

Source: Red Eagle and the Wars With the Creek Indians of Alabama by George Cary Eggleston

## **RED EAGLE AND THE WARS WITH THE CREEK INDIANS.**

### CHAPTER I.

SHOWING, BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION, HOW RED EAGLE HAPPENED TO BE A MAN OF  
CONSEQUENCE IN HISTORY.

It is a long journey from the region round **about the great lakes, where Tecumseh** lived, to the shores of the Alabama and the Tombigbee rivers, even in these days of railroads and steamboats; and it was a much longer journey when Tecumseh was a terror to the border and an enemy whom the United States had good reason to fear. The distance between Tecumseh's home and that of Red Eagle is greater than that which separates Berlin from Paris or Vienna; and when Tecumseh lived there were no means of communication between the Indians of the North-west and those of the South, except by long, dangerous, and painful journeys on foot. A man of smaller intellectual mould than Tecumseh would not have dreamed of the possibility of establishing relations with people so distant as the Creeks were from the tribes of the North-west. But Tecumseh had all the qualities of a man of genius, the chief of which are breadth and comprehensiveness of view and daring boldness of conception. The great northern chieftain did many deeds in his day by which he fairly won the reputation he had for the possession of genius, both as a soldier and as a statesman; but nothing in his history so certainly proves his title to rank among really great men as his boldness and brilliancy in planning the formation of a great confederacy of the tribes, which extended in a chain from the lakes on the north to the Gulf of Mexico on the south. He was wise enough to learn of his foes. He saw that their strength lay in their union; that it was by "joining all their camp-fires," as he phrased it, that they made themselves irresistible; and as he saw with consternation that the great tide of white men was steadily advancing westward, he understood, as few men of his race were capable of doing, that there was but one possible way for the red men to withstand the ever-encroaching stream. Separately the tribes were powerless, because separately they could be beaten one by one. Troops who were engaged in reducing an Illinois tribe during one month could be sent the next to oppose another tribe in Mississippi or Alabama. Thus the secret of the white men's success, Tecumseh saw, lay in two facts: first, that the whites were united, working together for a common purpose, and helping each other in turn; and, second, that the whites used the same troops over and over again to fight the separately acting tribes. . . .

It was in execution of this plan that Tecumseh made that journey to the South in the year 1811 which, in combination with other causes to be mentioned in their place, induced the Creeks of Southern Alabama to abandon all that they had gained of civilization, and to plunge first into a

war among themselves, and afterward into that struggle with the white men which destroyed their nation almost utterly.

In that war there was one man more conspicuous than any other--more relentless, more daring, more desperate in his refusal to give or to accept quarter, and at the same time more brilliant in attack and defence, abler in counsel, and having greater skill in the field than any of his fellow-chiefs--a man who fought **Jackson, Claiborne, Flournoy, Floyd, and Coffee**, whose troops, coming from different quarters of the country, surrounded him on every side and outnumbered him on every field; fighting them with credit to his own skill and daring, and with no little damage to these skilled enemies--a man of whom Jackson said, "He is fit to command armies."

This man was **Red Eagle, or, in his native Muscogee tongue**, Lamochattee. To the white men with whom he lived a great part of his life, and to his enemies in war, he was better known as **William Weatherford**; and as the historical accounts of the war in which he won his renown were all written by white men, because Red Eagle could not write, his white name, Weatherford, is the one by which he is generally known in books. His fame was won as an Indian, however; it was the Indian warrior Red Eagle, not the half-breed planter Weatherford, who did the deeds which gave him a place in American history; and this neglect of his Indian name in all historical works which refer to him is an example of the sarcasm of destiny. It reminds one of the hero of whom Byron tells us, who, falling in battle covered with glory, lost his only chance for fame by the blunder of a printer, who misspelled his name in the gazette. . . .

It is not merely in the military sense that the word enemies is here used, but in the literal one as well; for very nearly all the information we have about Red Eagle and his performances is drawn from the writings and the spoken testimony of men who hated him with a degree of violence of which one can scarcely conceive in our time. These men wrote while boiling with the passions of a war which seriously threatened the existence of this American nation, and they hated Red Eagle as one of the men who added very greatly to the country's peril, and sorely taxed its resources when its resources were fewest. Their hatred was so violent that they could not restrain its expression; while they granted to Red Eagle the possession of courage and ability, they could not write of him without flying into a passion and heaping hard names upon his head. . . .

That does not read like an account of the parliamentary methods of a brutish man, degraded by vice and debauched with drunkenness and gluttony; it sounds rather like a description of the wise ways of some Webster or Clay. Drunken men with the gift of eloquent speech do not hoard it and use it in this adroit way. This is not all, however. Men who are given over to vice, gluttony, and drunkenness usually carry the marks of their excesses in their appearance and their ways of thinking; but our writer who has told us that Weatherford was such a man, tells us how he looked and acted, and what his ability was, in this wise:

"His judgment and eloquence had secured the respect of the old; his vices made him the idol of

the young and the unprincipled. It is even doubted whether a civilized society could behold this monster without interest. In his person tall, straight, and well-proportioned; his eye black, lively, and penetrating, and indicative of courage and enterprise; his nose prominent, thin, and elegant in its formation; while all the features of his face, harmoniously arranged, speak an active and disciplined mind." A little further down the page this writer calls Weatherford "the key and corner-stone of the Creek confederacy," and characterizes him as "this extraordinary man."

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Notwithstanding this lack of detailed information respecting Red Eagle's life and deeds, however, we know with certainty that he was, as the writer quoted a few pages back said, the "key and corner-stone of the Creek confederacy," the commander of the Creek armies, the statesman who guided the Creek councils, and the general who planned and conducted the Creek campaigns. His was the master mind on the Indian side, as positively as Jackson's was on the side of the Americans; and therefore while there is an unfortunate lack of information of a strictly biographical nature concerning this remarkable man, it is still possible to write his life by writing an account of the Creek war. After all, it is the things a man does which make up his life; and the story of his deeds is his biography, whether or not it includes the dates of his birth and his death, or tells with precision when or how he did this or that. . . .

Upon many points the best authorities are conflicting, partly because their works were written each with a special purpose and from a special point of view, and partly because of carelessness in the collection and weighing of facts; but it is still possible to arrive at the truth in all essential particulars, and to construct, out of the fragmentary materials at command, a consecutive account of the brilliant campaign of 1813-14, in which Red Eagle was the foremost figure on one side, and Andrew Jackson the master spirit on the other.

## CHAPTER II.

### RED EAGLE'S PEOPLE.

**Red Eagle, or William Weatherford**, was only in part an Indian, as we shall see presently; but his life was so entirely the life of an Indian, in that part of it at least which gave him his title to a place in history, that we must naturally think of him as a member of his mother's race, rather than as a white man, and we must regard the Indian nation to which he belonged as his people. He was born a Creek, and not only so, but a great chief of the Creek nation; that is to say, a chief of the highest hereditary rank.

The Creek nation was not a tribe, but a confederacy of tribes, united as the Roman Empire was by successive conquests. The original Romans in this case were the Muscogees, a tribe of

Indians so much further advanced toward civilization when white men first encountered them than most of the Indian tribes were, that they had been able to preserve greatly more of their own history than savages are ordinarily able to do. They had fixed laws, too, not merely rules of the chase, but laws by which they were governed in the ordinary affairs of life; and many of their practices when the tribe was first known to white men indicate that they were then rapidly working out a system of government and semi-civilization for themselves, or else that, as they themselves believed, they were descended from a race formerly civilized, of whose civilization they still retained traces in their customs.

About the year 1775, an **adventurous young Frenchman named Le Clerc Milfort** visited the Creeks, and marrying a woman of the nation became a chief among them. After living with them for twenty years, he returned to France and was made a brigadier-general. In the year 1802, Milfort published a book about the strange people among whom he had lived half a lifetime, and from him, or rather through him, the world has learned what the Creeks believe to be the history of their nation.

This history, Milfort says, existed in the shape of a sort of record--not a written record, of course, but not merely oral tradition. The Creek historians had certain strings of beads, shells, and pearls which aided them somewhat as written books aid civilized men to preserve the memory of their nation's past. These beads meant different things according to their arrangement, and by their aid the historians were able to remember and transmit the traditions committed to their charge with something like accuracy.

The story, as they tell it, is probably apocryphal in most of its details, but it is less improbable, at worst, than is the story of the foundation and early history of Rome. According to the Creek historians, the **Muscogees** fought with the **Aztecs against Cortez**, and when the Spanish invader gained a secure foothold in Mexico they took up their march northward. On their way they encountered the Alabamas, whom they drove before them for years, following them from one part of the land to another, and giving them no rest. They chased the Alabamas to the Missouri River, thence to the Ohio, and thence to Alabama, whither they followed their steps. Finally, in the early part of the eighteenth century, the persecuted Alabamas despaired of finding a secure refuge from their relentless persecutors, and to save themselves from further destruction consented to form a close alliance with the Muscogees, submitting to the laws of their conquerors and becoming in effect Muscogees. This was the beginning of that confederacy which afterward became the Creek Nation. The Tookabatcha tribe, fleeing from their enemies in the north, sought the protection of the Muscogees next and became members of the nation. Other tribes were added to the nation one after another, until the confederacy, whose seat was in the region along the Alabama, Coosa, and Tombigbee rivers, became an empire, embracing in its rule all the people round about them, and carrying terror even to the tribes beyond the Savannah River.

The country which the Muscogee confederacy inhabited was and still is singularly well watered and fertile. Their two great rivers, the Alabama and the Tombigbee, are fed by numberless creeks of large and small size, and the number of these streams prompted the white men who traded with the Muscogees to call their land the Creek country, and from the land the name was transferred to its people, who were thereafter called the Creeks.

These Creeks, as we have said, had a sort of semi-civilization of their own when the whites first visited them. They had fixed rules and customs governing marriage and divorce. They lived in houses, wore scanty but real clothing, and were governed by a rude system of laws. Curiously enough, they even had a system of social caste among them, a sort of graduated order of nobility. There were certain families who held high hereditary rank, hereditary privileges, and hereditary authority--the family of the Wind, the family of the Bear, the family of the Deer, etc.; and of these the family of the Wind was the highest in rank and authority. They constituted, indeed, a sort of royal family, the family of the Bear ranking just below them.

When **Colonel Benjamin Hawkins** was sent on an important mission to the Creeks in the year 1798 he found an organized and somewhat complicated system of government in existence among them. Each town had its separate local government, presided over by a Micco, who belonged always to one of the chief families. They had their public buildings and pleasure houses, their fixed rules for the conduct of public business, for the promotion of warriors, and for all the other things which need systematic regulation.

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**Mr. Nathaniel Herbert Claiborne, a prominent citizen of Virginia**, and a man specially well informed on the subject, in a work which was written immediately after the Creek war ended, wrote as follows on the subject of the government's treatment of the Creeks:

"It has been demonstrated that the conduct of the United States to the Creek Indians was both just and honorable. Without any consideration save that which arises from the consciousness of doing a good act, the government of the United States had, for more than twenty years, endeavored to reclaim them from a savage to a civilized state. By the exertions of government, bent only on augmenting the stock of human happiness, it was evident that the situation of the Creeks was greatly ameliorated. Many of them spoke and wrote our language. Pious men were sent, at the expense of government, to instruct them in the religion of Christ. The rising generation were instructed in numerous schools.... A sentiment of pity, a fit cement for lasting friendship, had taken possession of the American breast toward the Indians; and our citizens and government vied with each other in acts of benevolence and charity toward them. They were instructed in the fabrication of the implements of husbandry. The loom and the spinning-wheel were in full operation through the whole nation; while the art of house-building, so essential to the accommodation of man and his protection from the winds and waters of heaven, was rapidly approximating to perfection. If any of our citizens injured them a

punishment was provided by law, and the temper of the nation, in unison with the temper of the government, rendered its infliction certain. And such was the progress of the Creeks in civilization, and the obligations they were under to the United States, that no one believed they could be cajoled into a confederacy against us."

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### CHAPTER III.

#### RED EAGLE'S BIRTH AND BOYHOOD.

**William Weatherford, the Red Eagle, was born in the Creek country**, and born a chieftain. The exact date of his birth is not known, but as he was a man of about thirty or thirty-five years of age when the Creek war broke out in 1813, his birth must have occurred about the year 1780. He is commonly spoken of in books, and especially in books that were written while a feeling of intense antipathy to him continued to exist, as the son of a Scotch pedler, or the son of a Georgia pedler, the phrase carrying with it the suggestion that Red Eagle was a man of contemptible origin. This was not the case. His father was a Scotch pedler, certainly, who went to the Creek country from Georgia, but he was by no means the sort of person who is suggested to our minds by the word pedler. He was a trader of great shrewdness and fine intellectual ability, who managed his business so well that he became rich in spite of his strong taste for the expensive sport of horse-racing.

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When **Charles Weatherford, the Scotch trader from Georgia, married the sister of General Alexander McGillivray, or Emperor Alexander McGillivray**, as he preferred to be called, he acquired by that alliance a measure of influence among the Creeks which few men even of pure Muscogee blood could boast. This influence was strengthened as his shrewdness and the soundness of his judgment made themselves apparent in the councils of the nation. More especially he made himself dear to the hearts of the Creeks by his skill in managing their diplomatic relations with the Spanish authorities in Florida, and the American agents.

In all this, however, the wily Scotchman served himself while serving the nation, and he rapidly grew to be rich. He lived, literally as a prince, at his home on the eastern bank of the Alabama River, on the first high ground below the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers.

Here he built for himself a home, and, still retaining his interest in commerce, set up a trading house. His love of horse-racing has already been mentioned, and now that he was a man of wealth and consequence it was natural that he should indulge this taste to the full. He laid out a race-track near his trading house, and devoted a large share of his attention to the business of breeding fine horses. Even in thus indulging his passion for horse-racing, however, Charles Weatherford was shrewd enough to make the sport contribute to his prosperity in other ways

than by means of profitable gambling. He so managed the races as to attract his neighbors, principally the Alabamas, to his place of business, and so secured to himself their trade, which would otherwise have gone to the traders on the opposite side of the river, in the village of Coosawda.

Here **William Weatherford was born**, the son of the wealthiest man in that part of the country, and by inheritance a chief of the ruling family of the nation. He had for tutors no less competent men than his two uncles, **Alexander McGillivray**, and the accomplished **Frenchman Le Clerc Milfort**. Young Weatherford evinced the best capacity for acquiring knowledge, but it was only such knowledge as he wanted to acquire. Caring nothing about reading and writing, he refused to learn to read and write, and no persuasions would overcome his obstinacy in this particular. He took pains, however, to acquire the utmost command of the English language, partly because it was useful to him as a means of communication with the Americans, and partly because he found that command of a civilized tongue gave him a greater force in speaking his native Creek language, and it was a part of his ambition to be distinguished for eloquence in council. He learned French, also, but less perfectly, and acquired enough of Spanish to speak it in ordinary conversation. He travelled, too, for improvement, making several journeys while yet a boy to Mobile and Pensacola, picking up as he went whatever information there was to acquire.

He thus became in an important sense an educated man. He could not read or write, it is true; but it is probable that Homer was equally ignorant, and not at all certain that Hannibal or **Richard Coeur de Lion**, great commanders as they were, were much better scholars.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

##### THE BEGINNING OF TROUBLE.

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The Creeks were made masters of their own country by the Treaty of 1790, and their absolute title to their lands was respected by the United States Government, which defended them rigorously against encroachments upon their domain. That government, having become possessed of a wide tract of territory lying west of the Creek Nation, toward which the tide of emigration was rapidly turning, wished to provide a more direct and better road than any that existed, and with that end in view sought permission of the Creeks to run the new Federal Road, as it was called, by a direct route through the Creek territory. The principal chiefs, beginning to learn some of the natural laws that govern commerce, saw that the passage of a good road through the heart of the nation would necessarily benefit them, and make their commerce with the outer world easier and more profitable. Accordingly these chiefs gave the Creek Nation's

consent, and the road was made. Over this the people quarrelled among themselves, dividing, as wiser people are apt to do, into two fiercely antagonistic parties. Those of them who objected to the thoroughfare were seriously alarmed by the great numbers of emigrants who were constantly passing through their country to the region beyond. They said that they would soon be walled up between white settlements on every side. The land on the Tombigbee River was already becoming peopled to such an extent that the hope, which many of the Creeks had secretly cherished, of driving the whites away from the banks of that river and recovering the territory to themselves must soon be abandoned, and they held, therefore, that in granting the right of way for the road the chiefs had betrayed the nation's interests.

There never yet was a quarrel which somebody did not find it to his interest to stimulate, and in this case the Spanish settlers, or squatters as they would have been called if they had lived thirty or forty years later, did all they could to increase the bitterness of the Creeks toward those chiefs who were disposed to be friendly with the Americans, and toward the Americans. These Spaniards still insisted that the territory in which they lived, and from which they were gradually driven away, belonged of right to Spain, and they saw with great jealousy the rapid peopling of that territory with Americans. The agents of the British, with whom the United States was on the point of going to war, added their voice to the quarrel, stimulating the Spanish and the Indians alike to hostility. It was very clearly seen by these agents that an Indian war, especially a war with the powerful Creeks, would greatly weaken this country for its contest with Great Britain. *Emissaries of the British* infested the Creek country, stirring up strife and sowing the seeds of future hostility among them. The Spanish in Florida, although our government was at peace with Spain, willingly became the agents for the British in this work, and secret messages were constantly sent through them promising arms, ammunition, and aid to the Creeks in the event of a war.

All these things gave great anxiety to **Colonel Hawkins**, the agent who had charge of the Creeks, but the trouble was not yet in a shape in which he could deal vigorously with it. He called a council, and did all that he could to convince the Indians of the government's kindly disposition. The friendly chiefs assured him of their constancy, and their assurance lulled his suspicions somewhat. He knew these chiefs to be sincere, but neither he nor they knew to what extent their influence with the nation had been weakened.

Then came **Tecumseh**, who, in the spring of the year 1811, arrived in the Creek country, accompanied by about thirty of his warriors. He came with a double mission: as the agent of the British he was charged with the duty of preparing the tribes of the South to join in the approaching war, as soon as a state of war should be declared; as Tecumseh he came to execute his own purpose, namely, the formation of a great offensive and defensive alliance between the tribes of the North and those of the South, against the American nation and people.



Tecumseh did not come as a stranger to the Creeks. The fame of his exploits in the North had reached them, and he was known to them even more favorably in another way. Nearly twenty-five years before, Tecumseh, then a young man, had dwelt among the Creeks for about two years, and the stories of his feats as a hunter had lived after him as a tradition. Hence when he came again in 1811 he was a sort of hero of romance to the younger Creek warriors, a great man of whose deeds they had heard stories during their childhood.

On his way to the South, **Tecumseh** tarried awhile with the **Choctaws** and the Chickasaws, trying to win them to his scheme, but without success. In Florida, he made easy converts of the warlike Seminoles; and returning thence he visited the Creeks, arriving in October. While Colonel Hawkins was holding the Grand Council at Tookabatcha, of which we have spoken, and was trying to placate the Creeks, Tecumseh, followed by his warriors, dressed in their most impressive savage costumes, consisting of very little else than buffalo tails and other ornaments, marched into the meeting. Marching solemnly round and round the central square of the town, Tecumseh, when he had sufficiently impressed the lookers-on with a proper sense of his dignity, went through the most solemn ceremonies of friendship with his hosts. Greeting the chiefs in the most cordial fashion, he and his followers exchanged tobacco with them--a proceeding which attested their fellowship in the strongest possible way.

In the main the Creeks received **Tecumseh** cordially, returning his protestations of brotherhood in kind; but one chief, Captain Isaacs, whose fidelity to his obligations as a friend of the whites was proved afterward on the battle-field, rejected the overtures of the men from the North. He shook his head when asked to shake hands; he refused to exchange tobacco; and, with the frankness of a brave man convinced of his duty, he told Tecumseh to his face that he was a bad man, and added, "You are no greater than I am."

Tecumseh had come to the council for the purpose of using it for his own ends, but while Colonel Hawkins remained he made no effort to put his plan into execution. Colonel Hawkins could have thwarted him, in part at least, if the wily Indian had openly avowed the object of his visit; but Tecumseh was too shrewd to do that. Colonel Hawkins prolonged the council from day to day, but still Tecumseh kept silence. Each day he would say, "The sun has gone too far to-day; I will make my talk to-morrow." But the to-morrow of the promise did not come while Colonel Hawkins remained, and finally, worn out with the delay, that officer brought his conference with the chiefs to an end and departed.

Then Tecumseh opened his lips. Calling the people together, he made them a speech, setting forth his views and urging them upon the Creeks. He told them that the red men had made a fatal mistake in adopting the ways of the whites and becoming friendly with them. He exhorted them to return at once to their former state of savagery; to abandon the ploughs and looms and arms of the white men; to cast off the garments which the whites had taught them to wear; to return to the condition and customs of their ancestors, and to be ready at command to

become the enemies of the whites. The work they were learning to do in the fields, he said, was unworthy of free red men. It degraded them, and made them mere slaves. He warned them that the whites would take the greater part of their country, cut down its forests and turn them into cornfields, build towns, and make the rivers muddy with the washings of their furrows, and then, when they were strong enough, would reduce the Indians to slavery like that of the negroes. There is every reason to believe that Tecumseh was convinced of the truth of all this. He was convinced, too, that the whites had no right to live on this continent. He told the Creeks, as he had told General Harrison, that the Great Spirit had given this land to the red men. He said the Great Spirit had provided the skins of beasts for the red men's clothing, and that these only should they wear. Then he came to the subject of the British alliance, telling the Creeks that the King of England was about to make a great war in behalf of his children the red men, for the purpose of driving all the Americans off the continent, and that he would heap favors upon all the Indians who should help him to do this.

A prophet who accompanied Tecumseh followed him with a speech, in which he reiterated what his chief had said, but gave it as a message from the Great Spirit; still further to encourage the war spirit among them, this teacher by authority promised a miracle in behalf of the Creeks. He assured them that if they should join in the war they would do so at no personal risk; that not one of them should be hurt by the enemy; that the Great Spirit would encircle them wherever they went with impassable mires, in which the Americans would be utterly destroyed, with no power or opportunity to harm the divinely protected Indians.

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All this was well calculated to stir the already moody and discontented Creeks to a feeling of hostility, and when the speech-making was over there was a strong party, probably more than a majority of the Creeks, ready and anxious to make immediate war upon the Americans. Colonel Hawkins's long labors in the interest of peace had been rendered fruitless, and the war party in the nation was more numerous and more firmly resolved upon mischief than ever.

Tecumseh's labors were not yet finished, however. As a shrewd politician works and argues and pleads and persuades in private as well as in his public addresses, so Tecumseh, who was a particularly shrewd politician, went all through the nation winning converts to his cause. He won many, but although he was received as an honored guest by the **chief Tustinnuggee Thlucco, or the Big Warrior**, he could make no impression upon that wise warrior's mind. It was not that Big Warrior was so firm a friend to the whites that nothing could arouse him to enmity. He had his grudges, and was by no means in love with things as they were; but he foresaw, as Tecumseh did not, that the war, if it should come, would bring destruction to his nation. He estimated the strength of his foes more accurately than his fellows did, and was convinced that there was no hope of success in the war which Tecumseh was trying to bring about. He was valorous enough, but he was also discreet, and he therefore obstinately remained true to his

allegiance. His obstinacy at last roused Tecumseh's ire, and it was to him that Tecumseh made his celebrated threat that when he reached Detroit he would stamp his foot on the ground and shake down all the houses in **Tookabatcha**--a threat which it is said that an earthquake afterward led the Creeks to believe he had carried out. The story of the earthquake is repeated by all the writers on the subject, but some of the accounts of it contradict facts and set dates at defiance; and so, while it is not impossible and perhaps not improbable that an opportune earthquake did seem to make Tecumseh's threat good, the story must be received with some caution, as the different versions of it contradict each other. So, for that matter, it is not safe to trust the records upon any point, without diligent examination and comparison. Thus the fact that **the battle of Tippecanoe** was fought during this Southern journey of Tecumseh makes it certain that the mission was accomplished in the year 1811; yet Pickett, in his History of Alabama, gives 1812 as the year, and several other writers follow him. Again, some of the writers to whom we must look for the facts of this part of American history confound Tecumseh's two years' sojourn among the Creeks about the year 1787 with his visit in 1811, saying that that visit lasted two years--a statement which would make great confusion in the mind of any one familiar with the history of events in the North in which Tecumseh bore a part. A careful comparison of dates shows that Tecumseh started to the South in the spring of the year 1811, and returned to the North soon after the battle of Tippecanoe was fought--that is to say, near the end of the same year.

#### CHAPTER V.

##### RED EAGLE AS AN ADVOCATE OF WAR--THE CIVIL WAR IN THE CREEK NATION.

We have called Tecumseh a wily politician, and in whatever he undertook his methods were always those of the political manager. He was quick to discover the temper of individuals as well as of bodies of men, and he was especially shrewd in selecting his agents to work with him and for him. He was not long in picking out Red Eagle as the man of all others likely to draw the Creeks into the scheme of hostility. Red Eagle's tastes and temper, as we have already seen, were those of the savage. He was a rich man, and had all the means necessary to the enjoyment of those sports and pastimes which he delighted in; but above all else he was an Indian. He looked upon the life of the white men with distaste, and saw with displeasure the tendency of his people, and more especially of his half-breed brothers, to adopt the civilization which he loathed. Moreover, he cherished a special hatred for the Americans--a hatred which his uncle and tutor, General McGillivray, had sedulously instilled into his mind in his boyhood; and this detestation of the Americans had been strengthened by the British and Spanish at Mobile and Pensacola, during his frequent visits to those posts. His favorite boast was that there was "no Yankee blood in his veins."

Besides his prejudice, Red Eagle's judgment taught him to fear the encroachments of the Americans, and men are always quick to hate those whom they fear. Red Eagle saw with

genuine alarm that the white men were rapidly multiplying in the Tombigbee country, and he knew that the Americans had made acquisitions of new territory which would still further invite American emigration into the neighborhood of the Creek Nation. All this he saw with alarm, because he was convinced that it boded ill to his people. With many others he feared that the race which held black men in a state of slavery would reduce red men to a similar condition as soon as their own numbers in the country should be great enough to render resistance useless. Convinced of this, Red Eagle believed that it was the part of wisdom to make a fight for freedom before it should be forever too late.

Tecumseh, finding in the young chief a man of the highest influence in the nation, whose prejudices, fears, and judgment combined to make him an advocate of war, took him at once into his councils, making him his confidant and principal fellow-worker. Red Eagle eagerly seconded Tecumseh's efforts, and his influence won many, especially of the young warriors, to the war party in the nation. His knowledge of the Creeks, too, enabled him to suggest methods of winning them which his visitor would not have thought of, probably. One of these was to work directly upon their imaginations, and to enlist their superstition on the side of war through prophets of their own, who, by continuous prophesying, could do much to counteract the influence of the older Creek chiefs, most of whom were attached to the Americans, and being well-to-do were opposed to war, which might lose them their houses, lands, cattle, and negro slaves. The possession of property, even among partly savage men, is a strong conservative influence always.

Acting upon Red Eagle's hint, Tecumseh directed his prophet to "inspire" some Creeks with prophetic powers. The first man selected for this purpose was wisely chosen. He was a shrewd half-breed named **Josiah Francis**, a man whose great cunning and unscrupulousness fitted him admirably for the business of "prophet."

The prophet of the **Shawnees took Francis** to a cabin and shut him up alone for the space of ten days. During that time the inspiring was accomplished by the Shawnee, who danced and howled around the cabin, and performed all manner of rude gesticulations. At the end of the ten days he brought the new prophet forth, telling the people that he was now blind, but that very soon his sight--which may be said to have been taken away to be sharpened--would be restored to him, so improved that he could see all things that were to occur in the future.

Francis, of course, lent himself willingly to this imposture, and consented to be led about by the Shawnee prophet, stepping like a blind man who fears to stumble over obstacles. Suddenly he declared that he had received his vision, duly made over, with modern improvements and prophetic attachments.

Francis used his new powers both directly and by proxy in the interest of the war party, creating many other prophets to help him, among them Siquista and High Head Jim; and the diligence with which all these workers for war carried on their prophesying, pleadings, and speech-

making increased the numbers of the war party, and added to the ill-feeling, which was already intense, between the Creeks who wished to make war and those who sought to keep the peace. The Creek nation was ripe for a civil war--a war of factions among themselves; it only needed a spark to create an explosion, and the spark was not long in coming, as we shall see.

Tecumseh, having secured so good a substitute for himself in Red Eagle, felt that his own presence was no longer needed in the Creek country. He accordingly took his departure for the north by a circuitous route, in order that he might visit the tribes on the Missouri River and in Illinois, and stir them up to hostility. He took with him the Creek chief Little Warrior, and thirty men of the nation. These Creeks accompanied him in all his wanderings until they reached Canada, where they remained a considerable time, receiving attentions of the most flattering kind from British officers and from the secret agents of the British. Upon their departure for the return journey, they were provided with letters which directed the British agents at Pensacola to provide the Creeks with arms and ammunition in abundance.

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Justice being satisfied, the Creeks might now have remained at peace with the whites if they had joined the older chiefs in wishing to do so; but unfortunately that which placated the whites only served to incense the war party among the Creeks against both the whites and the peaceful men of their own nation. Murders and other outrages occurred frequently. The men of the war party became truculent in their bearing, and matters were in a ferment throughout the nation. The prophets prophesied, and the orators made speeches denouncing the "peacefuls," as they called the Creeks who opposed war, as bitterly as they did the whites. The Alabamas were especially violent, probably in consequence of their close neighborhood with Red Eagle, whose influence over them was almost without limit. They committed outrages especially designed to force the beginning of war, among other things killing a mail-carrier, seizing the United States mail and carrying it to Pensacola, where they robbed the bags of their contents.

**Big Warrior**, who had stood so firmly against Tecumseh's threats, still held out, but he was now thoroughly aroused. He invited the chiefs of the war party to a council, but they scorned to listen to his pleas for a hearing. Failing to bring them to him, he sent a messenger to them with his "talk," which was in these words: "You are but a few Alabama people. You say that the Great Spirit visits you frequently; that he comes in the sun, and speaks to you; that the sun comes down just above your heads. Now we want to see and hear what you have seen and heard. Let us have the same proof, then we will believe. You have nothing to fear; the people who did the killing on the Ohio are put to death, and the law is satisfied."

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The long-threatened war between the United States and Great Britain had been formally declared in the year 1812, and it was now the spring of 1813. The Americans at the beginning of

the war had asserted their title to the town and harbor of Mobile, which, although a part of the territory ceded many years before to this country by the French, had until now been held by the Spanish. The affair was so well managed that the place was surrendered without bloodshed and occupied by the American forces; but its surrender served to increase the hostility of the Spanish in Florida, and although we were nominally at peace with Spain, the Spanish authorities at Pensacola, who had already done much to stir up Indian hostilities, lent themselves readily to the schemes of the British. During the latter part of August, 1812, they went so far as to permit a British force to land at Pensacola, take possession of the fort there, and make the place a base of military operations against us.

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A friendly half-breed, **McNac** by name, was driven from his home by one of the petty marauding parties spoken of a few pages back, and his cattle were carried to Pensacola by the marauders, and sold. After hiding in the swamps for some time, McNac at last ventured out at night to visit his home and see precisely what damage had been done. He was unlucky enough to meet High Head Jim at the head of a party of hostile Indians, and as there was no chance of safety either in flight or fight, McNac resorted to diplomacy, which in this case, as in many others, meant vigorous lying. He declared that he had abandoned his peaceful proclivities, and had made up his mind to join the war party. McNac appears to have had something like a genius for lying, as he succeeded in imposing his fabrications upon High Head Jim, who, suspicious and treacherous as he was, believed McNac implicitly, and confided to him the plan of the hostile Creeks. This plan was to kill **Big Warrior, Captain Isaacs, McIntosh, Mad Dragon's Son, and the other friendly chiefs**, before going finally upon the war-path, and, having thus deprived the friendly Creeks of their leaders, to compel them to join in the war upon the Americans. Then, High Head Jim said, the war would begin by simultaneous attacks upon the various settlements. Having exterminated the whites upon their borders, they were to march in three columns against the people of Tennessee, Georgia, and Mississippi, receiving assistance from the Choctaws and the Cherokees.

In such a state of affairs, of course, a collision between the whites and the Indians was inevitable, and when it came, as will be related in the next chapter, the **Creek war of 1813** was begun.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BATTLE OF BURNT CORN.

In the month of July, 1813, **Peter McQueen, High Head Jim, and the Prophet Francis**, having collected a large amount of plunder in their descents upon the homes of peaceful Indians and the plantations of half-breeds, sought a market for their booty. Collecting their followers to the number of about three hundred men, they loaded a number of pack-horses, and set out for

Pensacola, driving a herd of stolen cattle before them. It was their purpose to exchange these things at Pensacola for arms, ammunition, whiskey, and whatever else they wanted; and combining pleasure with business, they amused themselves on the route by burning villages and committing murders upon Indians who persisted in their friendship for the whites. . . .

The pioneers who lived in that part of the country were brave, hardy, and resolute men, and they no sooner saw their danger distinctly than they took up arms with which to defend themselves. They resolved to assert their resolution by attacking not the Indian towns, but the roving parties of Indian outlaws who were bringing the war about. If they could crush these, punishing them effectually, they thought, the great body of the Creeks would think twice before deciding to make the contemplated war.

Accordingly a summons was sent out for volunteers. About two hundred men, or nearly that number, some of them white men, some half-breeds, and some friendly Indians, promptly answered the call. Among them was Captain Samuel Dale, better known in history as Sam Dale, the hero of the canoe fight, one of the strangest and most desperate affairs of the war, some account of which will be given in its proper place.

This little army was commanded by **Colonel Caller**, assisted by one lieutenant-colonel, four majors, and more captains and lieutenants than have been counted. Deducting these from the total force, we are led to the conviction that there must have been an average of about one officer to every two men; but even this enormous proportion of officers did not prevent the men from behaving badly in the presence of the enemy and getting sharply beaten, as will be related presently.

When the several companies composing this expedition were brought together, the line of march was taken toward Pensacola, with the purpose of **encountering Peter McQueen** and his force on their return. On the morning of July 27th, 1813, the advance scouts came in and reported that McQueen's force was encamped upon **Burnt Corn Creek**, just in advance of Caller's column, and that officer promptly determined to attack them.

Forming his men in line he advanced cautiously through the reeds until the Indian camp lay just below. Then, with a yell, the men dashed forward to the charge, and after a few moments' resistance the surprised and beaten Indians abandoned their camp with its horses and its rich stores of ammunition and food, and fled precipitately to the creek, by which the camp was encircled except upon the side from which the white men came. Dale, who was a born Indian fighter, **Captain Dixon Bailey**, and **Captain Smoot**--who were also resolute men and good officers, Bailey being an educated half-breed--saw at a glance that to pursue the flying savages was to crush them utterly; and they therefore led their men, some seventy-five or eighty in number, forward, and crowded the Indians as closely as possible. Had they been promptly supported, McQueen's force would have been utterly destroyed, and there might have been no Creek war for us to write and read about. Unluckily the other officers were less wise than Dale

and Bailey and Smoot. When the Indians gave way and ran, leaving their camp with its pack-horses loaded with goods, the officers and men of the main body supposed that their work was done. Instead of joining in the pursuit, they broke their ranks, threw down their arms, and busied themselves securing the plunder.

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The Indians were badly hurt. Their losses, though not known definitely, are known to have been greater than those of the whites, of whom only two were killed and fifteen wounded. They had lost their pack-horses, and nearly all the fruits of their journey to Pensacola, so that they were forced to return to that post to procure fresh supplies.

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