortune to have one of their best horses fall dead upon the road. It was a sad event for it was one of the horses her father gave her when she left home for the West. But her father wrote her, when he heard of her loss, that he would bring her another horse the first time he came to see her, which he did.

While her husband was gone to the mill she had a great fear that a panther would kill her little boy or that a rattle snake would bite him. He was just beginning to creep and so enjoyed his ability to travel that he would some times creep away down the path to the spring and play there by himself. She says the rattle snakes were so thick that for some time she killed an average of two a day. But her greatest fear was from the panthers. Her husband killed one on the third day after they arrived, so while he was away, she was in constant fear that one would come by night and carry off her sleeping child. One evening as she was milking her cows she heard a terrific scream close by. She ran to the shed where her baby was sleeping fearing that at any moment a ferocious panther would spring upon them. She intended to put wood upon the fire that was kept burning at night to keep the wild beasts away. Imagine how she must have felt, alone in the dense forest at night with a child that often cried and it seemed to her as if to invite the wild beasts, and she herself a young girl twenty-one years of age. Before she had a chance however to replenish the fire, that terrifying scream came again; but it came from a tree above her and so close she saw it was only an owl. Another night the ducks under the wagon made a startled noise and that made her fear a panther was about to spring upon them, but this, too, proved a false alarm. She felt a great relief when her husband returned even with the sad news of the loss of their best horse.

Her husband, with the help of three hired men, cleared four acres, fenced it with poles cut from the land and planted it with corn while she dug and planted her garden. She with her more practical knowledge of plant life, raised a fine lot of vegetables, while his efforts nearly failed for lack of the necessary knowledge of farming. She says he planted too much in a hill and the rows so near together, that he raised but little. It rained a good deal during that spring and their goods under the rude shed got damp and possibly for that reason the baby got sick. Her sister came to see her and made an urgent demand that a log house should be built at once in order to give the child proper care. This was not a long task for the logs were already cut. So, neighbors were assembled and in a few days with their help, a log house was built. She too did her share for she says:

"So the house was made and roofed
And the chimney place was built
The doorway was cut out,
And in that I hung a quilt."

"And when they cut the first logs
From the intended door,
Then I began to carry boards,
Commenced to lay my floor."

"The boards were green, inch oak
And fourteen feet in length,
Each one was my full load,
And did take all my strength."

"Then I could keep my child
Out of the mud and rain,
And I was glad and thankful
When he got well again."

"At length they took a board
And made a good strong door
Then I was afraid
Of snakes and beasts no more."

A novel source of their supply of meat that first winter was wild turkey. They were driven by hunger, to seek food where the cows were fed and became so tame that they came around the door of the cabin to pick up crumbs. Her husband showed some practical genius for capturing them when needed. He built a log pen and covered it with poles. The logs were not notched as for the house, to fit closely together, but left spaces between the logs, not large enough for a

turkey to crawl through. A door near the ground with some corn in it induced the turkeys to creep into the pen. Then, when they wished to leave, they stuck their heads out between the logs and he chopped them off with an ax.

Large maple trees grew thick around the cabin on a spot that was to be cleared, so this practical little woman directed her husband and the hired man to cut grooves all around each maple tree that was to be removed, so that all the sap could run into a trough made of a short log of soft wood, like the bass wood. As spring approached and the sap began to flow, they gathered it in pails and she boiled it down in the cabin. Her husband tried to persuade her not to make more sugar and syrup than they needed for the year, but she could not allow the bounty of nature to go to waste. So even after the men had deserted her to begin chopping and clearing away the trees she carried on until she had three hundred pounds of sugar. When the British War of 1812 broke out, she sold what surplus she had at twenty-five cents a pound in exchange for coffee at fifty cents a pound, and tea at three dollars a pound. She also exchanged it for dishes and other things the household needed.

So ended the first year of this young couple in the forests of Ohio, housed part of the time in a rude shed and later in a log cabin that was merely a square log pen with a roof sufficient to shed most of the rain and with a rough floor made from rough boards laid snug together, a fireplace at one end and a rude bed of poles at the other on which was spread a feather tick, patchwork quilts and homespun linen. A table of rough boards stood in the middle of the room with benches for chairs and shelves and boxes for holding food and clothing and in one corner the all important loom and spinning wheel.

CHAPTER THREE

Her "Dark Ages" Of Trials and Separation From Her Husband

The next twenty years of her life were her "dark ages" of trials, disappointments and difficulties that would have caused the strongest man to give up the struggle. Not so with her, for she arose triumphant, leading her family of eight boys away from conditions that would have ruined their lives instead of turning over to the state valuable assets as she did in due time.

She started out with high hopes for a short time, for, her husband cleared six acres more and they then became entirely self supporting, for they produced on that rich soil all that they needed for fuel, food and clothing. What more could pioneers want? Alas! These are but trifles compared with the peace of mind and the harmony that should exist between man and wife. The gap between them was wide enough at the beginning of their married life and as neither one would yield to the will of the other, they drifted farther and farther apart. She was exacting in her demands and he grew more and more discontented with the kind of life they had to live.

Added to the growing home troubles was the fear of attack by the Indians. The British War was the means of destroying the friendly relations that existed between the Indians and the pioneers. The British paid the Indians eight dollars each for the scalps of men, women or children, so some of their neighbors were massacred, their cabins burned and their horses, pigs, and cows driven away. They had lived for a time in mortal fear that it would be their turn next. Some advised their retreat three hundred miles to her father's home in Pennsylvania. Even her husband urged her to go and take their son, now two years old, on horseback, and he would stay and do what he could with the neighbors to protect their property. She refused to go however, since she was soon to be confined with the birth of her second child. She wrote:

"I thought it was an even chance
For me to live or die
For I was neither fit
To either fight or fly."

The price paid for scalps soon fell from eight dollars to five dollars and the Indians decided to retreat farther West so they were not molested again. For a few years now, affairs went smoothly on. They commenced to feel secure and prosperous. They had extended their clearing to quite a farm and were selling surplus food, stock, and wool.

Prosperity sometimes however becomes a curse for after buying a farm of fifty acres cleared, with an orchard, house and barn, he felt he could now return to the business he had found to be so profitable in Pennsylvania. He bought a distillery and became shortly its best customer. Possibly his chances now to meet congenial friends and to forget the troubles at home led him to indulge more freely in the "intoxicating cup". He and the hired men ran the distillery while she and the boys ran the farm. Of this she wrote:

"And thus our time went on
From one year to another.
And every other year,
My children had a brother."

Possibly one of the causes of differences that helped to separate them was the fact that she made it a great point to entertain the Methodist ministers from far and near. Their house on the new farm became the stopping place for all traveling evangelists and he naturally felt that she cared more for them than for him. He became more careless and indifferent about his business, ran deeply into debt and mortgaged everything they had even to the household furniture. By the help of her brother Jacob, who was a shrewd business man, she redeemed the property more than once.

In spite of these losses, she and her boys made enough from the farm to build a barn, a brick house, and finally to buy a woolen factory where she hoped the boys could learn a trade. Not much time was found for education from books, at least when field work could be carried on. Doubtless a short time during the winter months, the older boys went to school for everyone learned to read, write, and keep accounts and compute figures necessary for their business. Doubtless too, their chief text book was the Bible as hers had been. The second son who was the father of the writer, often said he went to school but one year

all told; yet he became a constant reader of everything he could lay hands on. He could become so absorbed in what he was reading that no noise or confusion distracted his attention. Another son became a lawyer and a student of Geology. Doubtless what education they did get as boys, was directed and carried on by their mother with the same degree of thoroughness and rigidity as she did all her work.

Her oldest son, John, now eighteen years old, became very much discouraged because when he worked with his team on the turnpike as the public roads were called, his father would collect his pay and spend it for drinks, and made him ashamed. He asked to be legally bound out to learn a trade. Her second son, George, was already learning the weavers trade in the woolen factory. She thoght it would be better for John to go to Illinois where her brother John, was intending to go. At first the boy was shocked at the thought, but soon decided he must go with his uncle and cousins. The father was much opposed to this plan but she went ahead as usual with her own plans. She employed a tailor to help her make a new outfit of clothing and by the time things were ready, the father gave consent.

She gives the following interesting account of her son John's getting lost when going on an errand when six years old. He was sent to get some tow some distance thru the woods. He got lost in trying to come home by taking the wrong road down the river and wandered on several miles. When he did not return in an hour she went to look for him and soon saw the tracks of his little bare feet in the dust where he took the wrong road. She followed these for some time and losing sight of them returned home and called the men from the field. She then got on a horse and roused some of the nearest neighbors and soon there were a score or more searching thru the dense woods ringing bells blowing horns and calling. While they were thus engaged a farmer saw the little fellow still carrying his tow and on finding out who he was sent his own son on horseback to carry him home. So after many hours had passed the boy was returned to his distracted mother.

At the time her eighteen year old son was being fitted up to go to Illinois, she had about two thousand dollars invested in the machinery of a woolen mill most

of which she had saved by her own effort. She still hoped her husband would reform, but things grew worse as times went on. The sheriff finally came around and attached everything they had so she decided she could not stand it any longer. In the year 1829 she decided to take her family which now consisted of six boys and go to her parents who had moved to Ohio. Her son John had gone to Illinois, her second son George was away from home in the factory, and her eighth son had died at the age of four. William now aged fifteen and Joel twelve, were sturdy boys and a great help at this time.

She felt that it was a desperate step to take, but the future of her boys was at stake as well as her own peace of mind. She roasted some beef and baked some bread and put them in the cupboard for her husband. She then writes:

"——I
Wound the clock, picked up my babe
Stepped out and shut the door."

"And so I took my little ones
When he was gone from home
And went off to my father's
Where he did seldom come."

Her parents now lived in Ohio.

Here are the names of the little troop of boys and their ages in 1829 to show better what an undertaking lay before her with her property all gone and nothing left but an iron will and a lighter heart to be free from the cares that had so long oppressed her.

William, age 15
Joel, " 12
James, " 11
Jerry, " 8
Perry, " 6
Isaiah, a babe less than a year old.

The two older boys, William and Joel, picked the brush from a clearing and earned thereby a cow. Then they rented a field and raised six hundred bushels of corn, two thirds of which was their share. They earned cash in the harvest fields in the autumn before husking time; they earned a horse by clearing a piece of land of elm trees.

When they gathered the first load of corn, she took it to Newark, fourteen miles away, and bought boots

for her boys, and cloth to make them pants which they badly needed.

The two older boys insisted on having their pants made at once, so after supper she cut out the pants and with their help the two pair were sewed by hand before they retired. Then she tells how overjoyed they were in their new boots and pants wih these lines:

"One took three jumps across the room
A looking at his feet;
The other took a little dance
And did it up complete."

During the winter months all but the baby attended the district school, but as early in the spring as possible they commenced chopping logs and burning brush so as to extend their fields for more grain.

All this time she was turning over in her mind whether or not she could take her boys out to the prairies of Illinois. All her brothers had gone there and they gave glowing accounts of that far off land where they did not have to grub stumps nor carry stones to prepare a field. This made a strong appeal to her. She knew from experience what it was to carry on farming in Pennsylvania. There were but small fields there among the rocks. The soil had been carried away from the hill sides by the rainfall of ages. She had been charmed at one time with the rich soil under the great trees at her various homes in Ohio. Land had to be cleared of its timber, however, and that was difficult work, especially for boys under sixteen.

It is not difficult then to see what an appeal the great level prairies of Illinois made on her imagination. There her little boys could break up the sod with oxen instead of the laborious task of clearing the forest.

Then she had a hard struggle with herself to decide what to do for here were her parents and friends. Her little boys were working manfully to make a living for them all. Could they do better in Illinois? Then there was the long journey over swollen streams, and deep mires. Could she, with the help of her third and fourth sons care for the little ones and escape starvation and the Indians?

The chances for the future of her boys finally won the decision, so one morning at breakfast she proposed that they should undertake the journey. The boys'

spirit of adventure immediately came to her assistance. Doubtless the novelty of such a trip appealed to them more than the prairie land of which they could scarcely imagine. The fact that their oldest brother and their uncles were there probably gave assurance that it was not a wilderness to which they would go.

The third son, William immediately recalled that their brother George, now eighteen was still at work in the woolen mills and that he wanted him to go with them to Illinois for he said:

"He is the best mechanic
Of any of us boys,
He will make our sash and bedsteads
And make our tables too."

"And help to make the rails
And all we have to do."

Serious objections were raised by the neighbors and friends to try to persuade her she should not undertake such a hazardous trip. Her mind was made up, however, before she announced her intentions and they could not change her decision after it was once made.

They commenced preparations for the journey at once and in two weeks they were on the road. A settlement was made with her husband so that he kept the land and gave her seven hundred dollars in money. There was no divorce. William took a horse and went to the factory and brought George in the night so that he could escape the father's notice. So this part of her story ends with these lines:

"And so we left Ohio
In the year of thirty-one
The fifteen day of April
With my ninth little son."

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TRIP TO ILLINOIS AND FLIGHTS FROM THE INDIANS

The history of La Salle County, Illinois, by Elmer Baldwin gives the names of over fifty old settlers who came from Licking County, Ohio, so Elsie was to take up her claim among them. Her son John, now twenty-one years of age had taken up a claim near Lacon in Marshall County, and one of her brothers lived there too. Doubtless the history of the settlement of that County and Putnam County would also show a large number of emigrants from the same county in Ohio.

So she set out, a little woman who weighed less than a hundred pounds but with a will power of a ton. She had seven sons with her. George was nineteen and the youngest about three. They had all their goods and the food for the family and for the five horse team, stowed away in the great covered wagon. They wisely chose a course southward to the Ohio River, for, although it was a hilly road, it was dry and well beaten by travel. It was much longer than to have taken the direct route to Illinois. When they reached Madison, Jefferson County, Indiana, they followed the east fork of the White River most of the way across the state to Vincennes and then up the Wabash to Terre Haute.

Up to this point they had no great trouble except that she caught a bad cold. Here they crossed the line to Illinois and their real trouble began. There were few roads to follow and those they found seemed to have no botom. That heavy wagon sank to the hubs in the mud that seemed like grease. Sometimes they had to cross a slough and some of the goods had to be unloaded and carried across on their backs. Once the horses fell in a heap and nearly drowned the one under the rest before they could get the other off.

The fifth son James was an invalid and one of the older boys had to carry their afflicted brother across the slough on his back. At one time they got stuck in the middle of a slough so she got on the saddle horse, one of the five, rode back several miles and got a farmer to leave his plowing and come and pull them out. He helped them about seven miles to dryer ground and they fared better for a time. When they came to a slough after that she got on the saddle horse and rode

back and forth through the mire until she found the safest place for the wagon to cross. The fourth son, Joel showed himself the real teamster as he did later during the Black Hawk War. He drove the team all the way and showed that he knew horses and they knew him, for he could get them to do what no one else could.

When they reached Painter Creek within forty miles of their destination, they found the stream so swollen they could not cross. They therefore had to camp there three days and then finding the stream too deep to ford, two of the boys on horseback swam the stream and rode on about thirty miles to where their Uncle lived to get help to build a raft and float their wagon over. They found their brother some distance farther on than their Uncle's place, building a log cabin on his claim. He returned with them and by this time the flood had so subsided that they found that they could ford it. The water came into the wagon however, and wet their goods. She was much distressed at this for fear her bedding, clothing and rugs would be mill-dewed, so as soon as they reached John's place she spread them out to dry.

The presence of her oldest son as well as the fact that they had completed their journey in safety, greatly raised her spirits.

John's house was a log pen roofed over, but with neither doors nor windows. It was Saturday night when they reached this longed for haven, but the Sabbath day had to be kept as strictly as ever, so nothing was done to affect an entrance into that much needed house until Monday. Four sturdy boys with crosscut saws soon cut out the logs for doorways, windows and for the fireplace. As soon as the doorway was cut out, she says:

> "Then I commenced the moving
> In on the green grass floor.
> The grass had seen the sun and rain
> Not quite a week before."

While the boys built the fireplace and chimney of stone and clay, she spread carpets on part of the floor and hung a quilt in the doorway. The boys then made a table out of thin slabs of logs and benches for chairs. No doubt she thought of her first home in Ohio twenty years before and she felt about as thankful as she did then. She says:

"And off of that square table
Most cheerful meals we'd eat,
Of food, fish and potatoes
And different kinds of meat."

The boys then helped John split rails to fence his claim and break sod with the additional horses. They now had twenty acres ready for planting, but where could they get seed corn? The neighbors had none to spare for, the year before, the early frost had killed the corn before it was hard enough to keep. They had a little left of the corn they brought for horse feed and planted that as far as it would go. Then William, who seems to have been the leader among the boys, bought enough from an Indian to finish the field, though his mother lamented that he paid a silver dollar for what filled a small tin pail. Besides the corn, they raised pumpkin, beans and potatoes.

All this was on John's claim near Lacon and that would never do for Elsie and her other boys. So, early in the fall, she commenced a search for a claim for herself. Whenever a horse could be spared she was off searching up the river for conditions she thought were essential for a good claim. Sometimes she took one of her boys along and on one occasion two of her brothers went with her. The things considered essential besides level prairie were, that it must include enough timber for building a house, fuel and fences and it must have a creek so cattle and sheep would have water and there must be stone enough for the chimneys. At last a claim was located that offered all these conditions in La Salle County, but great difficulty arose in getting a house built before winter set in, for not only were all the family sick with the ague, but the neighbors too were suffering from the same malady. They thought a gas arose from the sod where it was turned up to rot, and this gas caused the ague. They, like the next generation or two, nursed the mosquito and blamed the sod. They used disgusting things for medicine, but lived in spite of it all. Elsie staggered forth for a bucket of water for her fever stricken boys when the fever was raging in her own veins, and nearly collapsed before she got back to the house. At last cold weather brought relief and help enough was found to finish a section of a third log cabin for her. Doubtless this was as joyful an event as each of the others had been.

She relates an incident that was a great shock to her mind on her travels alone when searching for a claim. She saw a little log pen about six feet square. Alighting from her horse, she saw it contained five dead Indians, one in each corner and one in the middle. Each had his blanket around him and his gun and knives ready for the "Happy Hunting Ground" where Indians go after death, and she wrote of it:

"I stood in solemn awe
To see the red man's fate,
Oh! the firewater! truely,
How much we should it hate!"

Possibly her inference was wrong as to the cause of their demise, but doubtless she had heard of cases where Indians had behaved as badly as white men in the use of "fire-water".

Early the next spring, two of her boys with a four horse team took a load of wheat and corn she had bought, to a grist mill over a hundred miles away to have flour and meal ground. The mill power was the horse power of the customers and while grinding their wheat one of their horses dropped dead, so one of the boys rode back home on one of the other horses to get another to pull the load home.

This was a slight misfortune, however, compared with what followed. Fever and ague commenced again and greatly weakened their vitality and discouraged their very souls. They had just begun sowing oats and planting corn when the alarm was spread by a man on horseback, that the Indians were killing the settlers, burning their cabins and driving off their cattle. He warned them that they must go away at once if they would save their lives. William was sent on horseback to warn the neighbors and George was requested to take his rifle and go to the fort at South Ottawa and help defend the families gathered there. Joel seriously protested against leaving, for, he said they might as well be killed by the Indians as starve, which he feared they would if they did not stay at work. It was decided however that they would go to her brother near Hennapin, Putnam County, so they packed up clothing, food and such of their furniture as the big Ohio wagon would hold and set out, drawn by three yoke of oxen. George helped them load the wagon and started them off by five o'clock. He then ran some bullets, finished sowing grain, hid the tools

under the floor and went to the fort at South Ottawa to assist in the defense. As usual, Joel drove the ox team, the other boys drove the cows, and their mother rode one horse and drove a mare and colt. While crossing the Vermillion River they were nearly upset but after some difficulties with one of the yoke of oxen that insisted on going down stream instead of across, they reached the other shore in safety.

A farmer invited them to stay that night at his house, an invitation they gladly accepted. This neighbor, learning from them of the outbreak of the Indians, went at once to the fort and returned to them the next morning with the sad news of the massacre of three families, fifteen people, and of two sisters that were taken away as prisoners.

These two sisters, named Rachel and Sylvia Hall, aged fifteen and seventeen respectively, saw their parents killed with tomahawks and scalped. They were then hurried away toward the Mississippi River as the Indians were then retreating. At one time during their captivity there was a near battle between a young chief and another Indian as to which one should marry the one with the beautiful head of hair. However, the girls were kindly treated and redeemed by the Government after a month, for five thousand dollars paid mostly in ponies which the Indians needed very much.

This information excited Joel so much that he urged his mother to start that afternoon for her brother's place some fourteen miles further on. They traveled about five miles when it rained so hard that they had to stop, leave their cattle, their wagon and the dog and go back to the farmers place. She rode her horse with her youngest son on her lap, two boys on the horse behind her, and two boys on foot. Then, they retraced the five miles and leaving the cows without being milked to graze with the oxen, and the mare and colt.

Early the next morning, as the rain had ceased, they returned and found their animals and goods as they had left them. The poor dog, however, was nearly starved. They fed him milk and meat and all took a hearty laugh at his size when his appetite was satisfied. She wrote:

"His hind feet and his fore feet
Stood farther then apart,
And his back was straightened out
And he seemed in better heart."

They traveled with great difficulty through the mud but reached their destination that afternoon.

They remained with her brother Jeremiah's family for a month and just as she was planning to start back with her family and cattle her son George came from the fort with bad news about another massacre, so it was decided that she and George would go on horseback to their place and plant potatoes and beans.

They reached home in time to plant what was needed and rode on to the fort for the night. Here they were joined by William who had been serving in the volunteer army and was now allowed to go with them in looking after their fields. The two brothers went to work at the fort to put their plows in order and their mother returned on her horse to hoe and weed the part of the garden planted a month before.

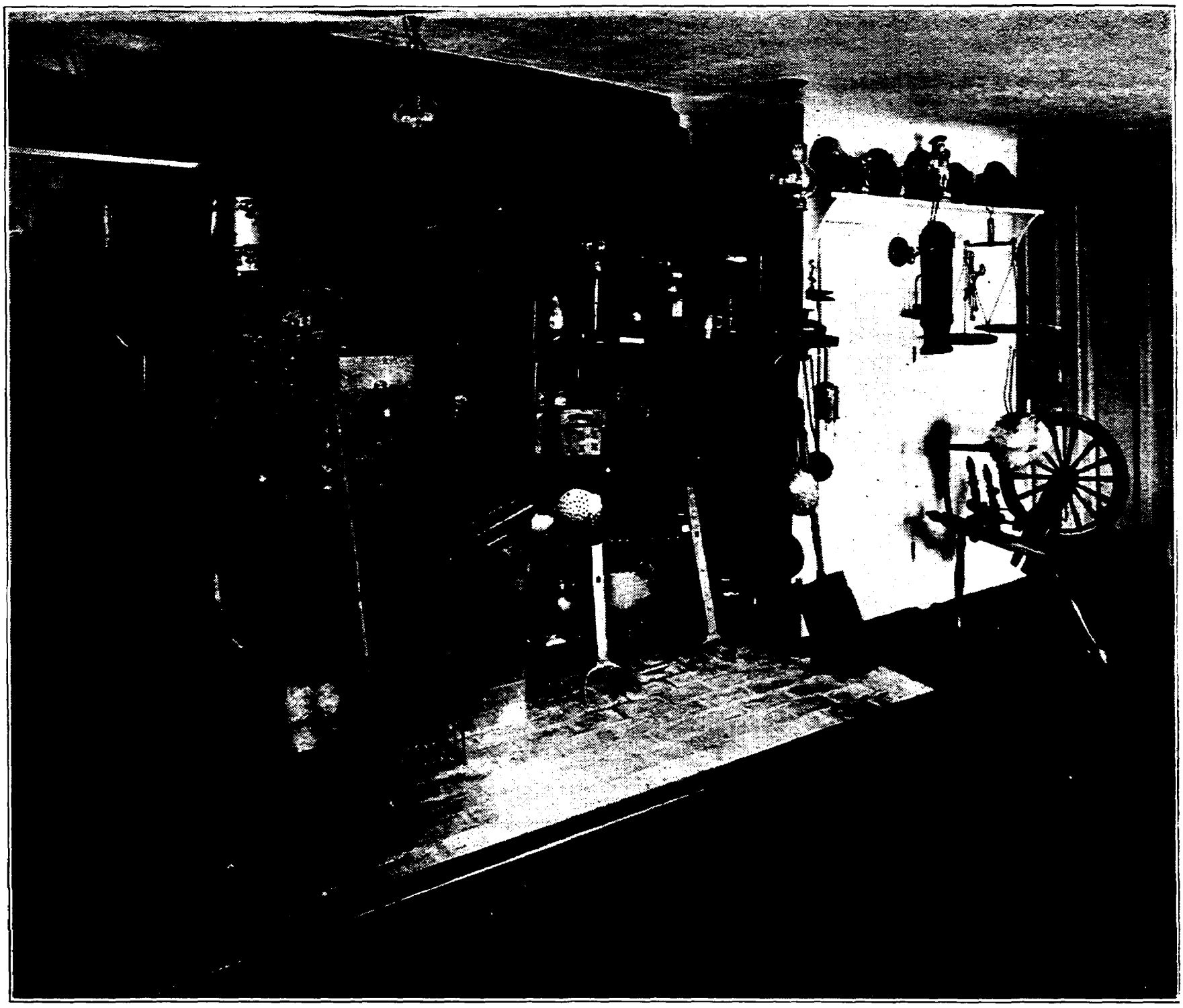
As she approached the house she was startled by seeing a small black pony and what appeared to be a red shirted Indian at the door. She also saw a column of smoke rising from the wood nearby. She debated with herself whether to whirl and retreat as fast as possible or to assure herself first that it was an Indian. She wished her horse would not walk so fast, but he seemed to think he was nearing home and was glad to quicken his step. Just then a white man came around the corner of the house and on his shoulder was her cat. She also saw a troop of horses feeding on the grass and she recognized them as horses of the soldiers of the fort.

She begged the officer not to allow his horses to destroy her corn to which he readily agreed. After the soldiers had finished their lunches and the horses were satisfied, they all departed and she went at her hoeing.

Several times that day she was alarmed by hearing voices and after climbing on the fence each time, saw more soldiers passing. Finally she saw a troop on horseback a half mile away traveling single file in Indian fashion, so she got on her horse and rode some distance to a neighbor's house and stayed there that night. She returned next day and found that George and William were already there at work sowing buck-

wheat and plowing corn. The boys went back to the fort each night and she to the neighbor's until the end of the week. On Sunday another massacre occurred in the neighborhood, so they decided to stay away until it seemed safe again.

Such were the trials and hardships of the other pioneers, so she experienced only a small part of the suffering of the settlement. If the truth were only known, Black Hawk's tribe and other tribes had suffered great injustice and hardship at the hands of white men and from their standpoint they were doing what they could to drive the enemy from their homes and their hunting grounds.



A COLONIAL FIREPLACE

This fireplace is more elaborate than that which could be afforded by the pioneers of 1831. Note the bake oven at the left of the main fireplace. Probably no pioneer had a bake oven in so convenient a position as this. Their bake ovens were built out of doors and the same chamber served for the fire and then after it was well heated and cleaned of ashes was the oven for baking. This bake oven had a more modern provision. Note also the various kinds of utensils. The lanterns hung from the ceiling probably belong to a much later period for the pioneers of 1831 used tallow candles for lighting their cabins.

CHAPTER FIVE

HER LOG CABIN FINISHED—DEATHS AND MARRIAGES—

By mid-summer of 1832, Black Hawk and his allies had all retreated west of the Mississippi. The Pottawatamies, however, under their peace loving chief, Shaubenee, remained in the vicinity. He proved to be a great friend of the settlers on many occasions. Perry A. Armstrong, seventh son of our heroine, secured the necessary funds with which a huge granite boulder was bought, had it properly engraved and set at the grave of Shaubenee in 1903. Shaubenee and several of his immediate family are buried at Evergreen Cemetery in Grundy County. Near the close of his life the citizens of Ottawa presented Shaubenee with a twenty acre tract of land and a house on the Illinois River near Seneca, Illinois. The Government awarded him a pension which he enjoyed the rest of his life. He died in 1859.

The settlers now returned to their homes to find that much damage had been done to their growing crops by the militia that had come up from the south. Our heroine found that their tools and clothing had all disappeared, their potatoes had been dug and all their hogs and chickens had been taken. Doubtless the militia, sent north by Governor Reynolds under the command of General Whitesides of the state militia, were not provided with sufficient rations for their support and were obliged to forage from the settlers whereever they went. This also gave them a sort of a license to help themselves to other things than food.

Three of her sons were absent. John was back in Ohio, William was with the militia, and Joel, then fifteen years old, had gone with three yoke of oxen to help haul provisions and supplies to the militia that were now at Rock Island to prevent the returning of Black Hawk.

There were a number of teamsters with their yokes of oxen forming quite a train under the direction of a government wagon master. Frequently a wagon got stuck and the wagon master had to call on the others to help it out of the mire. When near Dixon, some yoke of oxen strayed away when released at night to

graze and the wagon master called for volunteers to spare a yoke of oxen to draw that wagon along. Joel was among the first who loaned a yoke and received thereby the gratitude of the wagon master. Then he became the hero of the whole train by going on foot over the sloughs they had to cross, and by jumping and stomping on the sod found the safest place to drive and so his wagon was the first across. His mother after hearing the account of it wrote as follows:

"He put his oxen out
Upon a lively run
And the first man across
Was that same little son."

"When the wagon master saw it
Slapped his hand upon his knee
And said 'Upon my word,
You are the man for me'."

The boy had engaged to go only as far as Dickson, but the wagon master persuaded him to go further for she had him say:

"Come, go with me to Rock Island,
You shan't have a heavy load.
For you can show the older men
How they should take the road."

Some time after he had returned home, the paymasters came around and when Joel was pointed out as the boy who had rendered such exceptional services, they could scarcely believe that he was the one, for he was quite small for his age. He was indignant at their doubts, and answered their questions in an angry, injured tone. He soon convinced them by his accurate account of all that happened that he was the one. They complimented him warmly and paid him his wages.

Her house had been left with only one part completed the year before, so now help was obtained and the logs were laid up, and that gave them a house thirty-six by twenty feet and a shed on each side. There was a chimney and a fireplace at each end, so now they felt that they could live quite comfortably. She expresses her satisfaction in these lines:

"In eighteen months we moved six times,
No wonder we were tired,
To have a chance to be at home,
We very much desired."

During that autumn they cut and stacked hay and gathered their crops of corn, potatoes, cabbage, beans and pumpkins. The next spring George broke sod with two yoke of oxen not only for themselves but for neighbors for which he received some cash, some wheat and a cow. He held the handles of the heavy prairie plow while his little brother Perry nine years old, rode the horse that led the oxen.

Their vegetables for winter use were stored in the field by covering them with heaps of straw and then enough earth to keep them from frost. Grain for flour or seed next year was stored in the loft of the house. Corn was also a common article of diet either ground and made into porridge which they called mush, or the whole kernel scalded in lye made from wood ashes and then rubbed to remove the hulls. A large quantity of this food, called hominy, was prepared in winter and allowed to freeze and small quantities boiled soft when needed. Maple syrup and fried corn mush left from their evening meal and some fried pork made up their usual breakfast.

Before winter set in she bought a number of fleece of wool and she says:

"My son George sometimes carded
Until it was late at night
And I would spin the rolls
And he'd keep up the light."

"We sat by a log fire
Where I could see to knit
A carding and a spinning
Till eleven o'clock we'd sit."

She sold mittens she knit for a dollar a pair and socks at seventy-five cents. She wove woolen cloth, and made new clothing for the boys and for herself to replace those stolen by the soldiers. Then the boys split rails for fences and in the spring of 1833 made enough maple sugar and syrup to last all the year. Then they broke more sod and so extended their field crops. She and the smaller boys cared for the garden, the cows and the poultry. She made butter and cheese and enjoyed her home. On Sunday they all went to church on six horses and filled a pew which, she says, "was a flat rail".

Soon however she was both saddened and rejoiced, as parents usually are, for her older sons commenced to prepare for their own homes, and to marry. John

took a new claim across the Illinois River up the Fox River Valley, and soon after was married. George took up a claim in the eastern part of La Salle County near the river.

He married the next year, and so a second son was lost to the mother, but as the older boys left her home, the younger ones had grown up to take their places.

For nearly ten years her affairs went on smoothly without a death, and then in 1841 the invalid son died. He had always been her greatest care and so she missed him accordingly.

By 1851 all her other sons were married, and two of them had gone to California after the Gold Rush excitement. She now felt keenly her lonely condition. She wrote complainingly and with keen wit about this period of her life as follows:

> "My sons are active business men
> They come to see me now and then,
> But not so often now as when
> They wished assistance."

A calamity fell on her again in the form of the death of two of her sons in the same year. Jeremiah died at the age of thirty in California leaving a wife and two sons, and William in a fit of great discouragement took his own life. His wife had died and left him two daughters. The state had defaulted in the payment of a large amount due him for digging a section of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. He paid off the men who worked for him out of his own pocket and had nothing left. He became so despondent that he took his own life at his mother's home where he had gone with his two daughters. More will appear later with regard to the career of some of her sons.

This completes the story of her life until she left the farm and was living in the city of Ottawa in the late fifties. She had saved enough to live upon comfortably, but her long training in serious and strenuous labor could not now be thrown aside for leisure. She worked as if her life depended upon it. She pieced quilts and sewed carpet rags. Whenever she went among friends, relatives or neighbors, she collected bits of cloth for her needle work. The severest economy was practiced at all times. Frequently, as might be expected, she stood in her own light, refusing to take advantage of inventions that would have made life easier for her.

For example my mother bought a sewing machine that was one of the wonderful inventions of the sixties, that greatly facilitated woman's work and gave her some leisure from the tedious hand sewing that was practiced in every home. Grandmother chided her severely for her extravagance. That Wheeler and Wilson sewing machine worked as well as the sewing machines of today. It cost then sixty dollars. Grandmother said you could have bought a cow with that money, and think how much would have been saved from the butter her milk would yield. To show still further this extravagance, she invested five dollars in a sewing machine she saw advertised. It proved to be a fraud for it could neither sew nor even run. It soon found its way into the children's playhouse and nothing more was said about the extravagance of my mother.

She would often entertain me with stories in rhyme she had composed some time before, about events that had transpired in her early life, some of which I can recall verbatim, and will be given in the next chapter, though chronologically out of place.

CHAPTER SIX

THE WILD GAME OF THE COUNTY—THE TRIP FOR SALT

A few years before she came to Illinois, there was a very cold winter in Illinois with deep snow and a severe blizzard. The buffalos that were very numerous at that time, sought shelter from the storm in a deep valley or canyon. The blizzard brought snow upon them in such quantities and so rapidly that they were soon buried and perished. She speaks of seeing half an acre of their bones at one place in La Salle County soon after she came to the State.

The large timber wolves were very numerous and did great damage by killing sheep, pigs and poultry. The favorite sport of her boys, when they saw a wolf, was to mount horses that seemed to understand the sport and chase the wolf over the prairie and when they caught up to it, the horses would run over it, back and forth, until they had stamped it to death. The boys often left the breakfast table to kill a wolf that way and came back in high glee to finish their breakfast. They caught some in log pens baited with meat. They killed fourteen the first year after they came and received a bounty of two dollars each.

The deer and wild turkey were plentiful and doubtless added much to their stock of winter meat. Prairie chickens, wild ducks and geese were found in great numbers in early spring. A few bears were found, and some panthers and wild cats. John told his mother of the sport he had in the year of 1829 killing deer. The snow was very deep in the woods, and by thawing and freezing, a crust was formed on which the deer could walk, but when pursued and they jumped, the crust broke and let them in two or three feet. He could then run up to them without breaking through and cut their throats.

Before the advent of the white man great herds of buffalos lived on the rich prairies of La Salle County. They were the beef cattle of the red man, but they vanished with him. Deer were numerous in pioneer days. They were often very destructive to the pioneer's crops for no fence could keep them out. They would eat the twigs and blossoms of the fruit trees as

high as they could reach and the growing corn was their especial delight. The historian says that the last deer in La Salle County was killed in 1866.

Beaver and otter were found in the county in prepioneer days but the fur trader exterminated them for their pelts. Lynx and wildcats were found as late as 1870. Wolves, foxes, woodchucks and opossums are still to be found in the wooded ravines along the Illinois River. Skunks, ground squirrels and rabbits are still numerous even inside the city limits. Minks and weasels have gone like the other fur bearing animals.

Of game birds the quail is still found in small numbers and the wild duck stops for a rest on its annual migration in spring and fall. Prairie chickens were once so numerous that flocks of thousands could be seen on a frosty winter morning in a field of corn that had not been gathered. One could not approach them on foot but in a sled or wagon one could ride among them and at least make one shot at them before they would take fright. The wild pigeons came in such immense flocks in autumn on their journey southward that they darkened the sky like an immense cloud and often broke the branches of trees when too many alighted on a branch. They are now extinct and only a few mounted specimens are to be found in museums. It was not the sportsman that is to blame for their entire disappearance, but some disease from which they were not immune.

The farm boy of today does not know the charm of the signs of spring that were the delight of the youth of pioneer days. The "boom, boom", of the prairie chickens in February or early March told that the tedious winter months were about over and there would be a relief from the chores to be done on bitter cold mornings, and although plowing and sowing would begin they would be a change that would break the monotony of winter. Then there was the song of "Bob White" by the quail inviting him to try his luck with the little shot gun he had bought with his own money made by selling walnuts or popcorn. Later in the spring there was the monotonous, but pleasant song, of the whippoorwill, and the "chuck, chuck, chuck" of the raccoon calling his mate, and after his hound had tracked it to a tree, to climb it and shake off the little thief that later would play havoc with the young ears of corn.

Probably the youth of today would not exchange the purr of his automotor or the jazz rhythm he hears over his radio for the harbingers of spring that delighted the pioneer youth, but he will never know what he has lost any more than the pioneer could imagine what the future would bring forth.

As winter approached in 1831 they found their supply of salt was nearly exhausted and none was found for sale. Chicago, ninety miles away was the only place where a supply could be found. The man who sold salt to the settlers, did not want to risk freezing by going so far when it was already winter weather with the ground covered with snow. William, now aged 17, was always ready for any emergency. He offered to go if one of the younger boys would go with him. He wanted to take the big sled and three yoke of oxen to pull it. He would have plenty of straw and bed quilts in the sled so the boy could be protected against the storm, and he would walk and drive the oxen. Joel, to whom he appealed refused to go because he feared they would freeze. Perry, then only about nine, volunteered and their mother consented. So she fixed up such food as they could take and they set out on their perilous journey. When they came to the Fox River it was frozen over, and so smooth the oxen could scarecly stand, so they had to be unhitched and even then had a hard time trying to walk over. Two neighbors came to their assistance and helped them push the sled across. They lost their way that day and slept out all night. William tied the oxen to the rear of the sled, fed them corn and hay and crawled in beside Perry under the bedding. His dog also crawled in at their feet and helped to keep them warm. In the morning a man passing on horseback, directed them to where to find the track again that would lead them to Chicago. They fared better after that and were able to stop each night at some ranch house. A woman at whose house they stopped one night told Elsie later that frequently when other men came to stay over night they first stopped at the fire, leaving their team standing hungry in the cold; but this young man unhitched and fed his oxen before he came to the fire. A man who came for lodging drew off his boots and found that he had frozen a toe on each foot. The younger boy seeing he had six toes on

each foot remarked, "If you lose two toes, you will still have as many as other people ever have".

They reached Chicago in safety, purchased six barrels of salt and returned. The same men helped them across the river and they reached home within one week of the day they started.

Their mother had worried a great deal all the week and regretted that she had let them go, so it was a joyful occasion when they came back safe and well. She says:

"We all sat by a good log fire
Talking of those poor boys
When we heard the front door open,
In the entry heard some noise."

"Quickly then the door flew open,
In stepped those precious boys.
I never shall forget that hour,
So full of thankful joys."

"Their cheeks, they looked so red,
Their eyes, they looked so bright,
Oh, I was one glad mother,
My heart it felt so light."

Those six barrels of salt proved a great help to them for they bought corn and apple trees and sold some for cash.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Her Affliction of Sore Eyes and the Beginning of Her Life Story in Rhyme—Her Prejudices —Goes to Live with Her Son George—The Fiddle Story and Others

We now pass on to the year of 1856 after she had disposed of her farm and invested in houses in Ottawa that would bring her an income. She probably had a slight paralytic stroke for she lost the use of her right side for a time. Her grandson, John, the oldest brother of the writer, came to live with her, and probably read law in some one's office which course was a substitute for the law schools of today. He was about twenty-one years old at this time. He had gone to hear a lecture one stormy night, and as she did not hear him return, she felt that she had been deserted. While tossing on her bed, and brooding over her misfortune, she commenced to reel off in her mind, the stanzas that have been the source of information for this narrative.

The rain had been falling heavily all night, which, added to the sense of loneliness, inspired the first lines of her remarkable narrative. No doubt the act of recalling what she had experienced and setting it to rhyme, diverted her mind from the pain in her right side and eyes. Here are some of those first stanzas:

"In pain and anguish
On my lonely bed,
I turn and fix,
To ease my aching head."

"To find a spot whereon
That I may sleep.
But O, Alas! I can
But moan and weep."

"The clock strikes two.
How slow the hours pass.
The rain still beating
On my window glass."

She wrote twenty stanzas on this theme ending with this one:

"His promises sure,
Help me to endure,
This heavy affliction and grief.
Believing He'll come."

"In his own good time
And bring to me certain relief."

One of her tenant's little girls came in the next morning and wrote down these first attempts at rhyme as dictated to her. Her eyes were very sore for several years and the doctors, following the best information they had then, did various things that probably kept them sore long after nature would have done better by her if left alone. They bled her; they cut her cheeks, and had her eye-lashes drawn out as often as they grew out long enough to be grasped by tweezers. Possibly the theory was that a counter irritant would divert the patient's attention from the real trouble and would work a cure.

While she constantly complained of the neglect of her sons they kept one of their children with her all the time. They urged her to give up keeping a home of her own, but she refused for a long time, for she preferred, as most parents do, to be independent. At one time she had much trouble with her stove smoking, and was almost persuaded to yield to their pleading to go home with her son George. He took down the stove pipe and found that a brick had fallen from the top of the chimney and nearly blocked the draft. When this was removed and her fire burned without smoking, she again refused to leave her house. This went on until 1861 when she gave up and came to live in our home, and I, as a lad of eight to ten, held her head in my lap and drew out these stumps of lashes with tweezers, about once a week for four or five years. I recall it with a shudder today, for while it was a task I greatly dreaded I did not realize the pain she must have endured in having it done. Here she lived for several years, occupying a room on the second floor where she pieced quilts, sewed carpet rags and like she said of her mother:

"She kept a sharp look-out
That all the work went on."

And I, as a small boy that loved liberty, certainly felt that my grandmother was:

"The axle that business turned upon."

During a month or two of her summers she made short visits to the homes of her sons, John, Joel, Perry or to that of one of her brothers and she always came back with a quantity of scraps of silk for quilts or cloth for carpet rags. Both my father and mother were very patient with her and overlooked her eccen-

tricities, recognizing the strenuous life she had lived and the hardships she had endured.

Her health improved and her eyes ceased to trouble her, so after living with us for four or five years, she decided to go to Morris where she owned a small house near her son Perry's home. Here she lived by herself with a maid as a house keeper and a grandson to run errands and care for her as I did when she was with us.

Here she spent the remaining years of her eventful life. Before closing this narrative in order to better appreciate her character, it will be necessary to relate some of her ideas about slavery, the Civil War, the ridiculous fashions of woman's dress and her religious views, and finally to give a brief account of her contributions to Illinois in the part played by several of her sons.

She was greatly displeased with the hoops that appeared in 1859 and wrote many verses in ridicule of them. A few are quoted here:

"I have lived to see the fashions
Gone round and three times more,
But I never saw the odium
Of frightful hoops before."

"And from the best accounts
That I can get or learn
It's about two hundred years
Since last the hoops were worn."

"I think it was some scalawag,
The fag end of creation,
Destitute of principle,
Good sense and reputation."

"That again got out the wreck
Of trouble long ago
That Addison and others
Routed and scouted so."

"And now its on our sidewalks,
Just as it was before.
The old and young are all shoved off,
As in the days of yore."

She was equally severe on the bustles worn about the same time. She begins with these lines:

"Did you ever see a lady
With a hump upon her back
To imitate the camel,
By moss stuffed in a sack?"

On her seventy-second birthday, she wrote an account in a dozen stanzas telling what she had accomplished during the year:

1. Pieced twenty-six covers.
2. Tied fourteen comforts.
3. Made twenty-eight horse nets.
4. Knit five pairs of stockings.
5. Made four dresses for myself.
6. Knit eight tidies for chairs.
7. Made eight covers for cushions.
8. Cut eight pounds of carpet rags.

She prefaced some verses of advice she sent to a favorite nephew with these sentences in prose, that would be good for any young man away from home for the first time:

"You are now in a new place. Do be careful in your choice of company. We are looked upon by the company we keep. Best keep aloof from all company until you have time to discern who has principle, and who will be safe company. Bad company has been the ruin of thousands of well intentioned boys."

Here is one of the stanzas:

"Take up no idle habits,
Never learn to smoke or chew,
Never learn to gamble
And dram drink never do."

And at another time she wrote:

"Let slanderers discharge their tongues
With venom till they burst their lungs."

"Nor will you find your fortune sink
At what they speak or what they think."

In her seventy-fourth year she wrote:

"I am in my seventy-fourth
And traveled much alone,
But never had a joint put out
Nor yet a broken bone."

"Of rather sound material
I surely must be made
Or I could not have so escaped,
I often thought and said."

She was a little confused as to the use of the terms Republican and Democratic forms of government. She called attention to the prosperity of the government under Democratic presidents most of the time since the Revolution, and of the terrible civil war under Republican rule. She especially blamed Lincoln and

Henry Ward Beecher and the Abolitionists for the slaughter that was taking place. She resented the application of the name "Copper-heads" as applied to the Democratic Party, and called it the last resort of argument when the Republicans could find nothing else against the Democrats. She was radically opposed to freeing the slaves, and caused a preacher much annoyance by quoting Scripture to show that God authorized slavery. She told him that he had better read his Bible. She quoted from the Bible how God told Abram to take the heathen for bondman and maid. She called his attention to the promises made by the Lord to Noah's sons. She considered the white people as sons of Japheth. The Indians were the sons of Ham, in whose tents—lands—the seed of Japhet were to dwell; and Shem's sons were the slaves. She warned him:

"Beware you do not trample
Upon the law of God
For fear that He may scourge you
With His iron rod."

She thought the slaves were content and happy, clothed and fed, but when freed were not capable of caring for themselves. She also saw clearly the effect of slaughter of white men in order to free the slaves and asks in rhyme:

"Must our little orphan girls
A sacrifice be made
To heathen brutal lust
By war an orphan made."

"Whose fathers bled and died
To set the heathen free?"

Then calls on President Lincoln to stop the war as follows:

"Oh: Mr. Lincoln
Recall your proclamation
Before it is too late
For you to get salvation."

She wrote a great many stanzas at the request of friends on topics suggested by them on personal themes. Among the humorous verses the following always amused her grandchildren, concerning a servant girl that used to go out evenings. It was so often repeated to me by my grandmother with a merry twinkle in her eye, that I recall every word of it after a lapse of sixty years. It runs:

"I have a little pet
And she keeps me in a fret
For I cannot break her yet
Of her night walking."

"There come along some girls,
Then she fixes up her curls
And then the little churls
Go off with some talking."

"She comes home late at night
And then she strikes a light
To put my things aright
And disturbs my quiet slumbers."

"And then she winds the clock
And 'round the house she'll knock
And in the stove the coal she'll sock
Like heavy lumber."

Another little stanza she often repeated to me was composed just when she decided to go to live with her son George. I recall it as follows:

"I'll go off to my son's
And rock me at my ease
Where nothing there will trouble me
Unless it is the fleas."

In religion she was raised as a Quaker. She told in one place in her story of her father's family all going to church and of her sisters going to a secluded spot near the house to pray. She tells of taking her entire family of boys to church on six horses. The principle text-book used in schools was the Bible, so she was well versed in Bible doctrines. She closes many of her chapters with sentiments that show a deep religious trust in a guiding Providence.

My first experience with hearing a blessing asked at meals was in hearing her, a ceremony she never neglected.

The religious prejudice of the Quakers and early Methodists toward a violin are best shown by her own story, "The History of a Violin".

"One evening by my fireside
I thought I heard a fiddle,
I could scarce believe my ears,
It seemed something like a riddle."

"I stepped out at the front door,
Looked up and down the lane,
But there I could see nothing,
It was a puzzle to my brain."

"I walked back into the house
And by the fire sat down
But I had not been there long
Till again I heard the sound."

"Then I got up and started,
Through the dining room I went.
For then I did feel anxious
To find out what it meant."

"When I came to the kitchen
There I saw the fiddle.
My children all around it
And it was in the middle."

"I stood there in silence,
And confess I was amazed
My children all were silent
And upon each other gazed."

"At length I broke the silence
And whose is that? I asked.
One answered, It is ours,
We just now got it made.

"Then they all at once seemed anxious
To let me hear how they could play,
One at a time, my sons,
That must be the way."

"You all shall have your turn,
There must be no contention,
And you shall all be satisfied
With your new invention."

"Each man shall play an hour
Then perhaps he'll want some rest,
When each man saws his hour out,
I'll know who can do it best."

"Now John, as you're the oldest,
Take hold and saw an hour.
Go at it now my son
With all your skill and power."

"And I will watch the clock
And see there is no cheat,
When each man saws his hour out,
I'll know then who can beat."

"But with secret satisfaction
I saw their courage fail,
And long before their hour was up
Their music seemed but stale."

"The fiddle in the dining room
Upon the stand did lay,
Neglected and forsaken
And that from day to day."

"It was not long after that time
We had a visit from my mother;
In passing through the dining room
All three of us together."

"She suddenly made a stop
At the fiddle on the stand.
Disgusted and astonished
She pointed with her hand."

"She said, Washington, go burn it.
She spoke to my second son,
He snatched it up immediately
And to the kitchen fire did run."

"He slapped it in the fire,
Silk cords and all together,
No sooner said, than done,
At the suggestion of my mother."

"It is more than thirty years,
Since that incident has been
And not one of them since that time
Has touched a violin."

"I inquired of the boy
What put it in his head
To undertake a fiddle.
He answered thus, and said;"

"When I was at Uncle's
Not long ago its been
There one of his hands
Had a violin."

"And when his work was done,
At night when he came in,
Then he would sit down
And play on his violin."

"And sometimes after supper
He'd sit under the shed,
And there he'd play an hour
Before he went to bed."

"I thought the music good,
I loved to hear the sound,
And I thought that I could make one,
The first good chance I found."

"And when the work was done,
After we got it made,
To come and hunt the silk for cords
We were all somewhat afraid."

"For you sat in the room
And might detect us in the act
Unless we could get you out
Or your mind could much attract."

"And so we all drew cuts,
And the lot fell unto me,
And I came in the room
And stood before the fire you see."

"When in that important business
I well engaged your mind,
I went up to the case of drawers
And the skeins of silk did find."

"When I went to the shop they said,
Why you have done well,
And now to know your plan
We would like to hear you tell."

"When I well engaged her mind,
So that I thought that I could do it,
I went back and found the silk
And came out, she did not know it."

Although it required a great deal of skill on the part of her son George to make a violin without special tools and to do it all secretly, she showed no appreciation of his workmanship. This can be accounted for only by recognizing that she had a deeply seated religious prejudice against fiddles. The Quakers of her day, as well as some other religious sects up to the present time, believe the fiddle to be an instrument of the Devil used to ensnare young people through dancing to lead an immoral life.

She administered the severest penalty possible, not only upon the maker of the violin, but upon the innocent admirers of it. Not one of her sons ever had instruction in music. For anyone with that lack of knowledge of music to have to draw a bow across the strings of a violin, producing discordant note for an hour was surely enough to make them despise the instrument. The result was just what she wanted. She said:

"With secret satisfaction
I saw their courage fail."

Her method of corrective punishment was wiser than that of her mother who required that the offending instrument should be burned. Her mother's method was like that of a previous age when people were tortured or burned at the stake for having opinions opposed to the church. If Elsie had burned the violin as soon as she discovered it, her boys probably would have felt like martyrs and secretly vowed to learn the depths of the charm of the fiddle. Instead they found

it did not yield a charm in their hands and were satisfied to abandon it.

She told me she ran to save the silk cords before George could burn the fiddle, but he was too quick for her. George had a deep seated love for music and all his life he would sit and listen to music whenever the opportunity offered, even to the crudest strains. I have known him to lay side his newspaper to listen to his daughter playing five finger exercises on the piano in the early stages of her lessons.

This episode of her life as well as others related by her, indicate that she must have been a woman of strong convictions and tremendous will power. No obstacle baffled her courage. She also showed her keen intuition on her method of corrective punishment, but no matter if she was wrong in her judgment of the supposed evil, she was in advance of society of her day as to the best method of correction.

Some of the same traits of character were inherited or drilled into her sons. Conditions surrounding their lives were very different from those of her life, but they met those conditions in much the same way; overcoming new difficulties and recognizing their duty to society.

Brief sketches of the careers of her sons will form the next chapter of this tale of "The Woman Pioneer" in order more completely to show her contribution to the great Northwest.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONTRIBUTIONS TO AFFAIRS OF STATE BY THREE OF HER SONS JOHN, GEORGE AND WILLIAM

At the beginning of this narrative I wrote of the contribution this woman pioneer made to the history of Illinois in the sons she brought to the state. No history of Illinois of the pioneer days would be complete without mention of the part taken by at least five of her sons.

JOHN STRAWN ARMSTRONG

John, the oldest was among the first farmers to devote himself to the organization of farmers in their own interest, and so helped to inaugurate the Grange Society. Now, after nearly a century has passed, the organization of those engaged in any one occupation is found to be essential to the advancement of their common interests. In pre-historic times men lived apart and regarded all but their family as their enemy. They were slower than wolves to learn the advantage of hunting in packs. Witnesses to this fact of recent years, are not only labor organizations, but Kiwanis Clubs, Lions Clubs and Rotary Clubs among business men. John S. Armstrong recognized the advantages of organizations. Business men and professional men today recognize the advantage in ceasing to "cut each others' throats" and work together for the common good.

John S. Armstrong was one of the few men a century ago who believed in this doctrine. He gave the Grange movement all the encouragment he could locally and finally became the treasurer of the State organization. He became one of the best known farmers and stock raisers in the Northern part of La Salle County and left a large estate to his six children, some of whom are still living in the county.

GEORGE WASHINGTON ARMSTRONG

George, her second son, known as Wash Armstrong, was engaged all his life in public service. At the age of 32 he was elected to the State Legislature and served one term. In 1847 he was elected to represent La Salle and Grundy counties in the Constitutional

Convention. Again beginning in 1870 he served four terms in the Legislature as representative from La Salle county. In his first term of such service he introduced a bill creating a sinking fund to pay off the State debt and was warmly praised by Abraham Lincoln for it. He said to George "Young man, you will see the day when the State will be out of debt". This proved true for in one of his later terms in the Legislature, the House had a banquet at which George was given the honor of burning the last bond at the banquet table. He was also a member of the Legislature that finished the present State House at Springfield. As a boy I recall his complaints at some things in connection with that committee work. In the first place he thought it a mistake to locate the building where they did for it was a pond that had to be graded up many feet to become usable at all and then he objected to the marble trimming and balusters on the stairways. He thought this a great piece of extravagance. This is not to be wondered at when one considers the pioneer life he had lived and the need of the strictest economy at all times. Now all will admit that the majority of that committee were wiser than he in doing what they did. I recall a similar attitude of his in regard to the discarding of old machinery. We boys many times would like to have discarded old machines and purchase more modern ones, but his policy was to replace worn parts from time to time so that we felt that a machine could never be discarded. We wished sometimes that there might be a re-enactment of the fate of the "One hoss shay".

He was the best parliamentarian of the House and as the House was Republican and he a Jackson Democrat, he could only attain the position of minority leader. He ran for Congress against Owen Lovejoy at the time when anti-slavery was the issue and though he was opposed to slavery he, like Senator Stephen A. Douglas, believed each state should settle that question for itself. He was defeated though he received a large minority vote.

In 1834 there was a meeting of those interested in creating a commission to forward the interests of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. At that time there was no railroad and all freight and passenger transportation was by ox cart or horse wagon up and down the Illinois valley from Peoria to Chicago. The rivers

were navigable from La Salee to New Orleans, but the dream of the settlers was to connect La Salle with Chicago by a canal so there would be cheap transportation from Chicago to the gulf. A meeting was called at Ottawa to make a formal demand upon the Governor of the state to lay the matter before the Legislature. George W. then a young man only 22 years old was chosen secretary and to carry the request to Governor Joseph Duncan at Vandalia then the Capital of the State. The next year the State pledged its credit and bonds were sold to raise money for beginning the digging of the canal.

In 1837 as a mere boy 25 years old he took a contract to dig a portion of the canal between Ottawa and Utica. He hired about a hundred men just over from Ireland. Much of the work had to be done with pick, shovel and wheelbarrow because the limestone came near to the surface. He had his troubles with these so-called "Wild Irishmen". "The Corks" and the "Fardowns" were always at war with each other, and he had to make peace between them as best he could. Then there was the strike for more whiskey for they all believed it was necessary to have a certain amount of whiskey a day as a part of their wages. These amounts were called jiggers, that being about a gill, and of course the number of jiggers had to be increased. The war between the two factions was a bloodless one for the weapons were scythes and butcher knives and fists and the latter were the most common. It did however mean a serious time for the young contractor. He succeeded so well however as a peacemaker that both sides looked to him as their protector and when he returned to his claim in 1840 a large number of them took up small claims all around his. All our neighbors for some distance around in my day on the farm were the second generation of these people. He staked off his claim in 1833 but other business including three years on canal work kept him away until 1840. During this absence another man jumped his claim, that is, took possession of it and built a log house. To avoid a case in court for possession he offered a certain sum of money for peaceable possession which was refused in the presence of George's brother William. The latter was a large powerful man who did not waste words in an argu-

ment when fists were more effective, so by this assistance the offer was accepted.

On March 10, 1835 he was married to Nancy Green of Jacksonville and the young couple rode from there to Ottawa on horseback as there was no other means for travel between those two places. He then set up a sawmill on the Waupecan near the present city of Morris not then existing. He also conducted a blacksmith shop and a general grocery store until 1837 when he moved to Utica to begin his canal work. His sawmill business failed for as he said the Waupecan was a "thunder-shower stream" so only furnished water to run the mill a few months in the spring. Lumber was very expensive at that time as it had to be brought from Chicago by ox cart and cost $60.00 a thousand. No doubt his failure to produce lumber had much to do with his interest in a canal from Chicago to Ottawa and beyond. After the canal was completed in 1848 the price of lumber fell to half its original price.

Personally his canal work was a great misfortune for when the work was completed the State was bankrupt and he was obliged to take what he could get for the scrip in which the State paid for the work. He therefore had to sell his scrip for twenty-eight cents on the dollar and someone who had money to invest finally got the profit.

While pursuing his work on the canal, he was pursuaded that he ought to carry a pair of pistols to protect himself in case he were attacked. He purchased the pistols and put them on and wore them one day and then threw them aside feeling ashamed to thus appear before his men that he had been controlling by peace measures. He never carried them again.

An interesting event occurred in the year 1833 when as a young man a month short of 21 he went from So. Ottawa to stake off his claim in the eastern part of the county. His younger brother William and two hired men went with him on horseback and camped on the land the night in November 13, 1833 when the greatest shower of meteors ever recorded occurred. They were all rolled up in their blankets sleeping around their camp fire. George awoke about 4 o'clock in the morning with the brilliant light in the sky. What appeared like stars were swiftly flying across the sky from the north east. The whole sky was filled

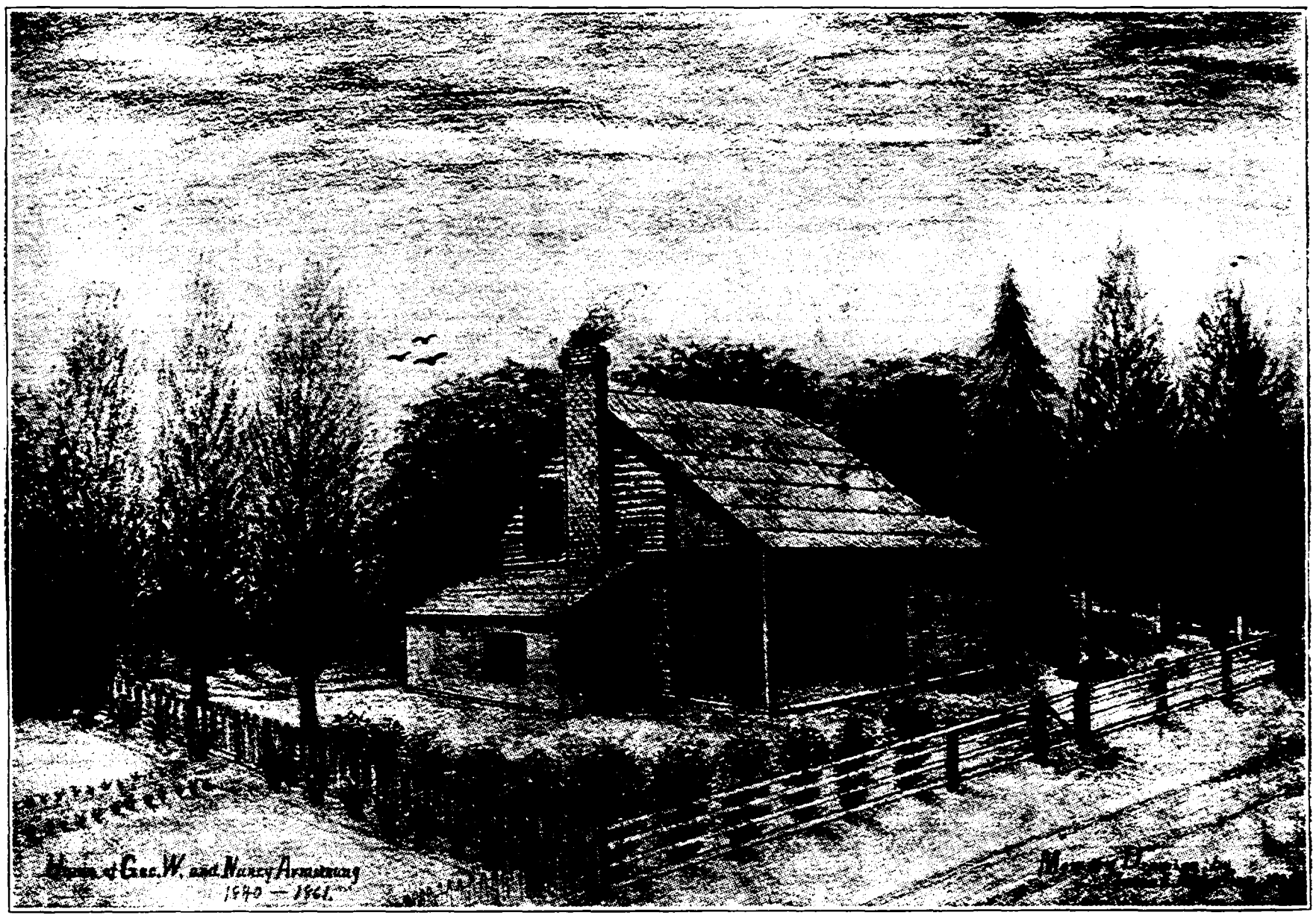
with them. He woke the others to witness the wonderful sight. His younger brother watched till he saw a particularly brilliant meteor go by and then said "There goes the morning star so I go too", so he rolled up in his blanket for another nap. The two hired men however took a different view of the affair and fearing the world was to be consumed with fire from heaven, they mounted their horses and rode as fast as they could back to So. Ottawa so as to die with their families, leaving the two brothers to stake the claim as best they could.

After returning to his claim he devoted himself to farming and stock raising. There were vast prairies only a few miles away where cattle could roam all thru the summer and where hay could be cut for winter fodder, so he conducted an extensive cattle ranch and drove his beef cattle to Chicago each fall. Rattle snakes and wolves took some toll and sometimes the cattle rustlers succeeded in cutting his profits. He never ceased however to devote a considerable amount of his time to serving the State, County and Township in which he lived.

For 22 years he represented his township on the county board of Supervisors and was chairman of that board most of the time. He was chosen as chairman of the committee of supervisors that built the present court house and jail at Ottawa and the chairman of the committee that built the river bridges at Morris and at Seneca. He bought the right of way for the Seneca and Kankakee railroad and was president of the local school board that built the first school house in that part of the country. That school house built in 1848 still stands and in it the writer attended school until his 18th year and then for two winters taught the school.

The history of La Salle County published by the Lewis Publishing Company of Chicago says of him: "He was a peacemaker and general arbitrator of all neighborhood difficulties. If he ever had an enemy, he was a silent one, for we never heard a single word against him or his motives".

He lived on his farm the rest of his life. As his family grew in numbers finally reaching nine, of which seven were boys, he found very soon after returning to his farm that the square log house needed to be enlarged. The first floor with its great fireplace



THE LOG HOUSE IN WHICH THE FAMILY OF GEORGE W. ARMSTRONG LIVED FROM 1840 TO 1861 AND IN WHICH THE AUTHOR WAS BORN

Drawn from memory by the author fifty years after it was torn away.

served as living room, dining room and kitchen. There were two bedrooms on the second floor. Lumber was getting cheaper by this time and he made three additions with studding, siding and plaster. There was added a kitchen, and two bedrooms and a porch. Before this all cooking was done over the fireplace or out of doors in the great stone oven erected for that purpose.

In 1860 he built a large eleven room house and a modern barn. During the civil war this house was the center where the neighbors frequently assembled at night to raise money for the soldiers' hospitals. I recall with a keen sense of delight the parties of young folks that assembled to draw prizes from the "grab bag" at a small fee or to buy chances on the cake that contained a gold ring in one of the pieces. Then there were the sewing circles that made bandages for the wounded soldiers.

There was one lesson in true statesmanship as illustrated by my father that made a deep lasting impression upon me. When Lincoln and General McClelland were running for office in 1864 it was the fashion for small boys to wear an oilcloth cap with the name of their father's candidate for the presidency upon it. Of course, my cap had the name of McClelland upon it during the campaign. When President Lincoln was assassinated on April 14, 1865, I saw my father and mother sitting on the porch both looking very sad and I heard father lamenting that the President had been assassinated. I was greatly puzzled at that, for in my opinion it was a good thing for now McClelland could be President and I did not see why my parents were so sorry.

Another lesson came to me in my father's account of a visit made by Senator Davis to Governor Ford of Illinois in 1844. As a small boy I was puzzled as to why my father thought it so important and told the story many times. The State was bankrupt at that time and had not even the money to pay the interest on money borrowed in Boston to say nothing of the bonds that should have been redeemed. The holders of these bonds sent Senator Davis to see what could be done. Accordingly, in that year, he arrived at Springfield and inquired where he might find the Governor's mansion. He was directed to go so many blocks east and so many south and the first house on the corner

was the one he sought. When he reached that point the only house was a small half story cottage. He went to the door to inquire where to go and knocking he was met by a woman in a calico dress and a checkered apron. He was surprised beyond measure when she told him that this was the Governor's house, and was asked to come in, and to wait for her to call the Governor from the back yard where he was sawing wood. Wishing to see the novel sight of a Governor sawing his own firewood, he said he would prefer to go around the house and see him there. The Governor was engaged in sawing a dry hickory stick with a dull saw and he kept right on till the stick was cut off.

Upon introducing himself and telling his business the Governor received him very cordially and invited him to go with him to his office at the State House. Here the Governor who kept his own books personally went over the figures showing the amount of taxable property in detail and the amount of the sinking fund that had been ordered by the law inaugurated by George W. Armstrong. In answer to the question as to the rumor that the State would repudiate its debts, the Governor laughed and assured him that the people of Illinois were honest and would pay every cent they owed. Senator Davis returned home and reported that* "Any State whose people had the good sense to elect such a man as Thomas Ford, Governor, a man whose character is an example of simplicity and economy of living, who resides in a small frame house, devoid of all the luxuries of life, and saws his own wood, will pay their debts in full with interest and this you may depend upon. As to repudiation, I am happy to report no such feeling exists among the press or the people of Illinois".

The full meaning of this episode has been coming to the writer ever since and the example of this excellent Governor should be kept before the present generation.

George W. Armstrong remained on his farm until his death in his 90th year and was laid to rest in the Cemetery in Ottawa.

WILLIAM ELDER ARMSTRONG

William E. the third son of Elsie and Joseph probably had the keenest intellect of the family, but allowed

*The Sauks and Black Hawk War, by P. A. Armstrong, page 131.

the misfortunes of his early business career to unseat his reason so he took his own life at the age of 36. From the History of LaSalle and Grundy Counties published in 1900 by the Lewis Publishing Company of Chicago, I find data for this brief sketch. It says:

"The name of no man living or dead is so intimately connected with and involved in the early history of Grundy County and the city of Morris as that of William Elder Armstrong from its inception, birth and christening to the time of his death."

He was one of the first to volunteer to go with his flint-lock rifle and join the state troops in the Black Hawk War. He was then seventeen years old. At 21, he with his brother Joel, owned and operated what would now be called a department store and did a large business in what is now South Ottawa. This was a great financial success. He ran a hotel next to his store. Then he obtained a charter from the legislature to operate a ferry across the Illinois River. Next he built a steamboat to run to St. Louis, but it was soon sunk and so this venture failed.

In 1837 he took a contract to dig several miles of the Illinois and Michigan Canal between Utica and Ottawa. He was then but 23 years old. He finished his work on this contract and then moved to his land in what afterwords, through his initiative, became Grundy County. He thought LaSalle County was too large a territory for one county. He therefore got up a petition, got it signed and presented it personally to the legislature and therefore got two counties set off. The act became effective February 17, 1841. The one on the East was called Grundy, and the one on the Northeast Kendall. The next question was where the County Seat of Grundy County should be located? The legislature required it should be on canal land and the site was decided on by three canal commissioners and three citizens of whom William was one. There was a dead lock at first, three for one site and three for another. Finally a new canal commissioner by the name of Morris was appointed by the Governor in place of one of the three and he favored the position desired by Mr. Armstrong.

In recognition of this favor, Mr. Armstrong moved that the town be named Morris, which was done.

He was elected sheriff several times and was the terror of evil-doers. Being a man of large size and

of great physical strength and courage he was afraid of no one.

On his canal contract, he was paid in scrip worth only twenty-eight cents on the dollar, and as he had to have money to pay his laborers, he had to sell the scrip to someone who could hold it until the state redeemed its promise and paid interest as well. He was a heavy loser and had to sacrifice all his other property besides. He brought suit against the state, but it was delayed time and again, until after his death.

The following paragraph from the History of La-Salle and Grundy Counties by the Lewis Publishing Company is quoted here:

"Taken all in all, he was the finest specimen of physical and mental manhood we have ever known. Quick to perceive and prompt to act, he could devise ways and means to accomplish the most stupendous results when other men would yield in despair. Whatever he attempted to do, he did it, if within the power of mortal man to do it, yet he was so kindly hearted and of such a loving disposition that every child who knew him would clamber all over him. He was a born leader of men and his influence was so great among the people of his county that he was known far and near as the Emperor of Grundy."

CHAPTER NINE

CONTRIBUTIONS OF JOEL, JEREMIAH AND ISAIAH.
JOEL W. ARMSTRONG

Joel W., the fourth son of Elsie and Joseph was the boy of 13 who with his brother William two years older, were the main help of their mother when she left her husband in 1829.

Two years later this boy, Joel, drove the five-horse conostoga wagon from Ohio to Illinois. It was no light task for a mature teamster in those days to drive such a heavy wagon over unimproved roads over swollen streams and thru the sloughs, but this boy understood horses and horses understood him. It was admitted by his older brothers that he could get horses to do what they could not get them to do. He had the same power over cattle as demonstrated a year later when he went with many other men to haul provisions to Dixon and on to Rock Island during the Black Hawk War.

Before he was old enough to take up a government claim he helped his brother William run a department store in South Ottawa and made it pay well. When old enough, he took up a homestead claim in Deer Park township where he lived the rest of his life. He showed his ability to understand the best traits of horses and cattle by introducing blooded stock into the county, and took the first prize many years in succession for Short-horn cattle and trotting horses. Before this time the stock reared in the county was the mongrel stock and the introduction of better breeds was the means of increasing the wealth of the stock raiser. He maintained a race track on his farm where he trained trotting horses.

He was the first postmaster in his section of the county and later recorder of deeds for the county. At one time he was elected Justice of the Peace and at another supervisor from his township to the county board. He was highly esteemed by all who knew him and looked upon as one of the leaders in all civic affairs. He reared a family of six children. His death occurred the same year as that of his mother, Elsie.

JEREMIAH ARMSTRONG

Not much can be learned of Jeremiah the sixth son since he died when his two sons were infants and so they passed on little information about him to their children now living. From other members of the family I have learned that he went to California during the "Gold Rush" of 1849 and died there of mountain fever the next year on the same day that his older brother William died. He left a wife and two sons in Utica, Illinois, when he went to California, intending to return for them later.

The journey across the plains at that time was a perilous one and his mother feared to have him undertake it alone. There were no railroads and in fact no roads of any kind. It was much more of an undertaking than the trip they made eighteen years before in coming from Ohio for part of the way from Ohio was a beaten track, but this trip to California was over trackless prairies and sand swept deserts. There were no sign posts along the way to tell the traveler which way to go unless it might be the worn out equipment, or the bones of horses and oxen that died of fatigue or the bones of the buffalos that had served as food for men and their bones picked clean by the coyotes of the prairies. Then there were the crude tombstones that marked the last resting place of those who could not bear the strain or died of cholera or were killed by the Indians scattered all the way.

Jeremiah's mother realizing at least some of these dangers persuaded her youngest son Isaiah now twenty-one years old, to accompany him. Jeremiah was twenty-eight, full of the vigor and ambition that had been handed down to him from his Scotch-Irish ancestors that caused so much trouble to the English Kings during the Border Warfares between Scotland and England for many centuries. He had high hopes of a fortune that would care for the wife and two little boys that waited for his return back in LaSalle County, hopes that were never to be realized. His fate however was to be shared by thousands of other ambitious fortune seekers.

It was a motely throng that assembled along the Feather River in California a few months later. They were young men from every state in the Union and some from Europe and South America. It is remark-

This picture of ox-drawn covered wagons was made recently when a Pageant was gotten up to illustrate the migration of pioneers not only when they moved from the eastern states to Illinois but the great migration to California during the "Gold Rush" in 1849.

During these times there were no hard roads and so a wide tired wagon was necessary so as to prevent sinking in the soft mud of the sloughs. For the same reason oxen with their split hoofs that spread as they go down, making a larger hole in the mire, contracted when the foot was drawn out so it created no suction. Horses were easily stuck in the mud because the hoof worked like a piston so that when the horse tried to pull the foot out of the mud there was no space around the hoof to let the air down so the suction held the foot fast. For like reasons oxen were found best for breaking the prairie sod.

—Underwood and Underwood Photograph.

able how the news had spread all over the civilized world about the accidental discovery of gold on Sutter's ranch in digging a ditch at a time when there were no telegraph wires stretched from city to city nor across the oceans. There were no radio or wireless apparatus and few newspapers so it took eight months for this news to reach New York. The great game of chance that has brought fortunes to a few and ruin to the many has always been and still is a siren of destruction.

Here were gathered the young men from all classes of society from the humblest ranks of labor to men of the professions of law, medicine and theology, each filled with the spirit of adventure and hopeful of being among the "quick rich" class of which there were some conspicuous examples. Men digging on claims side by side found pockets of gold on one claim worth $50 a day and but $2.00 a day on the other. Such was "the miner's luck".

A migration of young men like this of '49 had never occurred in this country before and never since in such numbers. During the gold rush to the Klondyke there was a somewhat similar migration and again to Cripple Creek, Colorado, but neither of these can compare to this to California. There were three main avenues of approach to the gold fields in '49. One was by boat from the east coast around the "Horn" and up the west coast, one was by boat to Panama, then across the isthmus by mule train or a twenty mile hike, then by boat to San Francisco and the other was by covered wagon, mule train and on foot across the plains. It is not difficult to determine what class of fortune hunters went by each of these three routes. The two boat trips were comparatively safe, but that across the plains was full of dangers and many lost their lives in the attempt. Wives, children and sweethearts remained at home waiting anxiously for the letters that in some cases never came. Hopes lived on for some time that the loved ones would return some day with the coveted fortune.

The great throng that assembled at Feather River, California, were like the bees of a hive. There was no government to protect the rights of the individual, no police, no courts of justice and yet all went well at least for a time for like the bees of the hive, for, all realizing their mutual dependence upon each other

were willing to sacrifice life itself if necessary for the good of the whole. It is said that a pan of gold at the door of a tent was as safe from thieves as it is today in a safety deposit vault. When the gamblers and thieves arrived as they did soon after, this was all changed and a very bad condition arose. The Treaty of Peace with Mexico was signed in February, 1848. By the end of 1849 there were more than a hundred thousand people in California. The territory acquired had not yet been divided into the states it afterwards became, but in 1850 California was admitted as a State. For this reason in 1849, thieves and gamblers took advantage of the lack of organized government and so for a time no man's life was safe.

After a short experience in mining the two brothers found it more profitable and sure of success to sell meat to the miners and so went into that business. The next year Jeremiah died of mountain fever. Little if any care had been taken to insure sanitary conditions of the camps even if they knew the necessity for it, for no one could be induced to stop digging to attend to such work. The consequence was that many died of fever. From time to time however, someone did awaken to the consciousness that he had not written home nor heard from wife, mother or sweetheart for a long time and so would travel a hundred miles to send a letter or to receive a longed for message from home, and some like the wife of Jeremiah got the sad news that the loved one never could return. Time softened the pangs of sorrow and disappointment in the heart of the widow, but two little boys grew up to manhood often wondering what might have been their career if their father had been allowed to carry out his plans for them.

PERRY A. ARMSTRONG

Perry A. Armstrong, the seventh son of Elsie and Joseph, had the advantage of a better education than any of his brothers. He attended Granville Academy in Putnam County and then two years at Illinois College at Jacksonville, Illinois. Poor health prevented the completion of his college course.

He then took up his residence in Morris at the age of twenty and remained there until his death in 1904. His whole life was devoted to public service. He was first appointed Postmaster and then elected school

trustee, and next township trustee. He raised and drilled a company for the Mexican War in response to the proclamation of Governor Ford in 1846.

In 1847 he was one of the delegates to the River and Harbor Convention where he was associated with Abraham Lincoln in Committee work. He was the first supervisor of the town of Morris and in 1847 Justice of Peace.

He was a clerk in the Office of the Auditor of Public Accounts during the winter of 1850-51 and drew the charters of the Rock Island, LaSalle and Chicago Railroad, Burlington and Qunicy and Illinois Central.

In 1853 and 1857 he was elected Clerk of the County Court. In 1862 he was elected to the Constitutional Convention of Illinois, but this Constitution failed in the election that followed.

During all the preceding years of his public career, he had been reading law, there being no law schools, and was admitted to the bar in 1863. He served two terms in the legislature and as a member of the Judiciary and Railroad Committees, he was the author of our common law jurisdiction of County Courts, and our jury law.

He was a personal friend of Lincoln and Douglas and during the winter of 1851 Mr. Lincoln and he alternated in reading the entire works of Walter Scott to a literary society in Springfield.

He was a member of the Independent Order of Oddfellows and a thirty-third degree Mason and at times held high official positions in each.

He is the author of "The Sauks and the Black Hawk War" and of many short poems. He secured the funds and placed a fitting monument at the grave of Shaubenee the noted Indian Chief and collected and sent to the Smithsonian Institute in Washington several tons of fossils he gathered from Mazon Creek near Morris.

ISAIAH ARMSTRONG

The youngest son of Elsia and Joseph Armstrong left Ottawa with his brother Jeremiah with an ox-team in the spring of 1849 when the whole country was in a fever of excitement over the discovery of gold in California the year before. The chances of finding a fortune stowed away in the earth was a prize held out to the imagination of every young man ambitious and courageous enough to undertake the dangerous journey

of three thousand miles across deserts, trackless prairies and swollen rivers with hostile Indians all the way.

These two young men, one 28 and the other 21 years old, set out on this perilous journey and reached St. Joseph, Mo., in May and there joined with 120 others that made up the wagon train of prairie schooners. Each night on the journey they turned their oxen out to graze since they could not carry fodder along for them. One night the entire lot of cattle was driven off by the Indians. The emigrants scattered out in all direction in search of them and after several days search found them with a tribe of Indians with whom they had a battle. Being well supplied with rifles they killed eight of the Indians and recovered their oxen without the loss of a man on their side. This caused a delay of a week and great anxiety on the part of the young emigrants.

Their next difficulty was in crossing the Platte River where they lost some of their oxen in the quicksand. They helped each other out by loaning oxen that could be spared and all went well until they reached Salt Lake City, where new troubles awaited them. One of the tenets of the Mormon Church was that God had revealed to Joseph Smith, their Prophet and the originator of the sect, that they were His Latterday Saints and that the wealth of the whole world was given to them and all they needed to do was to take possession of it whenever the gentiles would permit. The Mormons therefore first made an effort to convert the travelers that came their way and if they failed in this they would take possession of any of their property they could. They had been driven out of several of the eastern states by those who objected to that kind of a revelation, but in this wild country of Utah, they had pretty much their own way, at least for a time.

One night while the emigrants were resting and repairing their outfits, the entire herd of cattle were driven from their pasture and concealed in a corral. This caused another week's delay in searching for them and then were told that the Indians had put the cattle there.

They reached the Feather River in California in September and as this was their destination they all pitched tents and began digging for gold with high hopes. Some were fairly successful while others were

not. The two brothers not feeling satisfied with the uncertainties of mining decided soon that they would make money with greater certainty by supplying the camp with meat so they built a slaughter house and peddled meat from pack boxes on horseback. They made money at this and all went well with them until the fall of 1850 when Jeremiah suddenly died of mountain fever. This disease is found to come from germs carried by a tick that is found on cattle, sheep and horses in the western states, so no doubt the business of slaughtering animals was the cause of his taking the disease.

Isaiah then carried on the business alone until the next year, then sold it out and started back for Illinois to marry a young girl who was waiting for him there. There were no pack trains going in that direction so the only way to return was to take a boat to Panama, walk or ride a mule across the Isthmus and a boat to New York and home by rail.

On the 20 mile hike across the Isthmus with many others they employed natives to carry their baggage. On this short journey a great excitement occurred when some of the natives that were a little in advance of the rest of the party, came rushing back in great excitement saying there was a big snake in a tree over the road waiting to devour anyone who came that way. An old man of the party who carried a double barreled rifle, went ahead and shot it. It was a boa constrictor 21 feet long that could have devoured a man whole after crushing his bones by winding around him.

In the spring of 1852 the young couple were married and set out on their wedding tour for California. At St. Joseph, Mo., he fitted out a mule train to cross the plains. Here they were joined by many others who were to make the journey in the same way. A mule that was broken to carry women, but that refused to allow a man to ride him, was secured for the young wife. When they were in close proximity to a tribe of Indians the young wife stayed up all night with her mule for fear he would bray and thus attract the Indians.

When they reached the Utah line, they met the fast mail coach bound for Salt Lake City, so the young wife left the slower going mule train and rode to the destination of the mail coach and waited there for the arrival of the rest of the train. From there on to their

destination, Isaiah was engaged to pilot a wagon train on to California, since he had been over the route before and knew where the best route lay. They reached their destination in August at a town then called Hang Town. One may easily guess the source of that name. The name has since been changed to Placerville. This town is near the place where Marshall discovered gold while digging a mill race on the Sutter ranch and which started the "Gold Rush", in 1849.

The young man mined but a short time and since he still had his pack mules, he commenced carrying freight from Sacramento to Hang Town. He made it a good paying business and later sold it for $25,000. He then invested the greater part of this in a road house or hotel on the road he had been traveling where he knew such a house was very much in demand. Soon a tragedy occurred by which a man was stabbed and killed and his bloodstains on the floor were too terrible a sight for the young wife to endure, so he sold the place at a considerable sacrifice and moved to Placer County where he went into the logging business and kept it up until his death at the age of 77. They had eleven children of whom seven are living at this time.

An interesting episode is related by one of the daughters of this couple showing how Isaiah met the emergency that confronted the young couple when they reached the Platte River. The water was so deep where they proposed to cross that in all probability the little mule on which the young wife rode might have to swim. She was very timid about such an adventure for she feared she might be washed off by the current. He therefore tied her on the saddle so there was no possibility of such an accident and they got over in safety.

CHAPTER TEN

AN EPILOGUE BY CHARLES G. ARMSTRONG AND A TRIBUTE FROM THE WRITER, GRANDSONS OF ELSIE STRAWN ARMSTRONG

As Silently
The sands of life ran down so fast
From off the hill that marks the past,

That, upper glass with minutes store
Had emptied till but little more
Remained.

But in the lower chamber lay
The countless grains that marked each day

And added made the glorious whole,
The lifetime of a human soul.

Her fearless heart seemed made of steel
Yet quickly could she see and feel

The sorrowings of human kind
Thruout her verse I ever find.

The Star of Bethlehem's shining rays
The guide and beacon of her days

The secrets of her life unfold
Within her verse are quaintly told.

When men and women left the East
And builded where the fiercest beast

And still more savage Red Men roam
They both disputed them their home.

'Tis thus they worked and made this land
A Nation that on every hand

From North to South, from East to West
The world fears most, yet loves the best.

In the death of Isaiah the last one of the sons of our Woman Pioneer passed on, but her numerous grandchildren are now among the useful citizens of many states of the Union, but none of them will ever have the opportunity to know the full value of the character of that little women that withstood all manner of hardships and privations in order to give to us her grandchildren, now down to the fifth generation, the advantages we enjoy.

On May 31st our heroine passed away at her home in Morris across the street from the home of her son

Perry. So ended the life of our Woman Pioneer. Her contribution to the State of Illinois has been far greater than that of many a man whose name is emblazoned on the pages of the history of Illinois. Few now living except her grandchildren will even know that such a woman ever lived. A simple shaft of marble with her name, date of birth and death, mark her last resting place in the cemetery of Morris, Illinois.

The family records show the following as the record of the family of Joseph and Elsie Armstrong.

Joseph Armstrong 1780-1856
Elsie Strawn Armstrong.....1789-1871

Children

John Strawn Armstrong.....1810-1899
George Washington Armstrong.....1812-1902
William Elder Armstrong.....1814-1850
Joel West Armstrong.....1817-1871
James Henderson Armstrong.....1819-1842
Jeremiah Reed Armstrong.....1821-1850
Perry Austin Armstrong.....1823-1904
Clifford Irving Armstrong.....1825-1828
Isaiah J. Armstrong.....1828-1905

The following chapters are intended to throw some light upon the early history of events that must have tended to shape the career not only of the pioneers of that day but that influenced the development of the County, State and Nation.

PART TWO

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ORIGIN OF THE ARMSTRONG CLAN, THEIR MIGRATION FROM SCOTLAND TO IRELAND THEN TO AMERICA—INFLUENCE OF THE SCOTCH-IRISH ON THE REVOLUTION AND THE FOUNDING OF THREE UNIVERSITIES—ALSO A LETTER FROM JOSEPH ARMSTRONG TO HIS SON GEORGE

In 1509 when James the Fifth became King of Scotland, the Armstrong Clan of the border between Scotland and England had become very troublesome to both kingdoms. The tribe or clan was now very numerous and stubbornly resisted all attempts to bring them into submission to any laws but their own. The Armstrongs of Liddesdale were especially powerful, led by John of Gilnockie Castle. He had a band of followers that were able to defend themselves and their castle for many years and were captured finally, according to some historians, by a false offer by King James. He is said to have offered to take them into his own army if they would peaceably surrender and become his defenders, because he recognized them as the greatest soldiers of the kingdom. Flattered by this compliment Jonnie Armstrong, as Walter Scott calls him in one of his ballads, with his band of forty-eight followers surrendered but were all hanged upon the nearest trees.

In one of the scenes of Shakespeare's Macbeth the King occupied Duncenane Castle. Malcolm, the son of the King that Macbeth had murdered came with an army he had raised to overthrow Macbeth. In order to approach as near the castle as possible before being discovered, each man cut a branch of a tree and carried it over his head. There was a forest not far from the castle called Burman Wood. Malcolms' army started from this forest carrying these branches over their heads so that Macbeth's servant reported that he saw the Burma Wood start to come to the castle.

Engraved on the shield of several of the Armstrong Clan both in Scotland and in Ulster, besides the strong arm, there are hands holding a branch aloft, so it is

probable that some of the Armstrong Clan were engaged in that war between Malcolm and Macbeth and that they were on the side of Malcolm.

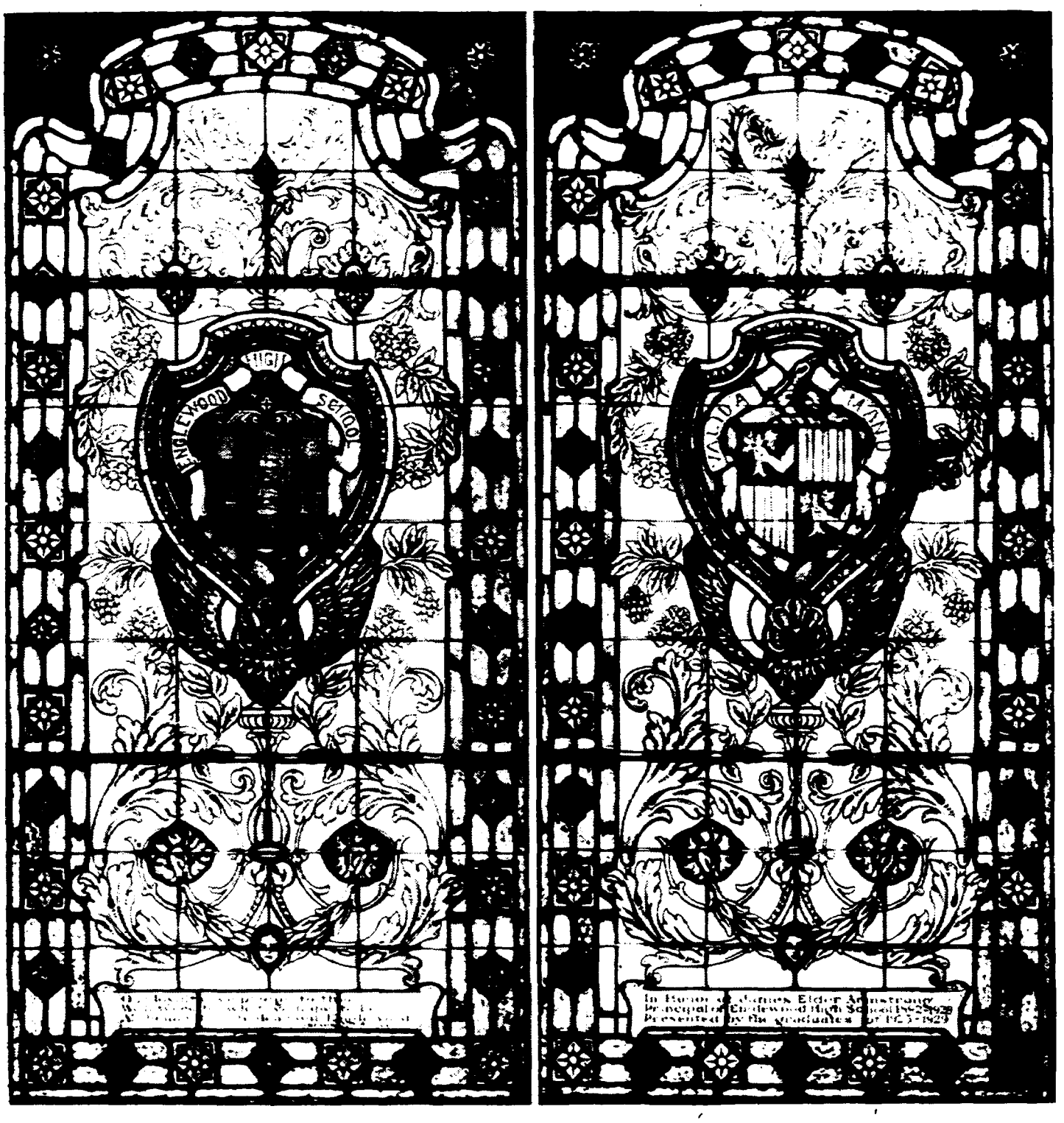
Note: See picture of the Armstrong Crest from the Memorial window at the Englewood High School, Chicago, in recognition of the services of the writer.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SCOTCH-IRISH IN AMERICA

King James VI of Scotland became James First of England in 1603. He had a very difficult time suppressing the Border Tribes of his native country and in taming the "Wild Irishmen" of Ulster in the north of Ireland. For centuries the natives of Ulster had been developing a type of society entirely different from that of England and the low lands of Scotland. It was no easy matter to bring these natives to respect the laws of England. It was very much like the task the pioneers of America had with the Indians, and the outcome was somewhat similar. At least the wars raged for some time between the two nations and eventually the Irish leaders were driven out of Ulster and colonies from Scotland took their places. The Feudal System was in vogue at this time, so all the land taken in war reverted to the king and he leased it to lairds who would agree to put up a stone castle, surround it with a wall and maintain twenty soldiers for defense. The laird was to lease the land around the castle to the farmers to till for a rental that would support the laird and his army and at the same time pay a certain amount to the King for the use of the land. Thus one class lived in luxury and the other in poverty.

It was at this time that colonies were being established in America so that colonization was engaging the attention of all western Europe. There were several reasons for this. All the principal cities were walled in, the gates were closed at night to keep out the robbers and thieves that were numerous then. In time, the population grew to be so great within the cities that many were glad of a chance to go to a distant land where there would be a better chance for life.

Then there were religious controversies that drove out of the country those who would not submit to the demands of those in authority. The governing classes lived in luxury and made greater and greater demands upon the laboring classes, so that those who could do so were glad to go to the distant countries for the freedom they craved.



MEMORIAL WINDOWS TO THE AUTHOR IN THE ENGLEWOOD HIGH SCHOOL INSTALLED BY THE ALUMNI OF THE SCHOOL IN RECOGNITION OF HIS 37 YEARS OF SERVICE

The shield in that to the right is a copy of the shield over a fireplace in Ulster. The hands holding a branch of a tree refers to the battle when Malcom's army carried branches of trees as they approached Macbeth's castle from Burman Wood.

When the Irish Earls were driven out of Ulster, the King was glad to plant Scotch and English colonies there. Scotland took more interest in this transplanting than England since it was only 13 miles across the channel to Ulster while from England it was not only a much longer distance but the seas were made very dangerous to life and property by the pirates that had their own way at this time. For these reasons great numbers of Scotch of all classes moved to Ulster and so founded the Scotch-Irish race which according to Professor Henry Jones Ford of Princeton University, contributed the most important elements of our American civilization. They migrated in greater numbers than any other nationality and they came with a centuries' of hatred for the oppression under which they had lived under British rule and so became the leaders in the Revolutionary movement that brought this government into existence.

They were the first to advocate higher education in the United States and were among the founders of three of our great universities, Harvard, Yale and Princeton. Professor Ford says of the Scotch-Irish educational institutions: *"The fact that originally, Presbyterianism was the product of historical research naturally set up standards of scholarship for its ministry. The grounds on which rested the doctrine of the parity of ministerial orders in the primitive church were not to be discerned by inward light nor apprehended by emotional fervor. It was a matter calling for historical knowledge, involving familiarity with the languages in which the records of the primitive Church were preserved. Institutions of learning were therefore a necessary accompaniment of the Presbyterian Church".

Going back now to the colonization of Ulster, beginning with 1609, we find a growing cause for a break between the Scotch-Irish and the English. Henry the VIIIth established the Episcopal Church as the State Church of England in opposition to the Pope of Rome. The Scotch being Presbyterians refused to use the Book of Common Prayer of the State Church. The Presbyterians were called Puritans or Non-Conformists for that reason. This controversy was kept up throughout the century of colonization of Ulster and resulted eventually in large numbers of the puri-

*The Scotch-Irish in America by Henry Jones Ford.

tans migration to America where they would have freedom to worship as they saw fit. They carried with them the embittered feelings that had much to do with the opposition to England in bringing about the Revolutionary War.

Professor Ford quoting from the historian Leckey says *"They went with hearts burning with indignation, and in the War of Independence they were almost to a man on the side of the insurgents. They supplied some of the best soldiers of Washington".

The cause that created this opposition to England was not only the religious controversy, though this was a leading one. Ulster was one of the first provinces of the British Empire to begin the raising of flax and the weaving of linen. She also found sheep raising very profitable owing to the mild climate warmed by the Gulf Stream. Here as Goldsmith said

> ". . . smiling spring its earliest visit paid,
> And parting summer's lingering blooms delay'd."

This made Ulster famous for wool and the products of the loom won renown wherever commerce brought them. This soon caused opposition from England and steps were taken to prevent Ulster from carrying on trade with the colonies in America. Then the shipping of beef and mutton to England from Ulster brought other restrictions on commerce and all these added fuel to the fires of opposition to English rule. Rents were raised on the King's lands and this made harder times for the laboring classes. Emigration then naturally followed as fast as they were assured of freedom from oppression. Some went to Holland, and some to Norway, but the greatest numbers went to America. In 1729 over 5,000 from Ulster landed on the coasts of America and during some years as many as 12,000 left Ulster and located among the colonies along the coast of America. A famine in Ulster in 1740 caused a great rush to this country and in 1773, 3,500 moved to Pennsylvania from Ulster and a few years later the linen and woolen industries almost failed for want of workers when 10,000 left for the new world.

Bucks County, Pennsylvania was the destination of a large number of these Scotch-Irish and it was here that the family of Joseph Armstrong, the grandfather of the writer arrived in 1789 when he was 10 years old.

*The Scotch-Irish in America by Henry Jones Ford.

The records of Buck's County show that other Armstrongs arrived there as early as 1720.

A LETTER FROM JOSEPH ARMSTRONG

In order to be fair to the character and ability of Joseph Armstrong the husband of the heroine of this narrative, I include here a letter written by him to his second son George W. from Chatham, Ohio, in 1844. It will be recalled that when she felt that she could endure him no longer she prepared some food for him, took up her babe and left their house and went to her father's to live for a short time. There never was a divorce but a legal separation was made, and division of the property.

It will be seen from his letter that he was a man of some education for that time and that he had some interest in civic affairs. Since he passed away long before the time of the writer it has been impossible to gather any definite information. Suffice it to say that his two oldest sons who knew him best of the family of eight boys regarded him highly and never said anything to relatives in disrespect. They seemed to feel that the separation was the best thing for both of them. He kept up a correspondence with the two oldest sons and visited them in their homes. His intemperate habits were no worse than many men of that time who moved in good society.

One can see from what facts are at our command that he was a man that wanted companionship and not finding it at home, sought the company of congenial friends that frequented the social clubs of that day, the saloons. The loss of his entire family doubtless was a shock that sobered him to realize the plight he had brought his family into for he wrote to and induced his son John to return from Illinois to Ohio the same year that the rest of the family arrived there, to help run the woolen mill and to remain with him for a year.

His letter here speaks for itself.

Chatham, Nov. 29, 1844.

Dear Son:

I embrace the present opportunity to inform you that I am well hoping these lines may find you and yours with all the balance of my relations and children well. The health of the neighborhood is generally good. We had a great jolification in Newark on Tuesday last. We had a dinner prepared in the courthouse in congratulation of the election of James K. Polk to the Presidency. Every Democrat almost in the County con-

tributed more or less to make the festive lively. We had a number of ladies to grace the entertainment and all went off in social harmony. The Whigs as a matter of course are chopfallen. When you receive this you will have taken your seat in the councils of your State. Mr. Willard Warner our Senator of State and Presly Obenon our representative, request that you send them a paper from your metropolis so that they may be informed from time to time of the proceedings of your legislature and they will return the compliment by sending you papers from Columbus. We have to regret that we could not do more for James K. Polk in this State. The Whigs have elected their Governor and will have a majority in both branches of the legislature of this State. I think it probable that I shall see you in Springfield if not disappointed in a few weeks as I expect to be in Illinois the coming Winter. I wish you to send me a paper weekly if it should so happen that I should not come to your State. Lee Johnson has returned but I can make nothing out of him, he says nothing about Benjamin Marple or any body else; all we get from him is that you gained the suit in which you were concerned. I advanced him ten dollars on your Acct. and loaned him Fifty dollars before he started on his own hook. Remember me to all inquiring friends and write me on the receipt of this and be sure to send me a paper from the commencement of the setting of your legislature. No more at present but remain your affectionate Father &c.

JOSEPH ARMSTRONG.

His interest in James K Polk was not only because he was a Democrat but because President Polk's father came from Ulster and so was brought up under similar traditions as he had been. He took great interest in the political career of his son George who was most like him of any of his sons. George at this time had been elected to represent La Salle County in the legislature which was a matter of great interest and pride to his father.

As stated elsewhere, Joseph was a member of a family from Ulster that came to Buck's County, Pennsylvania in 1789. They were aristocratic and probably well off financially when they left Bellcoo, Fermanagh County Ireland. Joseph often told his oldest sons that if they would go to Ulster they might be able to rescue a large fortune his father had left there. The reasons for abandoning it were never explained but no doubt was the same that caused so large a population to abandon what they had in order to gain a home in the land of freedom from British rule.

Opposition and persecution have often been the making of character and no doubt had much to do with the traits of the Armstrong Clan. According to the traditions that have been handed down thru almost every one of the Armstrong families of America, the name

had the following described origin: During the border warfares of Scotland, the hilly country was inhabited by tribes of natives that refused to submit to the rules and laws of the lowlands. They were warriors of necessity and the survival of the fittest had full sway for many years. There was a tribe whose leader bore the name of Fairbairn, and his tribe joined on the side of the King of Scotland. In one of the battles the king's horse was shot and the King was wounded. This Fairbairn lifted the King with one hand and set him on his horse shielding off the arrows of the enemy with his shield held on the other arm and led the King off of the field, thus saving his life. The King recognizing his great strength and ability, made him a Knight, gave him a castle and a troop of soldiers and changed his name to Arm Strong afterwards contracted to Armstrong. This was Siward Armstrong the ancestor of the renowned border tribe of that name.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Two of the Whisky Episodes That Were Chiefly Responsible for The Black Hawk War

In order to fully appreciate the calamity that plunged the pioneers of 1831-2 into the so-called Black Hawk War, it is necessary to make a brief survey of the events that led up to and transpired during those eventful years.

For centuries before the advent of the white race in North America, the hordes of Indians in tribes of various sizes possessed all the country from the frozen seas of the Arctic zone to the tropical regions of southern Mexico. These tribes developed types of society that the white races called savage or barbarous depending upon how near they came to the types of society we call civilized. These tribes varied in size from a few hundred to many thousands. Black Hawk's tribe, the Sauks, numbered about six thousand in 1831.[1]

These tribes differed in their degree of civilization as much as some nations differ from others today. One of the greatest marvels of today is the degree of knowledge and skill of the Incas of South America or the Mayas of Yucatan.

The Sauks were far more nearly civilized and intelligent than most of the tribes of all the northern countries. Doubtless climatic conditions had something to do with the evolution of the aborigines of America as it has had with the nations of the East. When a tribe moved about with the changes of season and especially if wild game was scarce, there was little chance to develop the intellect. Obtaining sufficient food or enough to keep the tribe above starvation was a major problem. This struggle for food led to wars between tribes for possession of the most desirable lands. This was no different from the wars of the Israelites and their surrounding nations. When a nation learned the arts of agriculture, as the Egyptians and Assyrians did, and became powerful, they were able to hold their territory against their would be usurpers, at least until some internal strife weakened their national resistance.

So it was with the tribes of Indians. The Mayas

1The Sauks and the Black Hawk War, by P. A. Armstrong.

possessed a country where nature poured out its richest rewards for the least effort in fruits, grain and fish, and the natural isolation of Yucatan and Central America safeguarded them against invasion.

The Sauk tribe fought its way from Canada to Michigan, next to Wisconsin and then about a century before the time of Black Hawk, they either drove out a weaker tribe or bought out the tribe that lived near the junction of the Rock River and the Mississippi. Here this tribe took possession of the fertile land which forms a peninsula between the two rivers. In Black Hawk's time, they cultivated about three thousand acres of land, raising corn, pumpkin, squash, beans and tobacco. Their houses were made of bark supported on poles set in the ground and bent over at the top to support the roof. Several related families lived in these long, narrow houses, called hodensotes.

According to the white man's plan of civilized society, the Indian men were lazy, spending their time in what the white man calls recreation, such as hunting, fishing, dancing and smoking, but this was simply the result of the evolution of the needs of society. The Indian men lived as active and strenuous a life as their squaws did. There was no housekeeping that required much attention from the squaws, so it was their place to cultivate the small field allotted to them. The clothing of all was simple and required little skill to make. Old men and children assisted in all their labors. The men really lived a strenuous life not only to provide meat which was their chief diet, but to keep a constant watch against the approach of covetous neighboring tribes. Sometimes they had to engage in a death struggle with an enemy to protect the women, children and old people against a foe that would kill these defenseless members of their tribe as feelinglessly as they would rats and wolves, or carry off the young girls to swell the number of mothers for their own tribe. White races have done the same and are not now all free from the same practice.

Our so-called civilized nations fought for the possession of territory throughout their history much the same as these tribes of Indians have done, so we hesitate to scan the pages of our own history if we would like to feel that we, as a nation, are guiltless. "The survival of the fittest", has marked the evolution of

nations, as definitely as it has the evolution of nature, including man.

When two nations come in close contact the natural tendency is for the stronger to feel that the manners and customs, mode of life and moral codes of the weaker are all wrong. In many respects there is some truth in the contentions of the superior nation, because the superior nation has gone through the phases of evolution of the weaker nation or they would not have become superior. The great and crying fault of the superior nations has always been in the methods they have used to enforce their particular culture upon the other, or to base their claim upon superior numbers.

In our treatment of the Indians, we have held their methods and customs in such contempt that we have cheated them out of their possessions even by violating our own rules of justice and morality. Looking back to the causes that led up to the so called Black Hawk War, which in reality was only a feeble effort on the part of the Sauks to regain possession of land they had lost by fraud, let us begin with the war with England in 1812.

The Sauks had been on friendly terms with the United States and had carried on trading in furs ever since the first explorers, Marquette and Joliet, came down the Mississippi in 1673. Black Hawk was the War Chief of his tribe and wishing to assist the United States, he offered to go into the war on their side, but the offer was declined because our officers did not approve of the Indian's method of warfare. The Indian code of warfare consisted of attack from behind trees and rocks, and the killing of women, children, old men and cripples. Black Hawk could not understand why the pale face stood out in the open and shot at his enemy. When his offer was spurned, he took his band of two hundred braves and warriors to Canada and was there accepted by the British. There they were given the red uniforms of the British soldiers and Black Hawk was given the rank of a Colonel. Forever after, any Indian that wore a red shirt or a red blanket was considered a member of the British band and regarded as an enemy by the Americans. A "brave" was the title conferred on the Indian who had killed one or more of their enemy and a warrior was one who had gone into battle but was not yet known to have secured

the scalp of an enemy he had killed. The scalp lock was supposed to be the handle by which the spirit of the dead Indian was pulled across the boundary into the spirit world. Since no Indian wished to meet his enemy in the spirit world, he removed the scalp lock so his enemy's spirit would have to remain below.

When Black Hawk returned to his village, called Saukenuk, near Rockford, he found that his place as War Chief had been filled by a sub-chief named Keokuk who was known afterwards as the Peace Chief. He was a man of remarkable ability as an orator and earned the distinction later among the whites as the Cicero of his tribe. For many years after Black Hawk's return from Canada, these two powerful chiefs were rivals in the tribe which resulted eventually in a division of the tribe into two bands. Keokuk took two-thirds of the tribe and established a village west of the Mississippi in Iowa, while the other third remained with Black Hawk at their ancient village Saukenuk. The Honorable John Reynolds, Governor of Illinois from 1830 to 1834, had a deep seated hatred for Black Hawk and believed ever after that Black Hawk was still a secret spy of the British.

Whisky was on four distinct occasions the "root of all evil" in bringing on the struggle that involved the entire nation and the murder of several hundred Indians and settlers.

Back in 1804 there was a French settlement on the Mississippi River in what is now Louisiana on the Cuvier River. These French settlers came there in search of copper as the French word cuvier means. These pioneers were fond of dancing and whisky. The latter they could secure in a sufficient quantity but women for partners in the dance were much needed. The Indians were glad to attend these dances for the whisky they had learned to prize and brought the young squaws for the dance with the Frenchmen. A relative of a sub-chief of the Sauks named Quashquamme and other Indians came done the river in their canoes to secure a drink of the free whisky and brought their daughters for the dance. During the performance after the Indians had indulged freely, one of them noticed that his daughter's partner showed improper familiarity with her and that she immediately left the floor.

He reeled up to the offender and demanded an apol-

ogy, whereupon the Frenchman struck him a blow that knocked him down and then dragged him to the door by his scalp lock and thrust him out with a kick. This was to an Indian, an insult never to be atoned for except by death. Finding the door locked the insulted Indian waited until the offender came out and then with one blow of his tomahawk, killed him.

It was about this time that negotiations were under way with Napoleon for the purchase of this vast territory afterwards known as the Louisiana Territory and completed April 30, 1804. Captain Stoddard was the Governor of this Territory so the case was reported to him. He demanded the surrender of the murderer, as this was now United States territory. A detachment of soldiers was sent from the Government headquarters at St. Louis and the murderer was surrendered to them and taken to St. Louis to remain in prison until a trial could be arranged according to law.

It was the custom among the Indians to pay the family of the murdered man a sum of money if the family was willing to accept it; otherwise a life for a life was required. The chiefs called a meeting and decided to send Chief Quashquamme and four other men to offer a cash payment for the release of the prisoner. They did not know that the white man's laws were different from theirs and that murder could not be compromised by the payment of money. Here they fell in with a Frenchman who was a member of the American Fur Company. He knew how to take advantage of the Indian's love of whisky and so kept them drunk for several days until his bill for board and whisky reached the sum of $2,234.50 Indian prices. He then induced General W. H. Harrison, Governor of Upper Louisiana, later President of the United States, to purchase all the lands in Illinois belonging to the Sauks and an associated tribe called the Foxes. This embraced all the land west of the Illinois River in Illinois. Quashquamme and his companions all so drunk they did not know what they were signing away, believed they were buying the release of the murderer and paying for the entertainment they had enjoyed. They put their cross on the line where directed since they could not read or write, and without realizing what they were paying or whether they had a right or not to sign for their tribe. Possibly they were not even informed what it was all about except to release their

friend from jail. Governor Harrison doubtless took no part in this transaction by the French agent. After the signatures were acknowledged in this questionable way, the prisoner was released and as he started to run from the jail, he was shot and killed before he had gone three hundred yards.

When these poor red men returned to their village they could only recall that they had secured the release of their friend, to have him shot down like a dog. They denied that they had sold their land when it was so reported to them later.

This transaction was supposed to be a treaty and was referred to ever after as the Treaty of November 3, 1804. The government at Washington believed this was a genuine treaty and according to its terms paid these two nations, the Sauks and the Foxes $1,000 a year in goods. This the Indians accepted for fourteen years and when in 1818 they were informed that they had sold their land to the United States in 1804 they firmly denied it. The two nations had never been consulted about such a sale and declared they supposed the payments they had received each year were for good behavior.

The description of the boundaries of the land covered in this treaty were bad guesses for a river that never existed was named as one of the boundaries. Subsequent treaties were drawn up and signed showing that there arose some doubts as to the validity of the so-called treaty of November 3, 1804. It was like the case of the farmer returning from the mill with his grist. He reported that "the miller ties his bag of flour so poorly that he had to tie it several times himself on the way home".

When Black Hawk was told of this claim of the government that their land had been sold in 1804, he denied that Quashquamme and the chief of the Fox tribe had any authority to sell their land and refused from that time on to accept the offered annuity. This then, was the second time that whisky was a cause in the Black Hawk War.

It was the custom for the tribe under Black Hawk to make a hunting tour to Missouri every winter, staying several months. They always took the entire tribe including squaws, children and old people, and thus escaped the severe cold weather of northern Illinois. To do this they had to borrow large sums of money to

finance the trip and support them during the winter. Black Hawk's word was accepted by those who traded with him for he paid it all back on his return, in skins procured during the winter. In 1829, on the return of the tribe in late spring they found that squatters had taken possession of their land, burned down most of their bark cabins, tore down their fences and constructed others as if they had purchased the land. Of course Black Hawk was highly incensed at this and had it not been for the next whisky episode, possibly the rightful owners of the land would have had more humane treatment.

There was a Pennsylvania Dutchman named Josiah Vandruff with a large family in possession of Black Hawk's own cabin, and as he was very poor, Black Hawk showed sympathy for this family by allowing them to remain several months occupying the same cabin with his family and cultivating some of the Indian's land for their support.

In the fall of that year, Mr. Vandruff built a cabin for his family and taking advantage of the Indian's love of whisky, kept a supply for sale. By 1830 drunkenness among the Indians had become so notorious that Black Hawk who was strictly temperate, remonstrated with him and all others who sold whisky to the Indians. He finally threatened to expel them from Saukenuk if they did not stop the sale of "fire water". All obeyed but Vandruff and he simply moved to an island in the river opposite Black Hawk's cabin and enlarged his business. At last, exasperated beyond endurance, Black Hawk offered to buy his entire stock so that he might turn it into the river. This was refused. He then threatened that unless Vandruff ceased selling liquor to certain confirmed drunkards, he would take forcible possesion and empty the barrels. Defiance was then shown by Vandruff by giving the "fire water" for any trifle or even free. This was more than the old chief could endure, so he took a half dozen warriors, crossed to the island, rolled out barrels and kegs of whisky, chopped them open with their tomahawks and emptied their contents upon the ground; then without a word spoken, returned to their village.

Carrie Nation is given credit a half century later for adopting a new method for removing the curse of the saloon but the credit should go to Black Hawk.

Vandruff now knew better than to defy Black Hawk

openly, but he shrewdly set on foot a plan to arouse the prejudice of the President, Andrew Jackson and Governor John Reynolds of Illinois. Both of these two officials were antagonistic toward Black Hawk because of his joining the British army in Canada during the War of 1812. They regarded him as a British spy although 18 years had shown no such relations with England. Vandruff secured signatures of some people as unscrupulous as himself to prove the false charges he made and made a trip to see Governor Reynolds. Vandruff so excited the governor that he started at once to drive the Sauks across the Mississippi. Vandruff undoubtedly used the Sauk's annual winter trip to Missouri as a removal from the state, and that the squatters had a right to take the vacated lands and village. Vandruff then claimed that the tribe came back and destroyed the settler's cabins, tore down their fences and destroyed their crops.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

BLACK HAWK RETURNS FROM THE WEST SIDE OF THE MISSISSIPPI TO TAKE POSSESSION OF THE LAND FROM WHICH HE HAD BEEN ILLEGALLY DRIVEN

"When Black Hawk returned from his winter hunt in the spring of 1831 he found that the squatters had completely wrecked Saukenuk, his ancient village, plowed up the graves of his ancestors, scattered their bones and desecrated their graves with crops. He was so enraged that he and his band threw down the fences of the settlers, trampled down their corn and dug up their potatoes, saying the land was Sauk, and that they had not sold it. Then the Hawk told them that they must and should leave his village, and gave them a definite time in which to vacate. The squatters construed his statement as a threat against their lives and showered Governor Reynolds of Illinois with messages and petitions couched in exaggerated terms. The Governor caught the general excitement of the situation and issued a fiery proclamation asking for volunteers. By so doing he ushered in the darkest tragedy that blots the annals of the Mississippi frontier."[2]

The Governor's call was for 700 men but owing to the intensity of feeling stirred up by Vandruff and Governor Reynolds, more than twice that number volunteered and all were accepted. This call for the state militia was unwarranted because there were enough government troups at Fort Armstrong under General Gaines to do all that needed to be done. Moreover Governor Reynolds had received word from General Gaines that he had sufficient troops to handle the situation. Fort Armstrong was on an island in the Mississippi River nearly opposite Saukenuk and General Gaines doubtless knew the situation better than Governor Reynolds.

In the Governor's call for volunteers he referred to the Sauks as the British Band although 18 years had elapsed since the Sauks had allied themselves with the British troops in Canada. To the young men it meant, taking up the war against the same enemy as their

2John Marsh, Pioneer, by George D. Lyman.

fathers had fought in 1812. Another cause for the intensity of feeling against the Sauks besides the fact that they had fought against the United States was the attitude of the territorial government at the close of the war with the British in 1814, when a bounty was paid out of the territory treasury for Indian scalps, like bounties on wolf scalps. Perry Armstrong says in his book 'it is a fact, that on the 24th day of December, 1814, being the very day the treaty of Ghent was concluded, our territorial legislature, then in session at Kaskaskia, passed an act which was approved by Ninian Edwards, the territorial governor and became the law entitled, 'An Act to promote retaliation upon hostile Indians, and to encourage the bravery and enterprise of our fellow citizens.' "[3]

This law provided a bounty of from $25 to $100 for each Indian killed or woman or child taken prisoner, depending on whether done during a raid by the Indians or whether done by a white man who dared go into the territory of the hostile Indians after receiving a license from a commanding officer. It was just like getting a license today to kill deer. The $100 bounty was worth about the same as $1,000 today in purchasing power. With this law in mind, it is easy to see how the settlers would feel that it would be to their credit to murder Indians. If the young pioneer found himself short of funds to get married, he might get a license for the asking and shoot an Indian thereby earning $100.

General Gaines probably did not know of the hostile feelings between Keokuk and Black Hawk, or he would not have requested both of them to meet him at Fort Armstrong for a conference on the 7th of June, 1831. Black Hawk considered Keokuk as we do Benedict Arnold. He had betrayed his tribe by obeying the request of the United States General to move across the Mississippi, taking two thirds of the tribe of Sauks and the tribe of Foxes with him when Black Hawk had advised all to remain and hold their land at Saukenuk. Consequently Black Hawk came accompanied by a band of braves and warriors, decorated in war paint and armed for battle, singing a war song. At the door of the fort he demanded that Keokuk and Wapello, Chief of the Foxes, and their followers should withdraw from the fort before he would enter. This request being

[3]Sauks and Black Hawk War, page 164.

acceded to in part, he entered in a defiant mood and positively refused to agree to move to the west of the Mississippi River. This exasperated General Gaines so that he thereupon demanded that Black Hawk's so-called British Band remove across the river in two days or be removed forcibly.

Black Hawk declared that they had never sold their land and that they were determined to hold on to their village.

Before this, when Governor Reynolds had written General Gaines the false charges made by Vandruff of hostile acts on the part of the Sauks on their returning to Saukenuk in the spring, he first replied that he had all the forces he needed for the protection of the frontier. He then dispatched an order on the commandant at Prairie Du Chien for four companies of United States regulars. These four companies came to Fort Armstrong under such emminent officers as Zachary Taylor, later to be the 12th President of the United States, A. Sidney Johnson, later one of the ablest generals of the Confederate army, Robert Anderson, who was the officer in charge of Fort Sumpter where the first guns were fired in 1861 at the beginning of the Civil War, and Jefferson Davis, later President of the Southern Confederacy. General Gaines next chartered the steamboat "Enterprise" and brought six companies of United States troops and supplies from Jefferson Barracks below St. Louis, reaching Fort Armstrong June 6th. This made an army of 1,000 regulars to fight a band of 200 Indians.

At this time Black Hawk's tribe was peaceably engaged in agriculture with no thought of war nor idea of moving away. The day after the arrival of this great army at Fort Armstrong the council was called which resulted in the demand for the removal of the Sauks within two days. Black Hawk then, upon the advice of the Indian prophet Winnesheik whom he consulted frequently for messages from the Great Spirit, sent a beautifully dressed maiden, the daughter of an Indian who had shown great friendship to the settlers, to plead with General Gaines to allow them to remain on their land until their crops could be harvested for how could they so late in the year keep from starvation across the river? General Gaines refused to grant this request but he did not enforce his threat of forcibly removal at the end of two days and had it

not been for the arrival on June 25th of Governor Reynolds and General Joseph Duncan, elected Governor in 1834 on his war record, General Gaines would probably have been more lenient.

Black Hawk knew that according to the Treaty of Ghent which was agreed to by the United States at the close of the war with Great Britain December 24, 1814, the Indians that had not committed a hostile act were not to be molested because of their former alliance with Great Britain. He also believed that since the land belonged to his tribe the white race would recognize the justice of his cause. He was shrewd enough however to recognize that where a motley undisciplined army of 1,600 militia had arrived, there would be no chances for life for men, women or children, so a cryer was sent by him through his village on the evening of the 25th, requiring all to be ready to leave this village early the next morning. One can easily imagine the feelings of those woman and children to thus leave their homes and the graves of their ancestors that were held as sacred to their departed spirits, leaving their growing crops and not knowing how they could keep from starvation when it was too late to raise crops across the river. They made rafts by tying canoes together and covering them with poles so they could transport their household goods, tied their ponies behind to swim and so crossed the river in early morning, June 26, 1831.

While the apparent object of the great army and militia to drive the Sauks across the Mississippi had been accomplished, an army of 3,000 men seemed to be disappointed for they marched upon the village from all directions either not knowing the game had escaped or to show what they could have done if necessary and then burned down many cabins.

General Gaines now showed some little consideration for the persecuted Sauks by having an appraisal made of their growing crops and by awarding them 3,000 bushels of corn. Thus ended the first half of the so-called war.

After reaching the other side of the Mississippi, Black Hawk received threatening messages each day from General Gaines who seemed to fear that he might return as suddenly as he had gone and Black Hawk fearing that General Gaines might turn loose his great army to pursue them, he and his chiefs returned to

Fort Armstrong on June 30th, 1831, and put their crosses on a so-called treaty by which they agreed to reside and hunt west of the Mississippi River and no one or more of the said band was ever to recross the said river to the place of their former residence or their old hunting ground without permission of the President of the United States or the Governor of Illinois, and several other stipulations.

Here is an observation made by Black Hawk that should cause us all to take stock of our boasted moral code. He said, "The whites may do wrong all their lives, and then if they are sorry for it when about to die, all is well: but with us it is different. We must continue to do good all our lives".

Brooding over the great injustice to which his tribe had been subjected, Black Hawk commenced to plan some means by which he could regain his lands east of the Mississippi. He had been assured much sympathy by all the chiefs of allied tribes west of the river. He thought a great confederacy could be formed of all these tribes and if they could obtain equipment and supplies from the British in Canada, they could drive the pale faces out of their lands. Accordingly, he went to Canada in the fall of 1831 and traveled from city to city telling his story of injustice, and reminding them of his efforts and sacrifices in their behalf in the War of 1812-14. He received the warmest sympathy from all but no assurance of help. The government officials told him that as a nation they were now at peace with the United States and so could not join with him in righting his wrongs.

General Dixen in Canada put a new hope into his mind however, that if the Sauk tribe had not sold their land to the United States, the legal titles were still with the tribe. He came back much depressed for want of the assistance he craved but was soon encouraged by a false prophet who had also made a visit to Canada and claimed to have assurance that as soon as Black Hawk commenced war to regain his land the British army would join him.

Keokuk kept a close watch on all Black Hawk's movements and informed Major Bliss, now the commander of Fort Armstrong, from day to day. The settlers for miles around were warned of a general attack by the Indians and told if they heard a gun fired by anyone that it was to be the signal that they must

assemble at once at the fort. Everybody was cautioned not to fire a gun for any purpose unless they were attacked. Notwithstanding this caution Joshua Vandruff and a companion, while returning home on April 7, 1832, saw a large flock of wild turkeys, crept up and each fired killing his bird. The sound of those two shots echoed and re-echoed back and forth from bluff to bluff and struck terror to the hearts of all the settlers for miles around. Mothers caught up their babes and fled poorly clad and raced for the fort. Men dropped the harness from horses at the plow and rode pell mell for safety. Vandruff to his chagrin, saw his wife and children half clad rushing to the fort. Major Bliss at the head of a company of regulars hurried out to protect the assembling fugitives but could find no one to inform him where the attacking Indians were until he met Vandruff who confessed his mistake. This mistake of assembling the settlers at the fort was a fortunate accident, for at this very time Black Hawk was crossing the river a few miles below and marching toward the fort.

It was the custom for Indians to stage a war dance before going into battle. It had a very hypnotic effect on the participants. Black Hawk thought by staging this war dance at Keokuk's village he could draw heavily upon Keokuk's braves to join his band. Again whisky came in for its share of the trouble for by some means, several kegs were procured and freely distributed. Then the war post was set up covered with pictures in red representing braves going to battle. As soon as it was in place, Black Hawk stepped back a few paces, uttered a terrific war-whoop and sent his tomahawk at the post imbedding it to the handle in that part of the post that carried the image of the warrior. In turn, according to rank, the chiefs did the same, then stepped back to allow space for the braves to form a circle around the war post, running hand in hand and keeping time to the beating of the tom toms by swaying their bodies forward and back and lifting their feet high at each step. When they had increased their speed till their circle broke, they went up and struck their heads against the war-post. This was their pledge to fight to the death if needed. By this time the excitement reached such a pitch that the participants were like maniacs. When the circling braves were nearly exhausted and again treated to

more fire water, Black Hawk took his place at the war-post and raised his right hand as a signal for silence. He then made a passionate speech relating the wrongs they had suffered and their great injustice. He made a fervent appeal for help and closed his speech with a glowing picture of a great confederation of Indian tribes that would sweep the pale faces back to the Atlantic ocean. He told them he would then have "an army like the trees of the forest" and that the English general in Canada had promised him all the guns and ammunition they needed. By this time he had not only his own band, but that of Keokuk, wild with enthusiasm.

Neapope, the half brother of the prophet who had been Black Hawk's spiritual advisor, then stepped forward and made a fervent appeal for all to join in the war that Black Hawk had outlined. He repeated the falsehoods he had told Black Hawk that the British Father had promised to come from Canada with men, supplies and ammunition as soon as Black Hawk struck the first blow at their common foe. There were wild shouts for Keokuk to lead them to battle by his own chiefs and braves. Whisky and the false assurance from Canada had done its work. Black Hawk now felt that he had won his case, but little did he realize how soon his hopes were to be dashed to earth.

All through this war dance Keokuk had stood a silent listener, pondering in his mind what he could do to prevent the massacre that would surely occur if the plans outlined were to be carried out. He well knew if the other tribes of his race from Prairie du Chien in Wisconsin to the mouth of the Mississippi joined in this confederacy, thousands of the pioneers would be massacred before the army of the United States could be assembled. Besides he had given a solemn pledge to his friend Colonel Davenport near the fort on Rock Island that he would do all in his power to prevent Black Hawk's band from coming back and in case he failed, to secretly notify him of the coming danger. He also at that time was concealing a spy from Fort Armstrong in his own tent close to the place of the war dance. He fully realized the danger he was in for if he showed that he was opposed to the plan of an Indian Confederacy in the midst of this insane, drunken mob, his own life would be the penalty. It is impossible for us at this distance in time and changed

condition of society to fully realize the seriousness of the position in which this peace loving friend of the white man found himself. Here was a red man uneducated except in the traditions and customs of the savages of his time, blessed with a remarkable insight into human nature. He saw too, the doom of his race unless they adopted the ideals he recognized as the strength of the white man's form of civilization. The lives of thousands of pioneers were at stake and then the annihilation of thousands of his own race.

When Mark Anthony spoke at the funeral of Julius Caesar, he appealed to a mob of intelligent citizens and thereby ran no risk of his own life. Cicero went to Greece and studied oratory and philosophy under the orators and philosophers of that remarkable type of civilization; but here was an uninstructed savage with a more difficult task than any of these heroes of the past. Like Mark Anthony he began by praising his opponent. He repeated the charge of injustice cited by Black Hawk. He praised the courage, self sacrifice, and long life of heroic deeds accomplished by the old chief who now felt that he had captured his opponent and that he would now lead the once deserters back into one united Sauk and Fox band. This part of Keokuk's oration wrought the enthusiasm of the entire group to the highest pitch.

His next step was to assure them that he was ready to lead them in battle to victory or death, but he wanted first to warn them of the difficulties for which they must prepare. He reminded them that though the Indians of all the tribes were united into one confederacy "would be as numerous as the trees of the forest" they should realize that the pale faced warriors were more numerous.

Then he reminded them that they could not hope to cope with the white man's warriors if handicapped by taking their women, old people and children along; and to leave them at home would mean starvation or the murder of the old and the children and a worse fate for their women by the army of whites. So he warned them that the condition of his leading them against so powerful a foe was that they should first put their wives, children and aged and sick, gently to sleep in the slumber that knows no wakening and then tenderly lay their bodies by the side of their sacred

dead, because they themselves would soon follow their loved ones to the land of dreams.

He then turned to Black Hawk and told him how Neapope had deceived him by falsehoods about help from the British Father who was then at peace with the Great Father at Washington, and why he need not expect help from the other chiefs west of the great river.

This appeal to their love of wives, children and the aged won the hearts not only of all of Keokuk's warriors, but a third of Black Hawk's band. All these quietly stole away, leaving the old chief with fewer supporters than he came. This however did not bar him from his intended invasion of Illinois. He crossed the Mississippi River and traveled along the east side of the river on April 6th and 7th, 1832.

We must now go back to the time of the turkey episode by which the settlers for forty miles around Fort Armstrong were assembled there. The fort under Major Bliss during the winter of 1831-2 was reduced to about 150 men and their provisions had run so low that they were put on part rations while waiting for provisions from the fort at Prairie du Chien where a messenger named Joshua Smart had been sent on foot to request supplies and reinforcements. The river was their only means of transportation and since it had frozen over in November no supplies had reached the fort at Rock Island at the usual time, hence the threatened famine there.

Smart reached his destination in due time, but as there was no way to convey supplies but by boat, he had to wait for the ice to break up in early spring.

In the meantime, Colonel Bliss at the fort on Rock Island, fearing that his messenger had failed to reach the fort at Prairie du Chien, sent messengers down the river in a canoe with an urgent request to Jefferson Barracks below St. Louis for supplies and soldiers because he had received warning that Black Hawk was preparing for an attack upon the fort. Fortunately for the starving garrison the river was free of ice below Fort Armstrong.

Early in March when the ice commenced to break up, a flat boat commanded by Joshua Smart, arrived with plenty of provisions but no soldiers since the Indians near Fort Crawford at Prairie du Chien were causing alarm there, so no soldiers could be spared. Joshua

Smart was then sent as a spy to Keokuk's village to secure information and was just in time to hear from his concealment in Keokuk's tent the speeches made at Black Hawk's war dance. He was perfectly familiar with the language of the Sauks and so was the means of reporting the remarkable oration of Black Hawk, Neapope, and Keokuk, and promptyl reported the same to Major Bliss at the fort. Smart then was just in time to accompany Keokuk and two hundred warriors up the west side of the Mississippi in his effort to reach Fort Armstrong ahead of Black Hawk who had several days the start of him up the east side. Keokuk had not gone half way to his destination when watching by night over his tired, sleeping warriors on the bank of the river, he saw the head light of a steamer coming up the river. This was the steamer coming from Jefferson Barracks with both supplies and soldiers on their way to the fort on Rock Island. He signaled for a hearing and after some difficulty in convincing the officer in charge that he was a friend to the settlers at the fort, the whole band was taken on board nearly sinking the little steam-boat and taken to the fort just in time to save it from the attack of Black Hawk.

Was it the combination of fortunate circumstances or an overruling Providence that brought about so many seemingly accidental circumstances? Whichever it was, there were a series of events most fortunate for the fort and the pioneers. Food came for the fort from the North in time to save the garrison there from starvation and the forbidden gun shots brought the settlers to the fort just before the arrival of Black Hawk. Then the steam-boat from the South came just in time with soldiers and two hundred friendly Indians and plenty of guns and ammunition to save the overcrowded fort.

Returning now to the movements of Black Hawk, we find that he brought women, children and the aged, with tents and located them near where their ancient village of Saukenuk had stood. His warriors rode their ponies while the others paddled their canoes up the river. Then on the evening of April 11, 1832, his warriors forded the south branch of the river and drew up on an island in full view of the fort. One can easily imagine the feelings of the settlers who now expected an immediate attack. It must be remembered that the

boat with soldiers and friendly Indians had not yet arrived and the panic stricken settlers knew nothing of their coming.

It may now be a matter of great curiosity as to how Black Hawk proposed to attack the fort since he had but few guns and little ammunition. Tomahawks and scalping knives could do little against the logs that constituted the walls of the fort. It rained all that night, so the chances for burning down the walls were not very probable. The panic stricken inmates however were unaware of the plot by which a band of two hundred bloodthirsty devils intended to enter the fort to murder and scalp every one within and equip themselves with guns, ammunition and supplies to enable them to drive the pale faces to the Atlantic.

No one in the fort knew that there was a cave under the east end of the island only a few feet below the main entrance to the fort and that three kegs of powder connected by trains of powder and connected with the entrance by a similar train so that the fort could be blown up at a moments notice from Black Hawk. The night was spent in prayer by some and in watching by others and doubtless none slept. At day break the whole company were thrown into a panic by hearing gun shots on the river and some on the watchtower of the fort. Their fears were soon turned to joy and a great shout arose when they learned that the shots were fired as a salute from the steamer that had arrived from down the river loaded with soldiers and Keokuk's band and the shots from the watchtower were the welcome for the long desired relief.

Looking now for Black Hawk, they found his band had melted away, for his spies had not slept either. He knew now that his chances for capturing the fort had been thwarted, so he withdrew quietly in the early dawn and was then making his way up Rock River.

His whole plan of warfare now had to be changed. Deserted by a third of his own warriors, with none of the supplies he had hoped to secure from the fort, few guns and little ammunition, his warfare had to be radically different and had it not been for the mistakes made by Governor Reynolds, the war might have terminated with less bloodshed and financial loss to the government. In the face of all that had occurred, he might have been persuaded to return to his village west

of the river if the Governor had used diplomacy and tact instead of his policy of murdering Indians both women and children as was finally done in getting them back across the Mississippi. He never ceased to regard Black Hawk as a British spy.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

STILLMAN'S DEFEAT, THE CAPTURE OF BLACK HAWK, SENT TO PRESIDENT JACKSON, AND RELEASED— NAMES OF PROMINENT MEN WHO TOOK PART IN THIS WAR AND WHO BECAME NATIONAL CHARACTERS

Up to May 14th, 1832, the war had been fought chiefly by threats and alarms spread largely by false reports. Now, the first bloodshed occurs and whisky again comes in for a large share of the cause. Black Hawk and his band of about 200 warriors with their women and children had gone up the Rock River to seek a place among the Pottowatomies where they might secure the use of some land to raise corn for their support. General Arkinson at the fort sent a messenger to request Black Hawk to return and cross the Mississippi and when he refused to go a second messenger was sent with the threat that if they did not go peaceably they would be pursued and driven across. This made Black Hawk indignant for he said he had behaved peaceably so they had no right to make such a demand.

About this time Governor Reynolds with the two battalions of militia arrived at Dixon. The two officers in charge of these two battalions, Majors Stillman and Bailey, were anxious to get into a battle and if they could capture Black Hawk, it would bring them, as well as Governor Reynolds, to fame. The Governor was especially anxious for this result since he hoped to run for President at the next presidential election. They did all come to fame, but of a very different kind than they hoped for. They started out with 275 men on horseback with Major Stillman named as the superior in command. They had a large covered wagon loaded with provisions and two kegs of whisky drawn by two yoke of oxen. In going up Rock River the wagon sank to the axles in a swamp of quicksand. Being unable to draw the wagon out, each man took his share of provisions and equipment on his own horse but what could they do about the whisky? They had no canteens, but as each man had a tin cup and most of them had a whisky thirst, they drank their full and

then behaved as could be expected. They followed on up the river till sundown and then commenced preparations for their camp when they saw three Indians aproaching with a white flag. Instead of respecting this as an effort to seek a fair understanding between opposing armies, a dozen men in their drunken condition mounted their horses and chased the Indians. They soon took them prisoners and brought them to camp. At this time five Indians on their ponies were seen watching from a little distance on a hill. These had been sent by Black Hawk to watch the bearers of the flag of truce, to report how they were treated. A company of the militia under Captain Eddes started in pursuit of them so they turned to fly for safety to Black Hawk's camp about ten miles away. They were overtaken and two of them killed but the watchful Chief and about forty of his warriors were on guard a short distance from their village hidden by bushes so that their pursuers ran right into their midst before they realized their danger. The Indians rose with a terrific war-whoop and fired possibly not at them for not a man was killed. This volley and the war-whoops evidently had the desired effects for they wheeled and ran, panic stricken toward Stillman's camp six or eight miles away. It was now growing dark and as they came pell mell near the camp they screamed and shouted that the Indians were coming. The whole camp went wild with excitement, rushed to their horses, believing that thousands of Indians were coming. Someone shot one of the three Indian prisoners and the other two escaped during the hurried preparation. Stillman's men left all their supplies and equipment behind and fled, every man for himself.

A comical story was told afterward about a doctor who was so excited that he mounted his horse without first untying the rope by which it was tied to a fire blackened stump about six feet tall. He set his spurs into the flanks of his horse that could go only a few feet ahead and then stop. Thinking the black stump was an Indian holding the rope he turned the horse's head to one side and giving the horse a cruel thrust with both spurs he thought he would jerk the rope out of the Indian's hand; but instead, the horse was brought up so suddenly that the doctor was thrown over the horse's head to the ground. He sprang to his feet and holding out the hilt of his sword to the stump,

said amid the loud thumping of his heart, "Mr. Indian, I surrender; please accept my sword". On finding his mistake he cut the rope with the sword and got away thanking his lucky stars that the Indian had only been a black stump after all.

Now Stillman's two battalions fled in disorder believing that thousands of Indians were after them. Eleven of their number were killed during that panicky flight by night, and the mystery is who killed them. The Indians' ponies were no match for the horses of the militia. Black Hawk and his forty warriors were two miles from his camp when the panic began. He could hardly have returned for ponies and then have overtaken the fleeing militia. Stillman's men fled in disorder, strung out as best they could in running through the wood. It looks as if the shots that killed the eleven men that night were fired by his own men, thinking they were shooting at their pursuers. Eleven whites and three Indians were killed and Black Hawk fell heir to the provisions and equipment left behind when Stillman's 275 men fled from 40 Indians.

Thus ended the first effort to drive Black Hawk across the Mississippi and Stillman's defeat was heralded all over the United States, and naturally caused alarm everywhere. Black Hawk's warriors were reported to be thousands instead of two hundred. Major Stillman's defeat spread terror everywhere and all the glory he got from his raid is that his name is now given as Stillman's Run, to the branch of the Rock River where he started to run from Black Hawk.

Governor Reynolds was terribly shocked and disappointed by Stillman's failure to capture Black Hawk for with it went his hopes for the credit of such a daring deed and the use he could make of it in the presidential campaign. Moreover, from the exaggerated stories told by Stillman's militia, the Governor fully expected thousands of Indians would swoop down on him at Dixon any minute. On May 15, he issued an order for 2,000 mounted volunteers to assemble at Henepin in Putnam County on June 10th. Two days later General Atkinson arrived at Dixon with 800 soldiers and immediately threw up breast-works to protect themselves from the expected attack. As the account of Stillman's defeat spread over the United States, the number of killed as reported increased to 52, and the supposed number of attacking warriors

was estimated at 1,500. Instead of that many Indians atacking the settlers, the Indians were defending themselves against an attack of the militia.

This exaggerated number of the killed had its foundation in the fact that when the roll was called at Dixon, 52 did not answer because 41 of them had deserted. Some of them turned up at Fort Armstrong and others at Ottawa in La Salle County and wherever they went they declared they were the only survivors. Runners were sent from wherever they reached a settlement to warn others that the hostile Indians were attacking the settlers and murdering everyone they could find.

The success of Black Hawk's band had a magical effect upon the allied tribes of the Winnebagoes and Pottawattomies. Heretofore these two tribes had refused to engage in the war except so far as harboring the Sauks; but now they were encouraged to believe that by united effort they could drive the whites out of the country. Various other allied tribes such as the Ottawas and Chippawas occupying territory all over the state, between the Illinois and the Mississippi rivers joined in the war. Black Hawk sent messengers to all these urging them to attend a war dance. Shaubenee was the head chief of all those tribes and had risen to that distinction by his superior ability as a wise counselor. He had fought beside the renowned Tecumseh who like Black Hawk, tried twenty years before to organize all the Indians to drive the whites out of the country. Tecumseh was defeated by General Harrison afterward President Harrison, in 1812. Tecumseh joined the British army and was killed at the battle of Thames, October 5, 1813. "Shaubenee then became chief and immediately ordered a retreat.

He was convinced that the white men were equally as brave as the Indians and greatly superior in implements and arts of war, so he made a vow to the Great Spirit that if his life was spared in that battle he never again would go upon the war-path against the palefaces. This vow he most religiously kept the remainder of his long, eventful life."[4]

Shaubenee warned Black Hawk of the certainty of defeat from his more intimate knowledge of and his experience with the whites. In reply to Black Hawk's plea that the Indians all united would be as numerous

[4]The Sauks and Black Hawk War, by Perry A. Armstrong.

as the trees of the forest, Shaubenee replied that the whites were as numerous as the leaves on those trees. Black Hawk was terribly disappointed at the refusal of this great chief to assist.

Here now were two great Indian chiefs facing a serious situation. The tribe of one starving for food so that they were now living chiefly on elm bark, clams and what game they could find. If they tried to return across the Mississippi they would have to go in canoes by the city of Dixon and right through armies of soldiers. To stay where they were they would soon be pursued and captured.

The other chief was fully aware that many Indians had grievances against the whites and were anxious for someone to lead them in a general war on the whites. Upon the decisions of these two chiefs rested the fate of both the whites and the Indians. Each quickly made his decision which will be the subject of the next chapter.

Shaubenee had his mind made up before Black Hawk's war dance was over just what he would do. He knew that many of the Indians throughout the state would take advantage of the occasion to murder women and children and that the blame would be charged to the Sauks. He and his son mounted their ponies and set out to warn the settlers for a hundred miles along the north side of the Illinois River. They rode day and night on different routes warning every family that the Indians were planning the murder of all they could find and that they must fly at once to the fort at Ottawa if they would save their lives. Some of the settlers refused to accept the warning thinking it was only a trick to have them vacate. Some even drove the old chief away with threats. One, Mr. Davis, on Indian Creek was very abusive. Shaubenee knew why there was greater danger for Mr. Davis, his wife and children than for any others in that neighborhood. Davis built a dam across the creek to furnish power to run his sawmill. This prevented the fish from going up the creek to where a tribe of the Pottawatomies lived. An Indian went to tear it down and was set upon by Davis and badly beaten with a stick. Shaubenee knew that these Indians would be glad of a chance to get revenge as they did soon afterwards by killing Davis and all his family in a most brutal way.

When Shaubenee had been riding for thirty hours

without food or sleep his pony fell dead. Fortunately he was near the cabin of a settler who knew him, so he was fed and given a horse with which to complete his journey of mercy to the settlers.

Now commenced the kind of warfare that only the Indians knew how to conduct. The details are too horrible to relate. It was during these raids that Elsie Strawn Armstrong and her boys were driven from their home the first year after their arrival in LaSalle County. Her second and third sons, George and William, enlisted and served in defending the fort at South Ottawa. The fourth son, Joel, drove three yoke of oxen with a load of provisions to Dixon and then on to Rock Island.

While there were many cases of a man or a family killed here or there throughout LaSalle and adjoining counties, there was none so brutal as that of the Davis family and neighbors assembled at this house on May 21, 1832. Sixteen men, women and children were brutally murdered with tomahawks by about twenty war-painted Pottawatomies. Two girls, Sylvia and Rachel Hall, aged 17 and 15 respectively, were carried off as prisoners. They saw their parents and their 8-year-old sister and the others who were in the Davis house, all killed and then they were taken to Wisconsin and turned over to the Winnebagoes and after eleven days were ransomed by the state and returned to their brother who had fled and escaped the rifle shots fired at him as he ran.

The State of Illinois afterwards gave each of these girls 80 acres of land located where Joliet stands. Three Pottawattomies were recognized a year later by the Hall sisters as being among the murderers. They were arrested and since there was no jail in which to confine them, they were put under bonds of one thousand dollars each with Shaubenee and five other chiefs as bondsmen. They returned at the time set for the trial but finally were freed of the charges for want of sufficient identification. Thomas Ford, afterwards Governor of Illinois, was the prosecuting attorney.

The 1800 volunteers were so disheartened by Stillman's defeat, that they all demanded to be released, not that they were unwilling to serve the State so much as the fear for the safety of their own families at home for it was at this time that they heard of the massacres at Indian Creek. General Atkinson yielded to their

demands and sent them to Ottawa to be mustered out of the service, May 28, 1832, by Lieut. Robert Anderson, later of Fort Sumnter fame. Governor Reynolds made a fervent plea to these men to re-enlist for 20 days until his 2,000 volunteers could respond to his second call and so protect the frontier. Enough of them did re-enlist and were assigned to the most exposed frontier and with the exception of one company, saw no Indians.

The Indian Creek massacre so alarmed Governor Reynolds that he sent out a third call for 2,000 volunteers so that by June 16th he had an army of 3,148 volunteers that were organized into three brigades of 10 regiments. Perry Armstrong in his book on the Sauks and Black Hawk war says that while the chiefs of the Pottawattomies and Winnebagoes kept their tribes from going into a general war, yet there were individuals in both these tribes that took advantage of the occasion to take revenge for some personal wrong. The most brutal murders were committed all over the territory of northwestern Illinois and southwestern Wisconsin by small bands of Indians. In all but possibly two cases it was by attacking defenseless men, women and children. In one case the scalp was taken from a child without first killing it and a man and wife were tied to a tree and then burned to death. Such horrible butcheries aroused the entire nation so that President Andrew Jackson ordered General Scott to go to Illinois and put an end to the attrocities by driving the Indians across the Mississippi River. Accordingly General Winfield Scott left Fortress Monroe on the Atlantic Coast with nine companies of soldiers on June 28, 1832. When they reached Buffalo, General Scott chartered four steamboats to go through the lakes to Chicago.

Asiatic cholera had appeared early that year at Quebec and Montreal. Little was known of its cause or how to treat it. All went well with General Scott's men until they reached Detroit when two cases of cholera appeared on one of the boats. Both died and the boats passed on up the St. Clair River to Fort Gratiot forty miles north, where 280 men were landed. Several died between Detroit and the Fort and the records show that only 9 of the 280 that landed survived. Two of the boats turned back to Buffalo, but many died on the return trip. The other two boats proceeded on

their course to Chicago. By the time they reached their destination not more than 200 out of the 850 men who left Buffalo were fit for the field. Men deserted every time there was a chance to land and so many of these were found dead in the woods. In six hours after a man was attacked in most cases he died in great agony. General Scott reached Chicago July 10, 1832, where he remained some time at Fort Dearborn to care for the sick. As soon as he reached Fort Armstrong, he discharged all the volunteers. Cholera again broke out at the Fort where 13 soon died. Next he ordered that any soldier found drunk should be made to dig his own grave as soon as his strength would permit, for, "if not needed for himself, it could be used by some drunken companion, for otherwise the temperate men would have to be digging graves for the drunkards". Soon after reaching this fort 50 died.

During this terrible siege of cholera, General Scott had tended the sick and dying personally, never sparing himself. After the cholera subsided he sent for the Chiefs of all the tribes in that vicinity and made them sign a treaty of peace, September 21, 1832. Keokuk and eight other chiefs of the Sauks, and twenty-four Foxes signed this treaty ceding all the lands they had claimed in northwestern Illinois to the United States.

Going back now to August 2nd, we find that the final battle with Black Hawk was fought by Generals Dodge and Henry under command of Colonel Zachary Taylor. This is the Battle of Bad Axe. The Sauks in trying to cross the Mississippi River, just what was demanded of them, were mercilessly fired upon. Their women and children were in bark canoes and men and ponies were swimming for dear life. One hundred and fifty men, women and children were killed and forty taken prisoners. Black Hawk and the Prophet on whom he relied for advice, escaped up the river and took refuge in Wisconsin. They knew they would be pursued, so Black Hawk hid by climbing up a tree where he remained two days and the Prophet hid in a canyon near by. Two Winnebago chiefs were employed to spy them out and deliver them to General Scott at Fort Armstrong. They camped near the tree in which Black Hawk was hiding and talked over their errand so that Black Hawk climbed down while they were asleep and escaped. He and the Prophet slipped away together, but were soon discovered and captured in a

wigwam where they were being fed. They were sent to Fort Armstrong, but as the cholera was raging there, they were taken to Jefferson Barracks by Jefferson Davis. Here they were turned over to General Atkinson who recalling all the efforts he had put forth to capture them without success, put them in ball and chains which irritated the old chief nearly to distraction.

While waiting here for the government to decide what to do with him, Keokuk made him a visit, bringing with him Black Hawk's wife, two daughters and some other Indians.

Keokuk tried to persuade General Atkinson to free Black Hawk, offering his personal bond for his return when called for and to be responsible for his good behavior while free; but this was refused. On April 26, 1833, the two prisoners with some other Indians including Black Hawk's two sons, were sent to Fortress Monroe. He was later brought before President Andrew Jackson, to decide what to do with him. The President had long since formed the opinion that Black Hawk was a desperate character and unworthy of any lenience; but when he came to see him and hear his side of the story, he gained an entirely different opinion of him. Black Hawk, through an interpreter, told his story in a way that convinced the President that grievous mistakes had been made in handling the beginning of the controversy and that Black Hawk had some grounds for complaints that could not be denied. He therefore directed that the prisoners should be taken to some of the principal cities of the East so that they might see how great a nation the pale faces were and what the white man's civilization could mean to the Indians, if they would adopt the white man's mode of life.

Accordingly they were taken to the Navy Yards at Norfolk, to Baltimore and New York. While in Baltimore he met President Jackson again and both were present at the same theater where Black Hawk attracted as much attention as the President. In an interview next day, the President gave him some good advice and told him he would be free to return to his people but that he must obey the counsels of Keokuk.

He went back very much impressed with all he had seen and very grateful for all the kindness shown him wherever he went.

A great ceremony was arranged by Major Garland, who read President Jackson's speech to about a hundred of the assembled chiefs and braves of both the Sauks and Foxes, and the peace pipe was passed around. Black Hawk was then allowed to go to his tribe west of the river where he lived a quiet life for many years, receiving much attention from both whites and Indians.

So ended the so-called Black Hawk War that had involved the entire nation. Four or five hundred Indians had been killed, two hundred whites massacred and over four hundred died of cholera trying to reach the battle fields of the West. The nation had spent over $2,000,000, the pioneers of Illinois and Wisconsin were driven from their homes and otherwise discouraged in their attempt to settle two of the great states of the Union.

All this may now be laid at the door of whisky, first, at the French settlement at Cuvier, where a drunken Indian took revenge for indignities shown him for resenting the liberties taken with his daughter; second, the treaty that five drunken Indians were forced to sign without knowing its full purpose; third, the sale of whisky to Indians that led Black Hawk to empty Vandruff's barrels on the ground; fourth, the effort of Stillman's men to save the whisky from the wagon stuck in the swamp.

The story of this nation's struggle with Black Hawk would not be complete without a few lines about the great Emancipator, Abraham Lincoln. He earned his choice as a captain by his remarkable personality, his ability as an entertaining story teller and as an athlete. On April 21st, when 68 volunteers assembled at Richland (Sangamon County), a man named Kirkpatrick stepped out in front and boasting of his long experience in the Army invited all who were willing to serve under him to step in line behind him. As the line commenced to form, some of Lincoln's friends grabbed him and pushed him out in front and called for men to form behind him. The result was that three-fourths of the men were found behind Lincoln.

His company was mustered out on May 27, 1832, and he immediately enrolled as a private under Captain Iles for another 20 days' service. This company was mustered out June 15th by Major Robert Anderson (of Fort Sumnter fame) and he immediately enlisted

again under Captain Early and served until July 10, 1832. During all his service he attracted men to him by his ready wit, his good judgment in handling men, and his self-sacrificing disposition at all time.

Among the many stories told of him I find this one by Benjamine P. Poor in "Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln" best. He says, "He was marching with a front of over 20 men when he came to a gate through which he found it necessary to march. He could not recall the proper word of command to get his company through the gate, so he shouted. 'This company is dismissed for two minutes, when it will fall in again on the other side of the gate' ".[5]

Many other noted men who took part in the war were:

Presidents: Zachary Taylor, William Henry Harrison, Andrew Jackson.

Governors of Illinois: Ninian Edwards, Thomas Ford, John Reynolds, Joseph Duncan.

Governor of Missouri: William Clark.

Prominent Generals: Samuel Whiteside, Edmund P. Ganies, William McHenry, Winfield W. Scott, Henry Atkinson, James Henry.

Lieutenants: Albert S. Johnson, Joseph E. Johnston, Jefferson Davis.

Brothers of Elsie Strawn Armstrong: John Strawn, colonel; Jeremiah Strawn, quartermaster.

Sons of Elsie Strawn Armstrong: George Washington Armstrong, William Elder Armstrong, Joel Armstrong.

5Black Hawk War, by Frank E. Stevens, page 279.

THE OFFUT STORE AT NEW SALEM WHERE ABRAHAM LINCOLN WORKED AS A CLERK UNTIL HE ENTERED THE STATE MILITIA TO FIGHT THE INDIANS IN THE BLACK

The man seated is John Armstrong, son of "Jack" Armstrong, Lincoln's Top Sergeant, with whom he had a wrestling match and in which Lincoln won. The other two are Mr. and Mrs. Hanbery of Rock Island, who furnished this cut of the Offut Store. This picture was taken 86 years after Lincoln left to go into the war.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE PART TAKEN BY GEORGE AND WILLIAM ARMSTRONG IN THE DIGGING OF THE ILLINOIS AND MICHIGAN CANAL, AND BY GEORGE IN BUILDING A PIONEER SCHOOL HOUSE

It is impossible for us of the twentieth century to realize how much we owe to our railroads and hard roads for automobiles. A century ago the pioneers had neither of these. The lack of transportation facilities had much to do with the hard times that befell the pioneers in 1837. Speculation and extravagant living were the prime causes of the panic as they are of every panic. It may seem strange to speak of the pioneers being extravagant, but no matter what the standard of living is, too rapid a change for the better is sure to lead to extravagance. The whole State was going wild over the prospects of a canal that would make it possible to ship their farm products to good markets and obtain lumber and coal and other things that were especially needed for the prairies of the state. Previous to this the prairies were considered uninhabitable because timber was essential for the log cabins, fences and fuel. With the prospects of a canal from the lake region to the place on the Illinois River where water transportation commenced and railroads all over the state which were promised, all felt that good times were just a little way ahead. Emigrants were pouring in from the East to take advantage of the new prospect and thousands of laborers were given work on the improvements being made. All these prospects led people to invest and spend more freely than they were able. Money was borrowed by the State to carry on these improvements and all went well until the money was exhausted and then the crash came.

Work on the canal then nearly came to a stand still except that the State issued scrip to those contractors who were willing to accept it, but those who were obliged to have money at once to pay the laborers had to sell it for from 15 to 28 cents on the dollar.

It was for this reason that the two Armstrong brothers, George and William, who had taken con-

tracts for digging parts of the canal lost hundreds of thousands of dollars because they both had to sell their scrip for what they could get for it.

The lack of transportation was the means of preventing the recovery from hard times because prices were so low on all the pioneers had to sell. The cost of transportation had to be taken into account so that Eastern merchants could buy elsewhere much cheaper. Then the cost of transportation had to be added to coal and lumber brought from Michigan or farther east, so it was prohibitive. Shipping down the river to the Gulf of Mexico was also expensive. What a boom it would have caused if it had been known that beneath all the lands of central Illinois were the great coal fields that have since yielded more wealth than the gold mines of California, that caused such a rush of settlers in 1849.

The first explorers of the Illinois valley pointed out a century before that some time a canal joining the lakes with the gulf would be a great boon and make the valley a great asset to the nation. In 1814, President Madison called attention of Congress to the advantages of such a canal and Governor Bond in his first message to the legislature that met at Vandalia urged this enterprise. In 1821 the legislature appropriated $10,000 for a survey of the route and an estimate was made that such a canal could be dug for $700,000, but the canal when completed in 1848 cost the State $8,000,000.

When George was in the legislature in 1844-5 there was a great deal of discussion as to whether canals or railroads would be the better investments for the State. A member of the assembly who was evidently much impressed with the value of a canal, made this statement in his speech. "A canal will wear deeper and wider the longer it runs while a railroad will commence rusting out from the day it is built". His opinion becomes the more amusing now with the great net work of railroads all over the State that has driven the canal into disuse.

In 1828 the law was passed authorizing the sale of bonds and the digging of the canal but money was not available until 1836 when the work began in earnest. Ground was broken at Chicago on the 4th of July with a ceremony. Many contractors like the Armstrong brothers took sections to dig and employed laborers

and teams with scrapers. Locks were constructed wherever the level changed too rapidly and bridges were built. After the failure of 1837 the work was nearly suspended. At last the state offered the bond holders every alternate section of land along the route of the canal and the tolls from the use of the canal until the sales of canal land and tolls had fully paid the debt if they would finish the work and put the enterprise thru. This offer was accepted and the canal was opened in 1848.

The canal boats were long low boats for hauling grain in the hold below deck and lumber on deck with a cabin fitted up for passengers. Many people came and went over this route which though slow was much more comfortable than the crowded coaches that made regular trips. A man stood on deck and blew a trumpet as the boat approached a town to let the waiting passengers know that the boat was about to arrive. The boats were drawn by a team of mules usually hitched tandem and driven by a boy walking beside them on one side of the canal called the toepath. The arrival of the canal boat at a town was looked for as a great event and doubtless attracted as much attention as the "steam coach" did a little later. People took pleasure trips to Chicago about as they do now on the lake steamers in a summer vacation.

No matter how useless the canal is today, it was a great boon to the pioneers of the Illinois valley and to the City of Chicago. Business was greatly stimulated in Chicago and the farmers began to get ahead of the hard conditions that had held sway for many years. The prairie lands were now thrown on the market because coal could be shipped in for fuel and lumber became so cheap that houses were no longer built of logs.

Before this time a great deal of timber was needed to furnish material for fences. These were built at first of rails twelve feet long and about three or four inches thick laid zig-zag and about five feet high. This required a great deal of timber land to supply the needed wood. Then all fires were wood fires. Now with cheap lumber the prairies were in demand. Later other forms of fences were built but none so numerous as the board fence made with six inch boards twelve feet long with a post every six feet. Wire fences have entirely displaced these as fast as they decayed. One

attempt made in the latter half of the century was the effort to have hedge fences that the agents claimed would make a fence that would never wear out, but alas, proved a dismal failure and the traveler about the State may see the relics of them today.

One of the great advantages of the canal to the City of Chicago was the draining off of the sewage that accumulated in the Chicago River, which had become a cess-pool of filth. The river was too sluggish to carry it into the lake and what it did carry was beginning to poison the water of the lake for drinking purposes. To feed the canal, pumping works had to be set up and dams built in the Calumet River to furnish a flow down the canal. For many years this was a relief to the city, but when the population doubled and doubled the condition of the river and the lake became so bad for the health of th egreat city, that a new and much larger canal had to be made at great expense by reversing the direction of the flow of the Chicago River. This deep waterway is not finished yet, but the State and the National Government are engaged in the great enterprise and before 1935 the great ship canal that has been the dream of three centuries will be completed and great freighters and pleasure boats will ply between Chicago and the Gulf or across the Atlantic.

A PIONEER SCHOOLHOUSE

From an old account book in the handwriting of George W. Armstrong I copy here the first page of the journal kept by the board of directors of District No. 1 of Brookfield Township, LaSalle County, Illinois.
February 9, 1848.

"Directors met pursuant to previous notice. There were present Steven Watson, Sales Austin and George W. Armstrong. Ordered, that George W. Armstrong be appointed treasurer of said district. Ordered, that Steven Watson be authorized to employ a teacher to teach the common school in said district for a term of three months.

Ordered, that the treasurer be authorized to contract with George Dixon, Esq., for the purchase of a sufficient quantity of brick to erect a schoolhouse 24 feet long by 20 feet wide and side walls 9 feet high and that the said treasurer pay out the money on hand to settle with Mr. Dixon for the demand of the purchase money.

Ordered, that the treasurer act in conjunction with the building committee to prepare and contract for the delivery of all the materials on the ground for the erection of the said schoolhouse, and the said treasurer is authorized to collect all the sums subscribed by the inhabitants of the said district for the purpose as shall be necessary to be used in the erection of said schoolhouse and; further that the said treasurer receipt for all materials that may be furnished by the subscribers in lieu of the subscriptions as the committee may think necessary."

(Signed by the three directors.)

Then followed an account of an election at which the legal voters authorized that all this should be done by the directors. The record then shows that William Watson donated a half acre of land and that the district bought a half acre more for the sum of $5. This was not paid for nearly two years and then 60 cents in interest was paid in addition to the price of $5.

At the next quarterly meeting of the board of directors the treasurer was authorized to pay the teacher, Adelia Hogaboom the sum of $9.69 on October 14th and on December 24th $8.31. This made her salary $6 a month for her three months' term. The records do not show, however, that she boarded around one week at the home of each of her pupils and after completing a round, the same was repeated over and over. This was the fact as related to me by my father. There is no statement as to where the school was held before the building was ready, but presumably at the home of one of the directors that lived nearest to the place selected for the building. When the building was completed a man teacher was hired and as he had to tend his own fires and act as janitor and possibly split the sticks of cord wood for the fires, he was paid $16 a month for a three months' term. He also probably boarded himself on that large salary.

Tuition was charged for pupils living outside the district at the rate of two and a half cents for each day of actual attendance. The record shows that a total of $7.90 was due from non-residents at the close of the term but only $5.74 was marked paid. While this amount was small it paid nearly a third of a month's salary of the teacher.

After the taxes were collected the township treasurer paid back to the subscribers the amount of their

subscriptions. The writer attended that school from his sixth to his eighteenth year, inclusive, and was then employed to teach that same school for two winters. Children up to their twelfth year attended three months each summer and three months each winter but after the age of twelve they attended only during the winter term.

The schoolhouse built in 1848 is still in use. It has had a new roof shingling several times and a new floor. There are some cracks in the walls but the principal one was not the result of age, but was made soon after it was built by making raised seats leaning against the front wall so as to have ampitheater seats for a vaudeville show. It was not known by that name but like the "rose by a different name, it smelled as sweet". They called it an "Exhibition" and the country swain came from the farms for miles around. It was a great event and will always be remembered by the writer for though only four years old, the scene, where a barber who was supposed to shave one of his older brothers, proposed to make short work of his task by pretending to cut off the head of his customer with a very large pair of wooden shears made for the purpose, is vividly impressed upon his mind. I am told by some of the audience that my protests, uttered in a loud voice, attracted more laughter than the performance on the stage.

At first the seats consisted of benches without backs and a plank in front for a desk. Later these were replaced with pine board desks that combined seat and desk with ample back rests and a shelf for the books. These desks also served for a place to carve one's initials, if done when the teacher was occupied at the time and there was enough to do at all times for the teacher, so he was not concerned with things that were done at some previous time. Then there were some things that were genuine of which we now have the name but not the substance. We had a real blackboard and not a slab of slatestone which we now call the blackboard. It was a real board painted black and a trough at the lower edge where some lumps of real chalk were placed instead of the crayons of plaster of paris we call chalk. The desks were arranged along the side walls facing the middle aisle with the girls at one side and the boys at the other. That was as far as sex segregation went,

for in all classes and games they were together. The teacher's desk sat on a platform six inches above the level of the rest of the floor at the end of the room opposite the door. There were no window shades on the windows, but the boys and girls that were well tanned and freckled in the full sunlight did not object to the sunshine on their backs while at school. The stove sat in the middle aisle and burned a stick of wood three feet long and woe to the youth who had to sit at the seats nearest the stove in winter or farthest away as of course some had to do.

At noon the tin dinner pails were brought out from under the benches and afterwards the usual pranks inside of the house were the rule if it was too stormy to go outside to pass the noon hour. The most common sport was pom-pull-away, anti-over and three old cat.

The school library consisted of a choice collection of Government reports, which were as good after a score of years as when they came from the press. There were a few well worn story books such as Robinson Crusoe, Swiss Family Robinson and some that I have forgotten. Doubtless there were some books on moral conduct which were in demand about as often as the Agricultural Reports. Contests in spelling and public speaking on Friday afternoon furnished intellectual entertainment and wrestling and foot races added zest to the outdoor amusements. Marbles and tops were unknown to the country boys until there were some city bred boys added to the community.

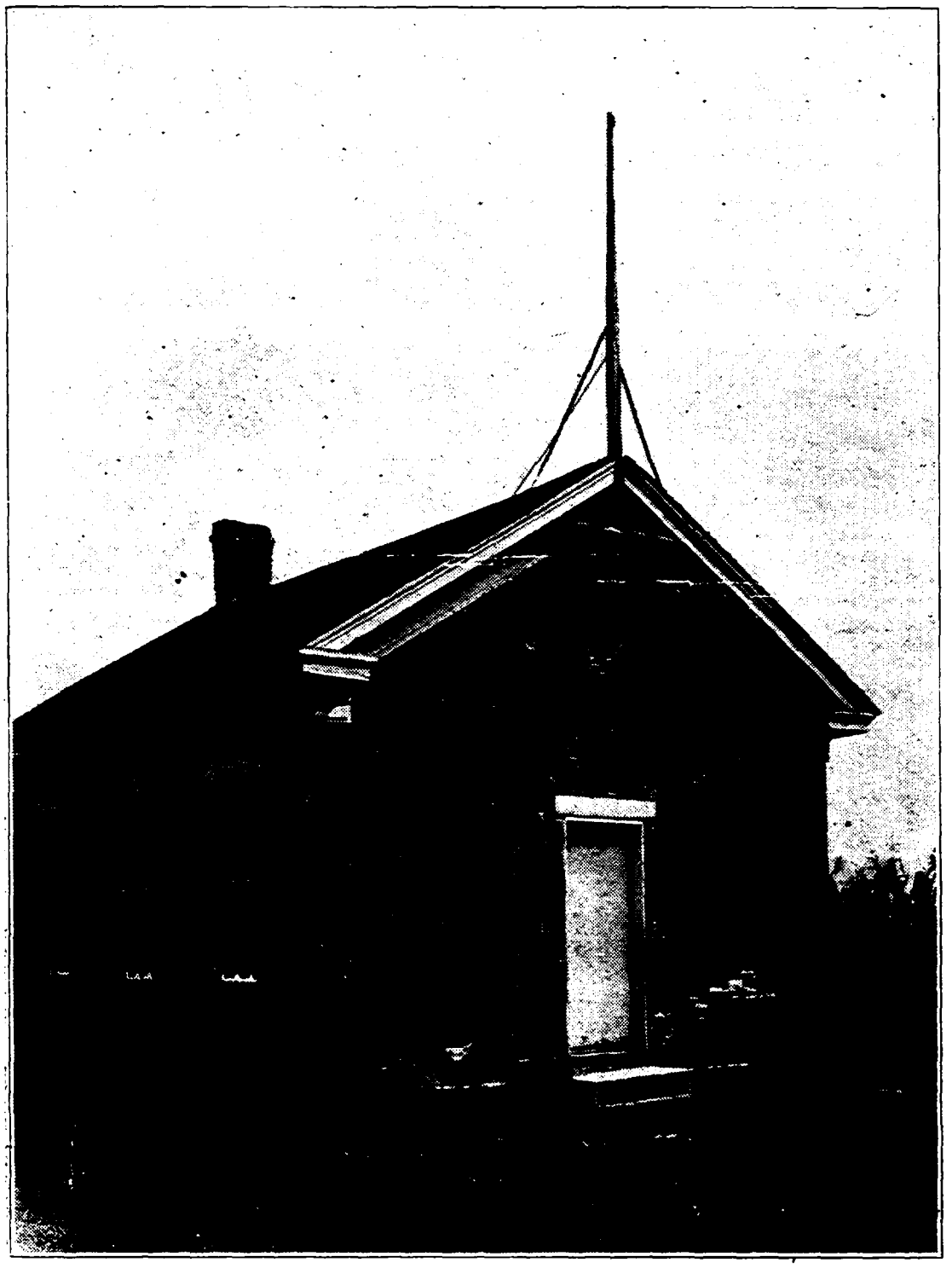
As to the teachers, they were usually the young men and women who were studying for a profession and out to earn some money and they knew as little about the art of teaching as the average city bred clerk knows of farming. Each winter, or nearly so, we had a different teacher and since no one knew where the previous teacher left off with such a subject as Geography, we were started again at the beginning of Mitchell's Geography and in three months we reached the State of Ohio. This has given me an excuse ever since for my lack of knowledge of our western states. I have no doubt that the writer taught as he had been taught by teachers good and bad during the two winters he was the teacher before going to college.

The cut of that schoolhouse shows a flagpole on the roof. That was added in recent years when some

reformers secured the passage of a law by our State legislature that required that the flag of the United States should be floated over every school building every day the school was in session. At that time the writer was a trustee of the University of Illinois and the flag was raised by the Military department with due ceremony every morning on a flagpole sixty feet high on the campus and lowered at sunset. Some farmers of the neighborhood who thought the University was breaking the law, had the entire board of trustees taken into court under indictment for violating the law. The attorney who argued our case explained to the Judge that if the law had to be obeyed literally there would have to be about twelve or fifteen flags flying one over every barn and chicken coop as well as the shops, laboratories and recitation halls, for they were all school buildings. The Judge stopped the attorney before he had spoken ten minutes and asked if he wished to plead that the law was unconstitutional. The attorney replied "I do". Then the Judge said "the Court declares the Law unconstitutional and the case is dismissed".

Today the old brick schoolhouse in the pioneer days of 1848 still serves the district just as it was except that an addition in the form of a leanto covers the front to serve as a dressing room and a storm shed both of which were very much needed. One misfortune befell the grounds, however, since the days of the writer and that is that owing to a mistake in the survey that staked off the acre of land, the building had a narrow escape from being on the wrong lot, for the correct survey brought the line a few feet from one side of the building and enlarged the space on the opposite side. There is therefore no chance now for the game we loved to play called anti-over when half of the pupils chosen by one leader stood on one side of the house and the others on the other and the ball was thrown over the house and the one who caught it before it struck the ground had the right to go to the end of the house and throw the ball at the players on the other side. The game went on until the bell rang for a return to books.

There is some compensation, however, for the shift in the lot, for there is more room on one side of the house now for that new game they call baseball.



THE PIONEER SCHOOL HOUSE BUILT IN 1848
AND STILL IN USE

George W. Armstrong was one of the School Directors that built this school house and where the author attended and where he taught his first school.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Some Historic Facts In Which The Sons of Joseph and Elsie Had a Part to Perform—The Discovery of Gold in California in 1848

George D. Lyman in his book entitled "John Marsh, Pioneer" tells of the great excitement that occurred in California in 1848. He says a man on horseback came riding like mad into the San Joaquin Valley shouting at the top of his voice. The settlers thinking that Indians were coming ran out to meet him with rifles in hand. Checking his foaming steed, he held out a buckskin bag shouting Gold! Gold! Gold! Gold in the Sierras!

James W. Marshall on January 19th, 1848, found flakes of gold while digging a mill-race at General Sutter's mill on the American River. Dr. John Marsh, a Harvard graduate who had been a prominent character in the Black Hawk War had been practicing medicine and politics in California for many years. A great deal of credit is due him for the admitting of California to the Union in 1850. As soon as he heard of the discovery of gold, he organized a party and left for the gold fields. When his party reached Yuba River they struck camp and began digging. His success was enough to set the whole world of adventurers on fire. He cleaned up as much as fifty dollars an hour for a time. He also conducted a kind of department store for the other miners and the Indians who were curious to know what it was all about. Since they knew nothing of the value of gold dust, they would exchange a tin cup full of gold dust for the same quantity of glass beads or weight for weight of sugar. When he had exhausted his supply of articles he could spare, he traded his red shirt off of his back for three hundred dollars' worth of gold dust. While panning gold out of the gravel from the river, he found many nuggets of gold which he piled up on his red bandana handkerchief. After he had a sizable pyramid of nuggets he went back into the river for one more haul and when he came back his handkerchief was gone but his gold was all there and in the distance he saw an Indian disappearing with his handkerchief.

Besides what he made by mining and trading in this way with the Indians, he brought away seventeen pounds of gold weighed on his steelyards. The only thing that could stop him in his mad rush for gold was the fact that he became sick from sheer exhaustion from overwork so he returned to his ranch with forty thousand dollars' worth of gold in his saddlebags.

No one else was so fortunate as he but many gathered sizable fortunes. Some of course found but little. Marsh had the advantage of education and a remarkable experience in many fields and all this helped him to know where the heavier particles of gold would probably accumulate as washed down the gullies from the crumbling mountains around. He knew, too, how to secure the help of the Indians and took every advantage of their lack of knowledge.

It was not far from this point that Elsie Strawn Armstrong's two younger sons arrived with many others after such accounts as this of John Marsh reached the States east in the following year.

*NAMES ONCE APPLIED TO LA SALLE COUNTY

La Salle County has been baptised with eight different names each in turn to honor the memory of some historic character. The state was settled from the South and in many cases the county extended north to the Wisconsin line. When the south end of each county so formed became sufficiently populated, it concentrated its territory in the southern end, cutting off the territory to the North which took on a new name. It was in this way that La Salle County bore the name of seven other counties before it received its present name in 1831. In 1790 there were but two counties and an unnamed territory occupying the rest of the state. Knox County occupied the eastern half of the state south of the Illinois River and a strip running along the lake to the Wisconsin line, and St. Clair County occupied the rest of the territory south of the Illinois River to the middle of the southern tip of the State. North of the river was not organized into a county. That part of La Salle County south of the river was then in Knox County.

In 1801 Randolph County occupied the southern part of the State, and St. Clair County took all the rest of the State except a narrow strip along the south-

*Data from "Counties of Illinois", by Louis L. Emmerson, Secretary of State, 1920.

east part of the state which was left to Knox County. All of La Salle County was now in St. Clair County. In 1809 Knox County had been crowded over the line into Indiana where it found its final resting place and now has Vincennes for its principal city. In 1812 St. Clair County was reduced to a small territory in the southwest and all the state north of it was now Madison County. In 1815 the eastern half of Madison County became Edwards County, so now La Salle County had its fourth name. In 1816 Edwards County was reduced to the southern end of its former territory and all the rest became Crawford County, and La Salle received its fifth name. In 1819 Crawford County surrendered most of its territory to become Clark County, La Salle's sixth name. In 1821 Clark County gave all its territory north of the Illinois and the Kankakee Rivers to form Pike County and the half of its territory to the west to form Fayette County so now La Salle County was a part of Pike County north of the river and Fayette County south, its seventh name and finally in 1931 its final name La Salle.

That part of the county north of the Illinois River formed a part of seven counties before it received its final name, but they were not all the same as those of the south side of the river. They were St. Clair, Madison, Edwards, Crawford, Pike, and Putnam and then La Salle. It now included in its territory parts of or all of four other counties. The southeast corner included a large part of Livingston County, cut off in 1837, a part of Putnam County cut off in 1839 when Marshall County was formed, and then owing to the efforts of William Elder Armstrong, third son of Elsie, in 1841 the two counties, Grundry and Kendall were cut off of the east side of La Salle County and it was reduced to its present boundaries.

Each of the names of counties that La Salle County bore at some time may be found in the list of the one hundred and two counties of the state, except that the present Knox County is not formed from any of the original Knox County.

Of the counties of Illinois, six were named for Presidents of the United States as follows: Washington, Madison, Jefferson, Monroe, Adams and Jackson. Four were named for the early Governors as follows: Bond, Cole, Edwards and Ford.

The State of Illinois had a series of names much

like La Salle County. It was first a part of Florida as a Spanish colony in 1543. In 1620 a strip across the state including Cook County was granted to the Plymouth Colony by King James of England. In 1699 all the present state became a part of Louisiana claimed by France. England still claimed it in 1763, but it was taken from Great Britain by George Rogers Clark in 1779 so it was then made a part of Virginia, and called the County of Illinois. In 1784 Virginia ceded to the Government as the Northwest Territory all that which includes the states of Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan and Wisconsin.

SOME OF THE SCENIC POINTS OF INTEREST IN LA SALLE COUNTY

On the south side of the Illinois River a few miles west of Ottawa stands the historic Starved Rock. It is an isolated cliff one hundred and twenty-five feet high with nearly perpendicular sides except on the south and here it is sloping enough to permit of crude steps to the top. Its area is about an acre at the top and is covered with enough soil to permit the growth of trees and grass.

In 1682 the explorer La Salle and his companion Tonti stablished a fort on this rock and called it Fort St. Louis. It then served as a trading post and many of the Indian tribes sold their furs here and purchased the trinkets most attractive to them.

The Rock derived its name according to tradition by various tribes of Indians from the tale that a band of the Illinois Indians took refuge here in a war waged against them by several allied tribes. This was probably about the year 1780. After the most of the besieged were starved to death a few surrendered or escaped in the night. Five tribes surrounded the rock and permitted no food or water to be obtained.

The Illinois Indians, once the most powerful and most numerous of all the Indian tribes in this State, occupied almost all of the territory of the State that has taken this name. The name meant Superior Men, and the time was when they were the superior Indians of the middle West, and La Salle County was the center of their population. They seem to have been hated by all the other tribes that finally united to drive them out of the famous hunting grounds along the Illinois River.

Starved Rock is now a State Park and has many visitors to climb its steep approach every year and imagine the scenes enacted during the siege of the band of starving Red Men.

DEER PARK CANYON

A few miles south and west of Ottawa on the Vermillion River is a canyon that attracts many visitors every year. It is a narrow cut in the rocks from twenty feet deep at the mouth to 80 feet at the upper end with sides perpendicular or even overhanging. Tradition says that it got its name from the fact that the Indians used it as a corral for deer.

Buffalo Rock is another unique rock on the north side of the river near Utica. It slopes gently up from the north with a perpendicular side to the South. It is said that the Indians would drive buffalos from the North with great shouts and frighten the animals so they would jump off of the perpendicular side and break their necks or their legs so they were an easy prey of the hunter who at that time had no weapons but the bow and arrow, spears and tomahawks.

THE DISCOVERY OF COAL

The First Coal Discovered in the United States, was in La Salle County near Ottawa by Father Hennepin, a Missionary that accompanied La Salle. This was in 1679. Coal is now mined in various parts of the county. During the pioneer days of the father of the writer there was a dream in the hearts of many a young man that coal would be found under each man's land but though it proved to be true in very many places, it was not always profitable because too deep and the vein too thin. Some lumps of coal were found in the creek on my father's farm which served as the foundation of many of my daydreams.

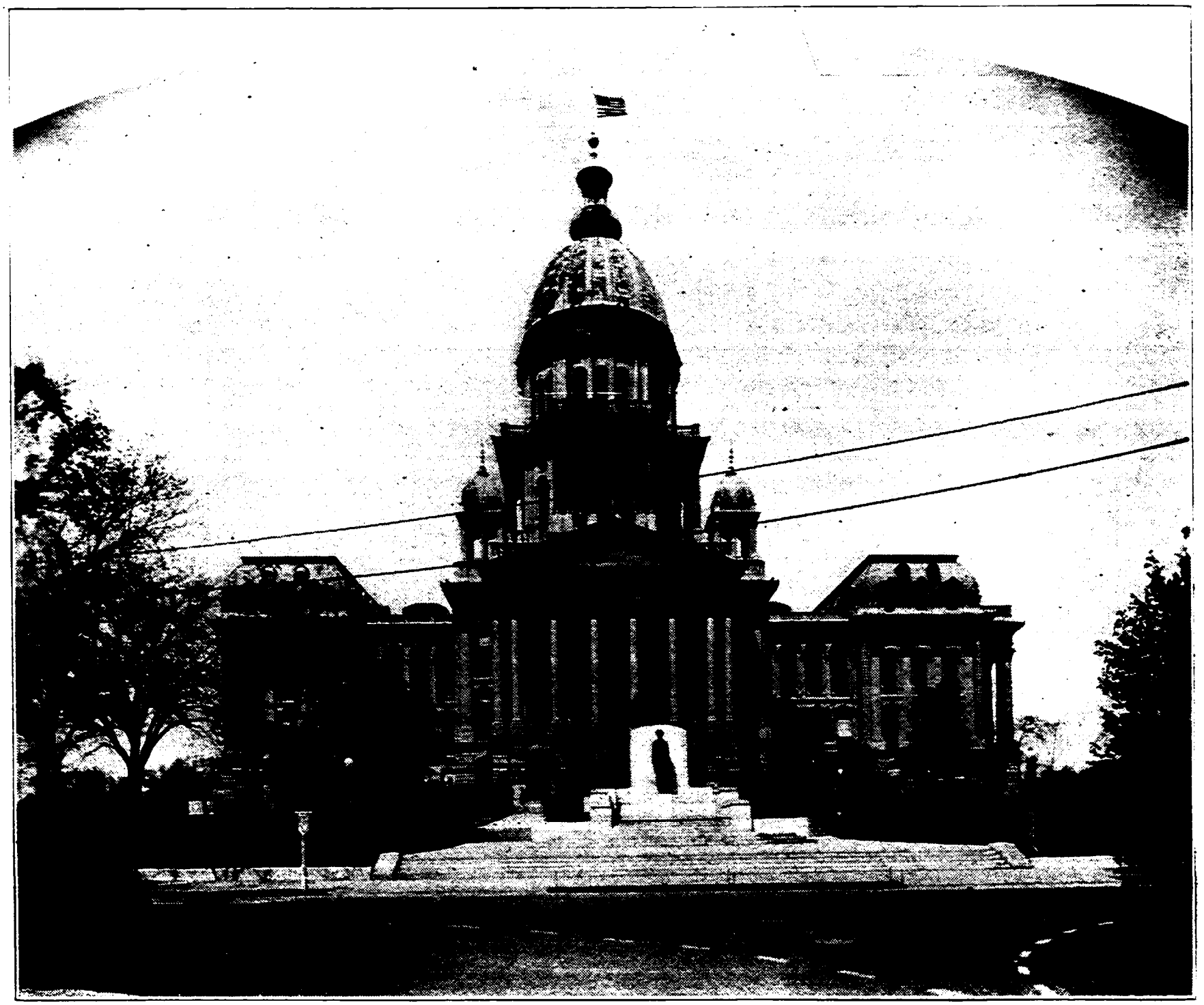
THE CAPITAL OF ILLINOIS

Before Illinois became a state in 1818, Kaskaskia on the Illinois River in Randolph County was the Capital and principal city. Here its Constitution was written and its first General Assembly met in a small two-story building. In the course of time as the state was settled up farther to the North, complaints were made that the Capital was too far from the center of population. Another complaint of some of the members of the legislature was that they were tired of

eating prairie chickens and venison which was the principal meat to be had there. Bids were offered by various cities farther North. Real estate agents with an eye to their own business offered them a free site 80 miles up the Kaskaskia River in the wilderness of Fayette County. This offer was accepted and the State sold lots there from the land given them to the amount of $35,000.00, and probably the real estate man sold more. With this money the State built its second State House. This city was named Vandalia. Here the legislature met for twenty years. Again the agitation arose for a capital city farther North and various cities bid for it. This went on for six years and was finally awarded to Springfield in Sangamon County thru the efforts of the "Long Nine" committee of which Abraham Lincoln was one. This committee was so named because the nine men that constituted the committee averaged six feet tall and Abraham Lincoln was the tallest of them. Before the capital was moved from Vandalia a third State House was built because the other burned and then that was replaced by a fourth before moving to Springfield.

Two conditions required for cities to offer for the new Capital were that the city must provide $50,000, and at least two acres of land. While Springfield was raising this fund Stephen A. Douglas offered to take the task off of their hands by offering to raise that sum in the adjoining county of Morgan with Jacksonville for the Capital. This brought out a debate between the two noted statesmen foreshadowing the state-wide debates between them on slavery and states' rights a few years later.

Lincoln won as he did in the other debate and the Capital was moved to Springfield in 1839. Here the state built its fifth Capitol building which was occupied until 1874, when the final building was sufficiently completed to occupy though far from finished. This building, the sixth Capitol for the State, was not completed until 1885, twenty-one years after it was begun. The chief reason for delay was that it cost almost double the amount first estimated by the architect J. C. Cochrane of Chicago. George W. Armstrong the father of the writer, was a member of the building committee during a part of this construction period and he as a farmer and pioneer not accustomed to marble wainscotes and stone stairways with stone balusters and a



THE STATE HOUSE AT SPRINGFIED, ILL.

George W. Armstrong was a member of the Legislature when this house was being completed and served as a member of the Building Committee.

high dome, made a bitter complaint to his fellow legislators in the House against the great extravagance.

This State House, however, is recognized today as one of the most artistic and beautiful capitol buildings in the United States.

CONCLUSION

This little volume has been written not only to serve as a tribute to the Woman Pioneer, but to give the youth of today a better idea of their debt to the pioneers who withstood the greatest trials and made the greatest sacrifices in preparing this great State of Illinois for the generations of today.

It may be said that the price they paid for life and liberty to make this State what it is was paid not so much for themselves, but that is the course over which civilization has always come. We today are the pioneers of tomorrow, and while the great majority of people of that time worked and schemed solely for their own advantage, as most do today, there were in all ages of the past, men and women who kept constantly in mind the needs of coming generations. We call them reformers and while in many cases they are wild, impractical theorists, there have always been true and wise builders for the future who like the pioneers of the past that laid the foundations for this great country of ours "Builded better than they knew".

The pioneers of the past century in America were unjust to the Indians and the Spaniards unjust to the Aztecs and perhaps they were the people who destroyed the Mayas. The Israelites took the land "flowing with milk and honey" from the possessors and were themselves carried off by the Babylonians. The Dynasties of Egypt show that the same process has been going on since the dawn of history. In spite of the losses to mankind by the conquests for personal advantages, there have been reformers who as pioneers led nations to higher ethical grounds and out of their efforts have come the civilizations of today.

We may very well ask ourselves, however, if we are not guilty of similar faults in our management of the affairs of our times? We legislate to allow privileges to the few that should belong to all alike. We allow a few who possess political power to waste public funds to gain more political power. We fail to unite as the early settlers did in mutual protection against a common foe.

It is the wish of the writer of this little narrative to inspire the youth of today to emulate the examples

of some of our forefathers who laid the foundations of our State and Nation. We shall be in as great need as we were a generation ago, for pioneers of the great Tomorrow.

The discoveries of science by the great seekers after truth and the inventions of creative genius will add new advantages that we cannot even imagine today, but these will bring new responsibilities. There will always be a need of pioneers in every age to blaze the new trails thru the dense forests of ignorance, across deserts of indifference, and rivers of doubt and to build fortresses of defense against the Indians who kill our youth by the allurements of mere amusement, while the richest veins of golden truths are yet to be discovered by the youth who has the true pioneer spirit of self-sacrifice and unselfish devotion to the good of humanity.

THE END