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HENRY ROWE SCHOOLCRAFT

The late Mr. Schoolcraft, from his earlier writings, and more especially from the position which for some years past he occupied under the United States government, and the series of volumes which under his supervision were issued in so magnificent a form by the national press, has long been regarded at home and abroad as the highest authority in all relating to the aborigines of the country.

His recent death makes it all the more apposite to give here a sketch of his life and a summary of his labors.

He was born March 28, 1793, at Watervliet, now Guilderland, Albany county, New York, where his family, originally called Calcraft, had settled in the reign of George II. He entered Union College in his 15th year, but apparently did not graduate, most of his education being, it is stated, self acquired.

His first attempt at authorship was in 1816, when he began, but never completed, a work on "Vitreology," of glassmaking, a business in which his father was engaged. His studies in geology and mineralogy, however, led him to the west, and he there made valuable collections, and on his return published, in 1819, "A View of the Lead Mines of Missouri," with a narrative, republished in 1853, under the title of "Scenes and Adventures in the Semi-Alpine Region of the Ozark Mountains of Missouri and Arkansas." In 1821 he published a narrative of an exploring expedition to the Lake Superior Copper Region, and the Upper Mississippi, which he had accompanied as geologist. This narrative he reproduced in 1854.

His first entry into the Indian service was as secretary to a commission to treat with the Indians at Chicago in 1821, an appointment which led to his "Travels in the Central Portions of the Mississippi Valley," &c., (8 New York, 1825). From this time till his death he was in one form or another connected with Indian affairs, and contributed in no inconsiderable degree to the present state of knowledge of manners, customs, language and history of the Indian tribes belonging to the great Algonquin family, and incidentally to all other Indian nations within our limits.

Having been appointed in 1822 Indian Agent on the North west frontier, he was, till 1841, a resident of Michigan, and identified with many movements in the west. From 1828 to 1832 he was a member of the legislature of Michigan, then under a territorial organization. His taste for historical and antiquarian research led him to be prominent among the founders of the Michigan Historical Society and the Algic Society, the latter devoted to the study of the language and history of the Algonquin tribes. He delivered about this time two lectures on the grammatical construction of the Indian languages, published in his next work. The New American Cyclopaedia errs, however, in stating that Mr. Du Ponceau received a gold medal for a French translation of them.

In 1832, with a second government expedition he penetrated to the head waters of the Mississippi, ascertaining definitely that the great river had its source in a lake, for which Mr. Schoolcraft, in his usual fondness for coining new terms, formed, rather at variance with common rules, the name of Itasca.

He published a narrative of this expedition at New York in 1833, and twenty years

later reissued it in connection with his early expedition.

In 1836 he acted as Commissioner of the United States in an important treaty with the Northwestern tribes, by which sixteen millions of acres were ceded to the general government.

Mr. Schoolcraft was then appointed acting Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and in 1839 chief disbursing agent for the Northern department.

His "Alcic Researches, comprising Inquiries respecting the Mental Characteristics of the North American Indians," (2 vols. 12 mo), Subsequently reissued under the title of "The Myth of Hiawatha," appeared at this time and were followed in 1844 by Oneota or the Red Race of America, republished subsequently as the "Indian in his Wigwam, or Characteristics of the Red Race." These works, undoubtedly the most important works on the Indians issued for a long period, made Mr. Schoolcraft widely known. Societies at home and abroad conferred membership on him, and scholars encouraged by their applause his studies in a field beset with difficulties, but producing results of great scientific value.

A man so widely known as an Indian scholar, a member of most of the Historical, Antiquarian and Ethnological Societies in the country, as well as of the Royal Antiquarian Society of Denmark, could not remain idle, and many addresses and papers show his activity and research. In 1844 he made a report to the New York Historical Society on the aboriginal names and Geographical Terminology of the State of New York; and the next year read a paper, before the same society entitled: "Historical Considerations on the Siege and Defence of Fort Stanwix in 1777;" and on the 17th of November 1846, on the 42nd anniversary of the society, delivered an address, taking as his subject: "Incentives to the Study of the Ancient Period of American History." He also contributed to the Ethnological Society's publications and submitted to the Smithsonian Institution a plan for the investigation of American Ethnology, and contributed to the Danish Society of Northern Antiquaries archaeological investigations on West Virginia, Ohio, and Canada.

Congress having, in March 1847, passed a resolution authorizing it, he was employed by direction of the Secretary of War, to prepare "Historical and Statistical Information, respecting the History, Condition and prospects of the Indian Tribes of the United States," and six volumes quarto appeared under Mr. Schoolcraft's supervision. These in a manner resume his other labors and are his great historic work. A brief analysis of them will, therefore, not be out of place.

The Historiographical Agent divides his Topic thus: Vol. I, 1, General History; 2, Mental Type of the Indian Race; 3, Antiquities of the United States; 4, Physical Geography of the Indian Country; 5, Tribal Organization, History and Government; 6, Intellectual Character and Capacity of the Red Man; 7, Population and Statistics.

Vol. II. 1, General History; 2, Manners and Customs; 3, Antiquities; 4, Physical Geography; 5, Tribal Organization History and Government; 6, Intellectual Capacity and Character; 7, Topical History; 8, Physical Type of the American Indians; 9, Language; 10, State of Indian Art; 11, Future Prospects; 12, Population and Statistics.

Vol. III. 1, General History; 2, Manners and Customs; 3 Antiquities; 4, Physical Geography; 5, Tribal Organization; 6, Intellectual Capacity and Character; 7, Topical History; 8, Physical Life of the Indian Race; 9, Language; 10, State of Indian Art; 11, Present Condition and Future Prospects 12, Demonology, Witchcraft and Magic; 13, Medical Knowledge; 14, Literature of the Indian Language; 15, Statistics and Population.

Vol. IV. Title 1, General History; 2, Manners and Customs; 3, Antiquities; 4, Geography of the Indian Country; 5, Tribal Organization; 6, Intellectual Capacity; 7, Topical History; 8, Physical Type of the Indian Race; 9, Language; 10, State of Indian Art; 11, Present

Condition and Future Prospects; 12, Demonology, Witchcraft and Magic; 13, Medical Knowledge; 14, Literature of the Indian Language; 15, Statistics and Population; 16, Biography; 17, Religion; 18, Ethnology.

Vol. V. Title 1, General History; 2, Mental Type; 3, Antiquities; 4, Physical Geography of the Indian Country; 5, Tribal Organization, History and Government; 6, Intellectual Capacity; 7, Population and Statistics.

In the vast array of matter here presented, others contributed much, chiefly in the departments of physical geography, tribal organization, history and government, topical history, physical type and intellectual capacity, as well as the numerous vocabularies embraced in the work. Still an immense part is directly the work of Mr. Schoolcraft. This embraces almost every branch of knowledge concerning the Indian tribes, the relics of the past, tribal customs, religion, arts, government, trade, dress, language, intercourse with others in peace and war. The subjects are treated cursorily: few articles are exhaustive treatises on any given point, and the author, taking a few facts or statements, the result of his own observations or that of others, rises to general views and theories preferring philosophical systems to a marshaling of facts and authorities. His style, too, is peculiar; with all our tendency to innovation, few Americans coined so many new words as Schoolcraft, some of which will remain as part and parcel of the language, while others, lacking analogy or an etymological basis, never met with favor. Some words may indeed be the coinage of the printer; few works having suffered more than these noble volumes at the hands of the compositors, and in the new edition announced, Messrs. Lippincott owe it to themselves to have the plates thoroughly revised.

The sixth volume is of a different character, and bears as its title "History of the Indian Tribes of the United States, their present condition and prospects, and a sketch of their ancient status, by Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, LL. D., &c. In one volume, part VI of the series." From what we have already said of the author's natural bent of mind and maturer mode of thought and views, we are not here to expect a history of the various tribes in our territory drawn up in a condensed form, by a careful collection and judicious comparison of all the fragmentary items of information afforded us by the earliest writers and their successors in later times. As the author remarks: "personal enquiries, however efficiently made, are alone inadequate to the compilation of Indian history. Books are required; and whoever endeavors to trace the subject will find many of these to be rare, and only extant in foreign libraries." "A hurried collection of the incidents of that history during the long period of three centuries and a half has necessarily rendered this view brief and summary."

The whole volume, with the exception of the chapters on the Andastes, is, we believe, exclusively the work of Mr. Schoolcraft. It is divided into two divisions, the first being, "a condensed view of the Post Columbian or Modern Indian History," and embracing 560 pages; the second being "economy and statistics, Capacity of Industrial and Social Development, and National Position; illustrated by some notices of the mental character of the Hunter Race and their ancient status and archaeology."

The treatment of the subject in the first part, after the introductory chapter, gives, 1, European acquaintance with the Indian Tribes; 2, Contention of France and Spain for the occupation of Florida; 3, The English Element of Civilization in America; 4, The Littoral tribes of North Atlantic, within whose territories the colonies were planted; 5, Synopsis of the History of the New England Tribes; 6, Indian Tribes of Maryland; 7, Occupancy of New York by the English and Sequel to the Indian Wars of New England; 8, Lenno Lenapi of Pennsylvania and Chicora Tribes of the Carolinas. After these separate views of tribes, the

author passes to general views, bringing the history down to the present time. It is not the annals of the tribes showing the wars, development, increase or decline, civilization or progress, but rather a history of the country, regarded in the light of the intercourse of the whites with the aborigines. This was, we presume, more especially the idea of government in commencing the work.

Mr. Schoolcraft's last labor aptly closes his contributions to American history, topography, archeology and linguistics. It is an immense repository to which students will long resort for aid in their investigations, and the full index promised with the new edition will facilitate greatly its use and enhance its value. The sixth volume appeared in 1857, and though material for two volume more were prepared government suspended the publication. During the late years of his life, Mr. Schoolcraft was a confirmed invalid.

"Not long after his settlement in the quiet life of study in Washington as Indian Historian," says the Rev. Dr. Gurley, "the reaction of his former exposures began to show itself in his physical frame; he was crippled by rheumatic affections; for many years he was unable to go much in society; for several years he could move about his house only on crutches; during subsequent years he could not be moved except on a chair fixed upon wheels; while during the last three or four years he has been confined to his bed with his limbs bent completely under him. Though suffering excruciatingly at times, his great spirit rose so completely above his physical condition, that no one in his company for an hour would hear even an allusion to his infirmities or pains, or would even think of them as he sat and filled up the moments with vivacious and fascinating discourse. He died, at last, Dec. 10, 1864, from a dry mortification of the portions of his body rendered nerveless by rheumatic or paralytic affections. His countenance, however, in death, was full of the health and radiance of his best days, and his high, open brow grew more majestic as his noble mind still triumphed till the "very last moment of his existence."

Mr. Schoolcraft was twice married; his first wife, a Miss Johnson, was on her mother's side an Ojibwa, and though educated in Europe was by her complete acquaintance with the manners, genius and traditions of her people well fitted to give Mr. Schoolcraft an opportunity of study by which he most fortunately profited as we know. She died in 1842, and some years after he was united in marriage to Miss Mary Howard of South Carolina, a descendant from an old English family that had settled upon a Sea Island plantation, under a grant from the King, in early colonial times, and which ancestral heritage has, for unbroken generations, been a cherished home to the family. "This lady," says Dr. Gurley, "preeminently endowed by nature and culture, seemed to Mr. Schoolcraft, to the day of his death, providentially sent to him to be his associate in the high mission of giving a scientific form and a literary finish to the results of his former explorations; especially as his afterwards crippled physical condition rendered it necessary that much of the labor of the pen should be performed through her as his amanuensis." Mr. Schoolcraft's contributions to American literature were not confined to the prose writings mentioned in this brief sketch. He wrote also, "The Rise of the West, or a Prospect of the Mississippi Valley," a Poem; "Gehale, an Indian Lament," "Indian Melodies," "The Man of Bronze," "Iosco or the Vale of Norma," "Talladega, a Tale of the Creek War," "Helderbergia, an Apotheosis of the Anti-rent War" (anonymous), and figures in the *Knickerbocker Gallery* as one of the leading contributors to that rich repository of American literature.