

VIII. RECOLLECTIONS OF THE OLD INDIAN CHAPEL.

Pottawattomie Chief, Simon Pokagon, prior to his death, at the request of the writer, prepared an address to be delivered at a proposed Fourth of July celebration at Menominee village several years ago, which owing to unforeseen circumstances was not held. The address was sent to the writer and is given here as the recollection of the old chief concerning the chapel and the occurrences that took place there about the time of the removal. Among other things he said

"We enjoyed our church at Menominee village several years, but in 1837 we received word that our priest wished to meet us at the chapel at Twin lakes. Cheerfully we obeyed the summons, but instead of meeting there as we supposed, the soldiers of the Cross, we were confronted with the soldiers of the United States armed with bayonets and guns. As our people entered the church, the door was closed behind them, that none without might suspect the fate of those from within, and so we entered as lambs to the slaughter for the last time. Some of you perhaps remember the sad stories of our wrongs, and how our fathers most solemnly declared so long as they lived that the treaty by which that part of the state was claimed by the United States was a base forgery on the part of the government agents who were paid large sums of money to procure the title. Hence we refused to give up our homes and go to an unknown land.

" And here the government made a second mistake on the same line by letting the job to unscrupulous men to remove us by force, if necessary, for which they were to be paid fifty dollars per head. Packed within the little church our people were tied and handcuffed. The stoutest braves, those who had never known fear, when they thought of the cruelties and injustice that was being dealt out to them, gave up in despair and wept like children. In vain they begged and prayed not to be forced from the home of their childhood. Some were packed into wagons like sheep for market, while others were chained as criminals together and marched off on double quick, not even being permitted to see friends or relatives left at home.

" As they were marched across the plains, under the hot, blazing sun,

wolves in the distance followed in the rear, like carrion crows, to feed upon the fallen. Some of you must remember from well authenticated reports how, on the long and weary march towards the setting sun, from fatigue and want of water, children, old men and women expiring fell; how infants untimely born, clasped in their mother's arms, together with them died and were left half buried on the plains, the prey of vultures and of wolves.

"Let us look away from the blood-stained trails our fathers and mothers trod as they were shamefully pushed into banishment, and consider the broken families who were here left behind-robbed, in the house of God, of sons, husbands and fathers. These, on hearing the sad news, as affrighted young partridges hid themselves in thickets and in swamps until all seemed quiet, when in the night time, as deer before dogs, they fled from the homes of their childhood, beyond the land of freedom, unto the king's land beyond the great lakes. Oh, how the hearts of these exiles from kindred homes and native land wept as they went forth from the lovely land of game to a place they knew not, to return no more! Think of it! And all of this was done by a people who had declared to the world to enjoy life, liberty and the pursuits of happiness is the God-given right of every human being. I wondered in my boyhood days how a Christian people could do such acts of cruelty and yet teach that all men are brothers, and that God is the Father of all. But in after years I learned that all misunderstanding made in contracts made between the two races, and all the wrongs suffered in consequence, had their origin almost entirely in that accursed drink more to be dreaded than a mad dog's and a rattlesnake's bite. In fact, its sting is death yes, moral death to the red man. I will repeat it: its bite is death to the white man too.

" And now, farewell. Remember the words I have spoken in weakness and in soberness and truth, and that, by reason of old age, envy, malice, hatred and revenge have long since faded from my heart, and my words should be received with as much weight as the confession of a dying man; for already with one hand I have pulled the latchstring of time and one foot is now passing over the threshold of the open door of the wigwam of life into that better land beyond. Soon I will stand in the presence of the Great Spirit and shall there plead with him in heaven as I have pleaded with him on earth that he will lead those by the hand who have so bravely fought against that old dragon, the destroyer of your children and ours, and lead them on to glorious victory."