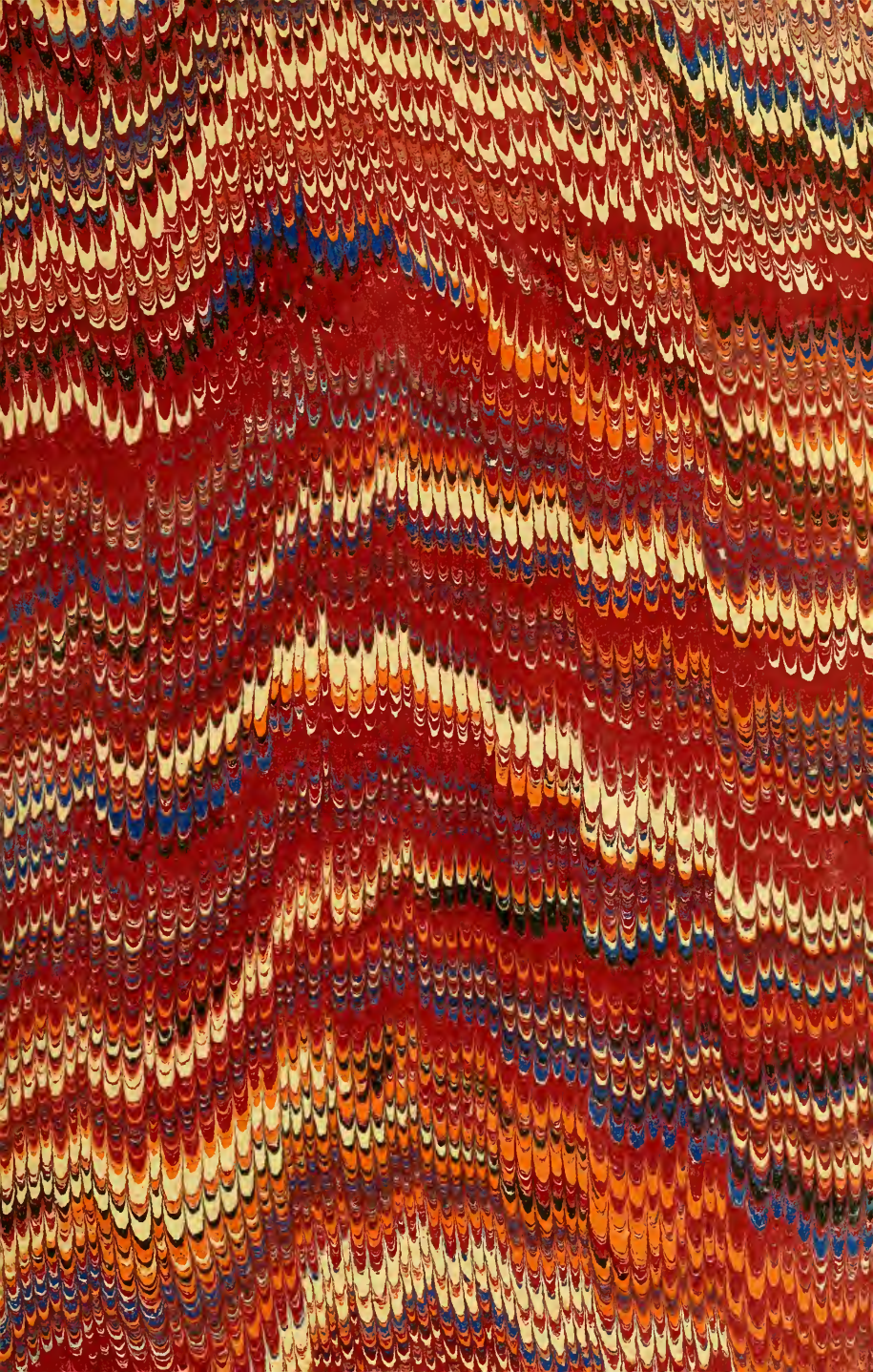

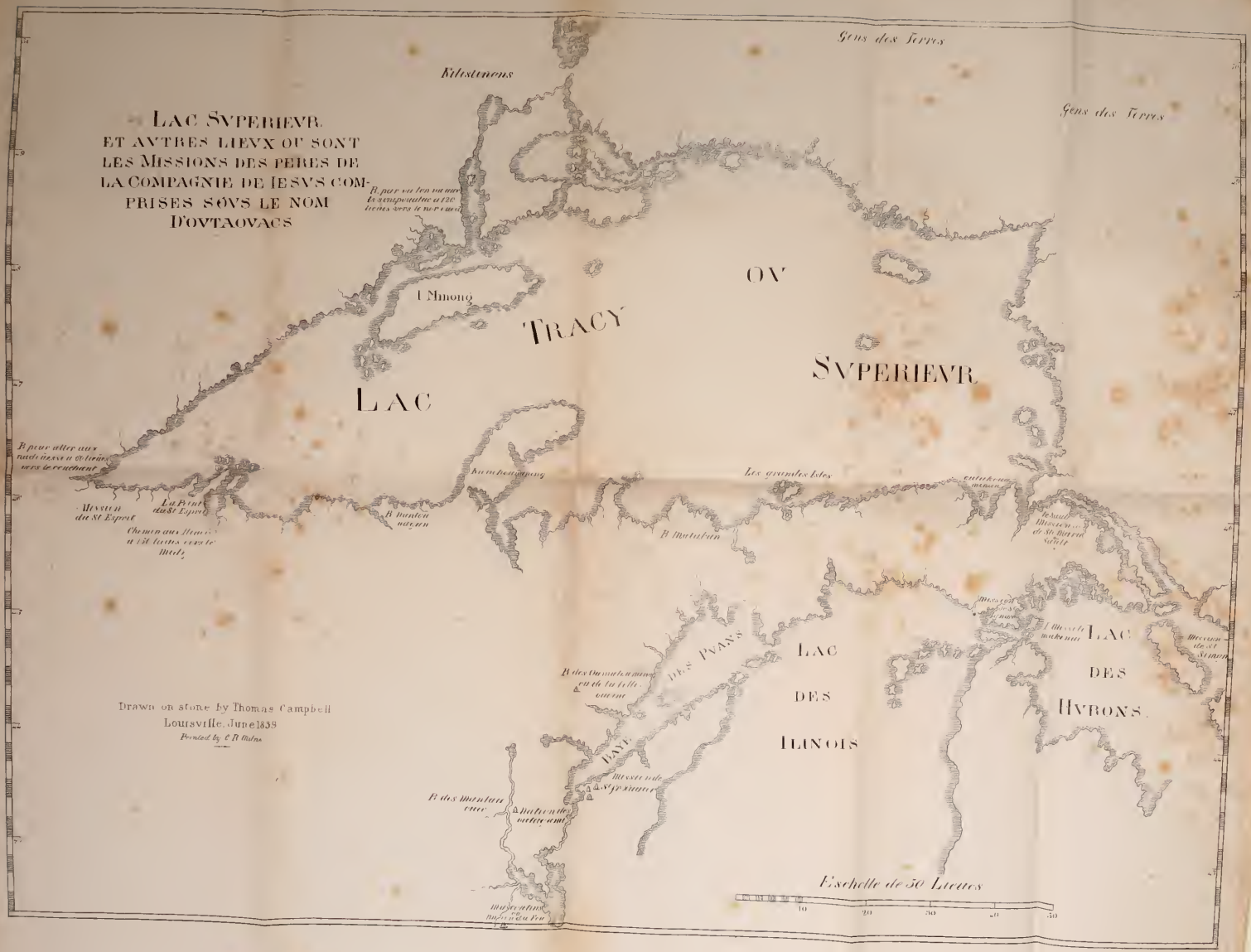
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DES
ILINOIS
LAC
DES
HVRONS
DES PEANS
Les grandes Isles
Eschelle de 50 Lieues
Drawn on stone by Thomas Campbell
Louisville. June 1838
Printed by C.R. Mills

ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE VINCENNES

HISTORICAL AND ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY,

FEBRUARY 22, 1839.

BY JUDGE LAW.

LOUISVILLE, KY.

PRENTICE AND WEISSINGER, PRINTERS

1839.

CORRESPONDENCE.

At a meeting of the Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society, February the 22d, 1839,

On motion of Dr. Stahl, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted:

1st. That the thanks of this Society be, and they are, hereby tendered to the Hon. John Law, for the learned and interesting oration delivered by him to-day.

2d. That a committee be appointed to request a copy of said oration for publication in pamphlet form, at the expense of the Society.

A. T. ELLIS, *Pres't pro. tem.*

GEO. R. GIBSON, *Secretary.*

—

VINCENNES, February 23, 1839.

DEAR SIR:—The undersigned, a committee appointed by the "Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society," request from you, a copy of the oration delivered by you on the 22d February, for publication—and as it is their wish, and the desire of our citizens generally, that the same should be published, for the learning and collection of historical facts contained in it, we trust that you will yield to the request, and furnish us with a copy of the same for that purpose. We are, with great respect and esteem, yours, &c.

GEO. R. GIBSON,
B. M. THOMAS,
DAN'L. STAHL.

HON. JOHN LAW.

—

VINCENNES, February 25, 1839.

GENTLEMEN:—Yours, under date of the 23d February, was duly received. The address to which you refer, was intended for the use of the society of which you are members, and is entirely at their service.

Some of the incidents connected with the capture of Vincennes by Col. Clark, and set forth in the address, were, as you well know, derived from a *manuscript* journal of the campaign, kept by one who had a command in it. The manuscript was forwarded to the society for their use, by an honorary member* of it, not a resident of our town. Courtesy would require, that previous to its publication, his consent should be obtained. He has been written to on the subject, and should there be no objection on his part, the oration is entirely at your service, for any purpose which the Society may designate.

JOHN LAW.

To Messrs. Geo. R. Gibson, B. M. Thomas, Daniel Stahl, Committee, &c.

*Professor Bliss of Louisville, Ky.

VINCENNES, February 22d, 1839.

We, the undersigned, having understood that the members of the "Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society," had requested the Hon. John Law to furnish to said Society a copy of his oration this day delivered, on behalf of said Society, for publication, would beg leave to concur, and join in said request, and respectfully solicit on behalf of the French population of Vincennes and its neighborhood, a participation of the wish. Signed,

LAMBERT BARROIS,	ANTOIN MARCHALL,
M. D. RICHARDVILLE,	CH. GRAETER,
LEWIS L. WATSON,	J. F. BAYARD,
FRANCIS BOLON,	PIERRE BROUILLET, *Sen'r.*
PIERRE LAPLANTE,	JAMES THERIAC,
JOHN B. GREMORE,	FRANCOIS VACHET,

VINCENNES, February 22d, 1839.

The undersigned has received, with sentiments of profound respect, the note addressed to him, on behalf of the French inhabitants of Vincennes, and will with pleasure comply with their request, as soon as circumstances will admit.

The history of our "ancient borough" has been but little understood, and if there has been any one gratification, which the undersigned has felt in the delivery of the address, the publication of which is sought for by your note, it is in the fact, that by it, he has been enabled to present the well founded claims of the ancient inhabitants of the "Post" to the gratitude of the present generation.

JOHN LAW.

To Monsieures Laplante, Bayard, Brouillet, Barrois, and others on behalf of the French population of Vincennes.

ERRATA.

[The absence of the author from the place of publication, while the address was going through the press, obliged him to entrust the reading of the proof to a literary friend, whose want of familiarity with the chirography of the manuscript will be received as an apology for the following rather numerous *errata*.]

On page 12th, 6th line from the bottom, instead of "Father Gabriel *Maust*" read "Father Gabriel *Marest*."

Pages 13th, 14th, and wherever it occurs, instead of "*Onalache*" read "*Onabache*."

Page 14th, 4th line from the bottom, instead of "Belle *Rivier*" read "Belle *Riviere*."

Page 21st, 20th and 31st lines, instead of "*Longpie*" read "*Longprie*."

Page 22d, 19th line, instead of "*hero*" read "*heroic*."

Page 21th, 4th line, instead of "*the* very conquest" read "*this* very conquest."

Page 25th, 3d line from the bottom, instead of "on *receiving* his troops" read "on *reviewing* his troops."

Page 28th, 12th line, instead of "kingdom of *Sardina*" read "kingdom of *Sardinia*."

Page 30th, 17th line, instead of "*early*" read "*easily*."

Page 41st, 26th line, instead of "*American Governors*" read "*Americans*."

N. B. For a history of the accompanying Map see note "A" in the Appendix

ADDRESS.

Having been solicited by that portion of my fellow-citizens, who are members of the "Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society," to prepare an address, connected with the early settlement, the rise, and progress of our ancient Borough—I have thought that no occasion could perhaps be more appropriate for its delivery than the one on which we are assembled. Dating its origin long before even the birth of the "Father of his Country," a solitary spot in the wilderness long after his advent on the stage of action—scarcely known even at the date of his decease, we have seen it within the present century forming a *nucleus* from which has arisen three great States—embracing a population probably five times as large as that which belonged to our parent State Virginia, at the treaty of peace in '83, and one of them, our own State, at the last Presidential election giving, of the free white suffrage polled on that occasion, the fifth highest vote of all the States of the Union. Could it be permitted to him who was "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen" to look down from the mansions of bliss, where "he rests from his labors," upon the work of his hands, and see an empire called into existence since his departure—abounding in wealth—in

intelligence—in patriotism, and love of country; inhabited by freemen, the descendants of those whom he had led to battle, strong in their attachment to liberty, and able and willing to maintain it; proud of the appellation of American citizens, and deeply imbued with the republican principles so admirably set forth in his farewell address;—could he see the country north-west of the river Ohio, which, even at the period of his departure for another and a better world, was the abode, for the most part, of the son of the Forest, or the game which constituted his daily subsistence—now dotted with cities and villages—covered with cultivated fields—and the residence of upwards of two millions of beings, most of whom have come on the stage of action since that period; how would his heart swell with joy, his bosom throb with pleasure, at the reflection, that these glorious results, are but a part and parcel of that admirable system of government, the foundation of which was cemented by the blood of his fellow patriots of the revolution, and the superstructure of which was the work, in part, of his own hands. For aught we know, my countrymen, his spirit may at this very moment be hovering over this assembly. That Being who is all wise and powerful, and who created him, like Moses of old, to lead our fathers from a "land of Egyptian bondage to the Land of Promise"—may, for aught we finite beings know, and for the same wise purposes for which he created him, permit him to see, and to watch over, and to guard the rights and happiness of their descendants. Let us at least act as if we felt the influence of his counsels, and preserve them, as the richest legacy we can hand down to those who are to come after us. If there is any one subject which should engage the earnest atten-

tion of the human mind—if there is any one in which mankind are particularly interested, it is the history of their species. The interest in the subject is much increased by the particular relationship which we bear, to the country whose history we are anxious to thoroughly understand. There is a sort of selfishness in the matter, which, after all, constitutes the true love of country. It is this feeling which is the father to all genuine patriotism, and without it, there would be but little inducement for action. We read with infinitely more pleasure, in childhood, the relations which are given us of the struggle for independence *here*, than we ever did, or ever can that of any other republic, which has heretofore, either in ancient or modern time, acquired its liberty. We may, and no doubt do, dote on isolated cases of patriotism, and love of country, as we find them recorded in other times and in other places. Our feelings are enlisted—our blood comes quicker through our veins, while reading the stories of Grecian and Roman struggles for independence—and it is the same with the more modern contests, between the sovereign and his oppressed subjects. We enter the lists—we fight over the battles, in our mind's eye, of Marathon and Thermopylæ. The strongest feelings of the human heart are enlisted in behalf of the oppressed, and of those contending, as we believe, for their rights. But what boy who reads of the struggle at Concord, and the battle of Bunker Hill, but that feels an interest in the story, which no pen, ancient or modern, has ever given to similar engagements. He feels that his fathers were there before him—that the very ground is holy—that the same blood which waxed warm in that contest, when bayonet crossed bayonet in deadly strife, is running

through his own veins; and the names of those who fell there, become as "household words" to him. Stand on its gory heights and look around you—does one experience the same emotions on the heights of Athens, on the Acropolis, rich as it is in classic association, and in the recollection of a gallant nation struggling for existence? No: The American feeling predominates, and it is right it should be so. "Romanus sum" is the true watch word and battle cry of all who love their country. If this feeling exists to the extent which I have described it in relation to country—does it not run through all the geographical divisions into which our country is divided? The citizens of one section will point you to the fields of Trenton and Princeton, as among the most gallant exploits of the revolution; another to the Brandywine. The Carolinian will tell you, that the battle of Eutaw was among the most sanguinary fought; while the Virginian points to the seige of Yorktown, as the last and the brightest page in our struggle for independence. These feelings are natural, they are proper; and I should think but little of that man's heart, whatever I might of his head, who did not feel and express them. It is this attachment to our own state, to our own abiding place—to the land of our nativity, or our domicil, which forms one of the strongest links of that chain which binds us to our common country. But I will go farther. There is, or should be, not only an attachment to our common country, and to the state which we live in, but a strong and abiding attachment to the very town in which we are located. Without it, we cannot feel personally interested in its welfare, in its prosperity, in its improvement—in all which should render it dear to us, as the abiding place of ourselves and of those connected

with us. I lay it down, therefore, as a principle not to be contested, that he, who, with the ties which should bind him to the place of his birth or his adoption, does not feel warmly, nay deeply interested in its history, in its prosperity, in its adversity;—who, whether "through good or evil report," will not protect, defend, and uphold it, is neither a good citizen, attached to the state he lives in, or devoted to his country. Let others gainsay us as much as they may; let envy detract from our merit, or jealousy decry our position, our capabilities, our business, or our taste; it is our duty to stick to the "Post."

As to the early history of Chippe Coke, (the town of Brush Wood,) or as known in later days, Vincennes, clouds and darkness rest upon it. At what date it first became established as a military position, it is almost impossible at this late period actually to determine. It is well known that it was first settled by the French. That nation, with a tact and judgment which is wonderful, and with a prescience which seems to be more than realized at the present time, in relation to the country watered by the Ohio and the Mississippi and the tributary streams; in the latter part of the 17th century attempted a union of their settlements on the Mississippi, with their possessions in Canada. In order to effect this, they established a cordon of posts from the Lakes to the Balize, including one or more military stations on the Illinois and the Wabash. We know, that early in the 18th century, at least, there was one here, one at Kaskaskia before that period, another at Peoria, and one at Ouiatanon, or the mouth of the Wea, a short distance below the present site of the town of Lafayette. The project was a grand one, and but for the

concurrence of circumstances, usually attendant upon national schemes, when colonies are to be formed at a distance—and which in the event of a war with a rival power, are the first objects of attack and conquest, might have been successful. And "New France," for that was the intended designation of this Transatlantic Empire, might, in all the elements which constitute wealth and power, by this time have rivalled its founder; and we, instead of being plain republican citizens, have formed a portion of the subjects of the "Grand Monarque." But the war with Great Britain, which was concluded by the peace of 1763, transferred Canada to the British dominion, and Louisiana by the secret treaty with Spain in 1762, to the latter power. France was thus stripped of all her possessions in the New World—possessions acquired by an immense expenditure both of blood and treasure. It was in the accomplishment of this bold and magnificent scheme for western empire, on the part of the French Court, that the settlements on the Illinois and Wabash were formed. But it was not the military subjection alone of the western country that France had in view. There was another and a higher consideration—it was the establishment of the Catholic religion—the established religion of France, which she wished to introduce into her possessions on the continent. Wherever, therefore, she sent a detachment of her troops, she accompanied it with a Missionary of the Cross—and while the aborigines of the country were kept in awe by the force of her arms, it is no less true, and certainly more creditable, that the child of the forest was led to obedience by the milder but not less powerful influences of the new creed, which their fathers, the "Robes Noir," or Black Robes as they called them, introduced

to their understanding. It is probable their imagination may have been as much influenced as their judgment. But be this as it may, it is an admitted fact, that the Jesuits who accompanied these expeditions, did much to soften their feelings and civilize their manners, during the short period they occupied the country; and the influence of their doctrines, and the amenity and kindness of their manners, are yet remembered by the tribes who occupied a few years since the country between the Lakes and the Ohio. No set of men, in pursuit of any object temporal or spiritual, ever endured greater hardships, suffered more perils, or made greater sacrifices, than these Reverend Fathers. Not content simply with the establishment of their "Tabernacles in the wilderness," they followed the Indian to his hunting grounds—threaded forests—swam rivers—crossed prairies in the midst of winter—frequently for days without food, and often nearly without raiment. The supposed conversion of a single Indian to the doctrines of the Catholic church—the baptism of an infant, seems to them to have been an ample reward for all their labor, for all their toil, and for all their sufferings. With us in these latter days, differing as most of us do in our religious opinions from this school of ecclesiastics, it is almost impossible to do them justice. As a whole, their history has been but little studied, and less understood. They have neither had their Livy or their Polybius. If the history of these men—of their exertions, of their influence, of their actions, for good or evil, ever is to be written with candor, it *must be in this country*, the scene of many of their labors, and I might well add of their sufferings and their death. "No subject would form a more imposing or interesting theme for the historian, none demand

higher qualifications, more laborious research, and above all the most dignified superiority to all the prepossessions of age, of country, and of creed." It is well known, that according to the rules of the order of St. Ignatius, annual reports were required from his followers wherever located. The Jesuit, whether in the cold regions of Labrador, in the Tropics, in Cochin China; in fine, in Europe, Asia, Africa, and America, transmitted to his superior, at the end of the year, an account of his stewardship, in the shape of a pastoral letter. But it was not simply the spiritual situation of his vineyard he delineated. He described the country, its geography, its topography, its customs, manners, habits, traditions, language, dialects; in short every matter which either in a religious, and I might add political view, would enable his superior to judge of the necessity of further exertion or additional aid. And, strange as it may seem, the best and only authentic account of the country bounded on the north by the Lakes, east by the Wabash, south by the Ohio, and west by the Mississippi, one century since, is in the relations made by the Jesuit Fathers, giving an account of the Missionary laborers in that quarter. And I am indebted to one of these communications in the "Lettres Edifiant et Curieuse" (Letters edifying and curious) published in Paris in 1761, for the first written notice of the "Post"* It is contained in a letter written by "Father Gabriel Maust, Missionary of the company of Jesus, to Father Gemon of the same company," dated at Kaskaskia, an Illinois village, otherwise called the "Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin," November the 9th, 1712, one hundred and twenty-six years since. Cast your eyes back my

*See note A.

friends to this period, and in your mind's eye run over the period since intervening. Where now is the good Father, and the friend to whom he communicated? gathered to their fathers: generation after generation has passed away—the priest and the catechuman have returned to the dust from whence they came, and the places which "once knew them, know them no more forever." One hundred and twenty-six years since, and the country now abounding in all the materials which constitute a great nation, was all but a desert to the banks of the Delaware.

It is a singular fact, yet no less true, that the Wabash was known and navigated by the whites long before the Ohio was known to exist. Indeed all the maps—and I have seen two before the year 1730—call the Ohio at its confluence with the Mississippi, "Oualache." The reason is obvious, when one reflects for a single instant, that the whole course of travel to the Mississippi was either by the *Illinois* or the *Wabash.* The only communication with the Mississippi *was by the French* in the latter part of the 17th and early in the 18th century, and was from the Lakes. The priest and the soldier were the only travellers. They ascended the Maume, crossed the portage and descended the Wabash to this post. The nations of Indians on the south side of the Ohio were at war with those on this side. They wished to cross to Kaskaskia; the Indians here told them there was danger in descending further. They wend their way across Illinois, aiming at the Mississippi; they descended that stream to New Orleans; and when they found the Ohio pouring its flood into the "Father of Waters," they naturally enough suppose it to be the same stream they had navigated in their voyage here, and delineate it on their

maps as the "Oualache." In corroboration of the remark here made, permit me to quote from a portion of the Reverend Father's letter above referred to. In page 325 describing the Illinois, he says: "About eight leagues, or 240 miles below this, (he is writing from Kaskaskia,) on the Illinois side, that is to say the east side, (for the Mississippi runs generally from north to south,) there empties another fine river called "Oualache." It comes from the east north-east. It has three branches, one of which extends as far as the Iroquois; the other runs into Virginia and Carolina, and the third heads among the Miamis." Now it is very evident that the river thus described was the Ohio, and that branch of it which is said to run up to the country owned by the Miamis, was the Wabash. The other branches were the main river, and the Tennessee, or the Cumberland. The writer gives a very graphic description of the country bordering on the "Oualache;" says it is rich in minerals, especially lead and tin, and that if experienced miners were to come out from France and work the mines, he has no doubt "gold and silver" would be discovered in abundance. That the quantity of "buffalo and bear" which was to be found on the banks of the Wabash, was incredible; and, in the true spirit of an epicure, the good Father says—"the meat of a young bear is very delicious, for I have tried it." Thus we see that in point of antiquity, and virtue of prior discovery and occupation, the stream we live on takes precedence of the "Belle Rivier."*

But to return to the immediate subject of our address. The first notice of *Vincennes* which I have been enabled to find, with no little research, is the one given by

*See note B.

Father Marest in the same letter from which I have made the above quotation, and is on page 333 of the volume referred to. It will be remembered that Volney, who was here in 1776, and whose active mind, led him to various enquiries in relation to our first settlement, gives it as his opinion, that the first establishment made here by the French was in 1735. And he states the fact, that he conversed with the oldest French settlers, and with all whom he supposed could give any information on the subject. It will be also recollected that the date of Father Marest's letter from Kaskaskia is Nov. the 9th, 1712; twenty-three years before the period assigned by Volney for the establishment of a post here. In the letter referred to, of Father Marest, he says—"The French having lately established a FORT on the river Wabash, demanded a Missionary, and Father Mermet was sent to them." Now there can be no doubt that the river he mentioned, was the one we live on, and not the Ohio with which it was, as I have mentioned, confounded; and for this very obvious and plain reason, that the French never had a "*Fort*" on the Ohio within the limits either of Indiana, or Illinois. And, it is equally clear to my mind, that the post mentioned, was the one afterwards, par excellence, called 'au Post,' or "the Post," and subsequently "Post Vincennes." If I am right in my conjecture, the settlement of this place by the French, may be dated back as early as the year 1710 or '11—probably the former, inasmuch as the *Fort* must have been built and garrisoned before an application was made for a Missionary; and it would take some time to answer the call from Kaskaskia, the nearest point where a priest could be obtained. The first settlement of this place then, by the whites, was

in the year 1710; twenty-five years before the period assigned by Volney. But it will not do to let Father Mermet go, without a more particular notice of him and his visit, seeing this was the first "labor of love" ever undertaken to our ancient Borough. It seems, the moving impulse which led this "Herald of the Cross" to the shores of the Wabash, an impulse which drew many of his brethren into the western wilderness, was the conversion of a tribe of Indians now extinct, but probably a branch of the Miamis—as he says they spoke that language—and called 'Mascoutins,' who had their village near the Fort; and who, from their strong attachment to the superstitions of their medicine men, were very little disposed to hear "the true faith," as delivered by the Reverend Father. Resolving in his own mind the best method of overcoming their unbelief in the true church, he concluded to have a sort Owen and Campbell debate, a public discussion with their principal medicine men, in the presence of the nation. But let us hear the Father's own account of the matter. "The way I took," says the Father, "was to confound, in the presence of the whole tribe, one of these charlartans, whose 'Manitou,' or Great Spirit which he worshipped, was the 'buffalo.' After leading him on insensibly to the avowal, that it was not the buffalo that he worshipped, but the 'Manitou,' or Spirit of the buffalo, which was under the earth, and which animated all buffaloes, which heals the sick, and has all power; I asked him if other beasts, the bear, for instance, and which some of his nation worshipped, was not equally inhabited by a Manitou, which was under the earth? "Without doubt" said the Grand Medicine. "If this is so," said the Missionary, "men ought to have a Man-

itou who inhabits them." "Nothing more certain," said the Medicine man;—"ought not that to convince you," said the Father, pushing his argument, "that you are not very reasonable? For if man upon the earth is the master of all animals; if he kills them, if he eats them; does it not follow that the Manitou which inhabits him, must necessarily have a mastery over all other Manitous? Why then do you not invoke him, instead of the Manitou of the bear and the buffalo, when you are sick?" "This reasoning," says the Father, "disconcerted the charlatan." But like much other good logic in the world, I am sorry to add, in his own words, "this was all the effect it produced."

A severe malady broke out in the village. The Indians, says the Father, gathered around the *Fort*, for the purpose of making a great sacrifice to their Manitou. They slew thirty or forty dogs, hoisted them on poles, and forming a procession, danced and sang around the *Fort*. Finding their own efforts unable to stop the pestilence, they appealed again to the Missionary, to stay the destroying angel, who was carrying them off daily. But it seems, neither the "Manitou" of the French or of the Indian was able to arrest the plague. For, says the Father, "notwithstanding all my attention, more than half the village perished." How long Father Mermet remained here, we are unable to say. We find he returned to Kaskaskia, and ultimately died there. His place no doubt was supplied by the labors of another; but by whom and when is unknown. The records of the Catholic church here make no mention of a Missionary, until about the year 1749, when Father Meurin came here; and from that time, until the present, there has been a regular succession of the priesthood.

From the period to which I alluded, and for the term of nearly half a century, there would be but little to notice in the progress of this settlement, even if we had the materials of its rise and progress to operate on. Isolated as it was, there were no events either in its political or social character, which would afford much interest. There was probably a succession of priests and commandants, who governed the little world around them, with infinite power and authority; from whose decrees spiritual or temporal, there was no appeal, and none desired. "No colony can long remain separated from its parent stock until it exhibits a peculiar, and distinct character. Climate, situation, and country, although not exclusively the agents in forming the character, must nevertheless be admitted to have great influence." The character of the society was a mixture of military and civil; more however of the former, than the latter. The white portion of the population was, it must be remembered, essentially French. In this remote country there were few objects to urge to enterprize. Beggary was unknown. The necssaries of life were easily procured; and beyond these, there were no wants to be supplied. Hospitality was exercised by all —for there were no taverns. Of what use were codes of law, judges, prisons, in such a society. Each district had its commandant; and their proceedings were singular enough. The party complaining obtained a notification from the commandant to his adversary of his complaint, accompanied by a command from the commandant to render justice. If this had no effect, he was notified to appear before the commandant, on a particular day, and answer the complaint; and if the last notice was neglected, a sergeant and file of men

were sent to bring him. It was a very short and summary process, of the John Doe and Richard Roe-kind —no Sheriff, no taxation of costs. The party recusant was fined and kept in prison until he did his adversary justice; and when extremely refractory, the cat-o-nine tails brought him to a sense of justice. And I am not quite sure, that in many cases, the same speedy and exact method of dispensing justice might not be practised in these latter days. Sure I am, if it was, much unnecessary litigation would be avoided. In such a state of things, of what use were learning and science. Few could read, fewer write; and as to arithmetic, it was a lost art. Their dealings were marked by honesty and integrity, and peltries were their standard of value.* Honorable, punctual in their dealings, hospitable to strangers, and with great kind feeling and brotherly love towards one another; — these may be considered as their virtues. In opposition to them, it must be said, that they were devoid of public spirit, enterprize, or ingenuity; were indolent and uninformed. They told me, says Volney (the Americans) in his visit here in 1796, "that the Canadians had only themselves to blame for their hardships. We must allow, say they, that they are a kind, hospitable, sociable set of fellows; but in ignorance and idleness they beat the Indians. They know nothing of civil or domestic affairs; their women neither sew nor spin, or make butter, but pass their time in gossipping and tattle. The men hunt, fish, roam in the woods, bask in the sun. They do not lay up, as we do, for winter, or provide for a rainy day. They can't cure pork or venison, make sour krout, or spruce beer." But I doubt much, my friends, whether all these useful

*See note C.

and elegant accomplishments of the American, of "curing pork, making sour krout and spruce beer," which have been inculcated by them to their French neighbors, have much improved their social and moral condition. If happiness in this world consists, and it does so in a great degree, in freedom from care, the ancient population of our village were the happiest of the human family; all their desires fulfilled. But the race is nearly extinct; they have become amalgamated with another people; their habits, manners, opinions, nay language itself is changing; and in a few years, the tall, manly, arrowy form, of the descendant of St. Louis —mild, peaceful, and always polite—with his blanket capote, the blue kerchief round his head, and sandalled feet, will,—as some of us have seen them in our younger days, wending their way on Sundays in their untired and unironed cart, to the old wooden chapel of St. Francis Xavier, with smiling faces, and, as I believe, with sincere devotion,—be seen "no more forever." A new generation, a new race, a new people have encroached upon their possessions; and the laws of civilization, as sure as the laws of nature, will force them to yield to to the manners, habits, customs, dress and language, of their more powerful neighbors. Whether by the change their physical or moral condition is bettered, is a question which might be well mooted. For my own part I doubt it. I believe they were a happier, better, and more moral people before their connection with the Americans, than since; and that the change of government, has been productive of no good to their social condition. As an evidence of their attachment to the old state of things, is the fact, also noticed by Volney, "that the first thing they demanded on their cession to the United States, was a military commandant."

I have before remarked, that from the advent of Father Mermet as Missionary here, in the year 1710 or '11, for nearly a half a century, there were no important events connected with the history of our "Post," but a continued succession of commandants and Missionaries. I should, however, fail in a very important part of our history, were I not to notice, during that period, the commander after whom our town is named. Francois Morgan de Vinsenne. ("*Vinsenne*," for so he spelt his name,) was an officer in the service of the King of France, and serving in Canada probably as early as 1720, in the regiment "de Carignan." At any rate, as we are informed, he was engaged in some service with another officer on the Lakes towards Sault St. Marie, for the Governor of Canada, M. de Vaudrieul, in 1725. At what time he took possession here, is not exactly known; probably somewhere about the year 1732. There is nothing on our records to show, but an act of sale made by him and Madame Vinsenne, the daughter of Monsieur Phillip Longpie of Kaskaskia, and recorded there. The act of sale, dated 5th January, 1735, styles him "an officer of the troops of the King," and "commandant au poste du Ouabache;" the same deed expressing that Madame Vinsenne was absent at the Post. Her signature being necessary to the deed, she sent her mark, or cross, which is testified to as hers, "X the mark of Madame Vinsenne," and showing that the good lady was not very far advanced in the rudiments, though her husband was commandant, and her father the wealthiest citizen of Kaskaskia. The will of Monsieur Longpie, his father-in-law, dated the 10th of March, 1734, gives to him, among other things, 408 lbs. of pork, which he wishes "kept safe until the

arrival of Mons. Vinsenne," who was then at the Post. There are other documents there signed by him as a witness, in 1733, '4; among them one of a receipt for 100 pistoles, received from his father-in-law, on his marriage. From all these proofs, I think it evident that he was here previous to 1733, and left with his command, on an expedition against the Chickasaws, in 1736, by orders from his superior officer at New Orleans, "Monsieur d'Artagette," commandant for the King in Illinois, and in which expedition, according to "Charlevoix," M. St. Vinsenne was killed. But as the facts are not generally known, I quote his words among the last of his volume: "We have just received very bad news from Louisiana, and our war with the Chickasaws. The French have been defeated; among the slain is 'Monsieur de Vinsenne,' who ceased not until his last breath to exhort the men to behave worthy of their religion, and their country." Thus perished this hero and gallant officer, after whom our town is named. We may well be proud of its origin. On looking at the register of the Catholic church, it will be found, that the change of name from Vinsenne to Vincennes, its present appellation, was made as early as 1749. Why or wherefore, I do not know. I wish the original orthography had been observed, and the name spelt after its founder, with the *s* instead of the *c*, as it should be.

The war between France and England, which broke out about 1754, deprived the former of all her possessions in this country; Canada was added to Great Britain, and Louisiana, as before remarked, to Spain. The English, anxious to acquire possession of the country, soon after the peace of 1763 took possession of it. The subsequent events will introduce the American popula-

tion on the stage of action; and a brief but accurate history of the events which have occurred since, will close my notice of it. The inhabitants occupying the Post, seem to have but little considered or regarded the change. Their old laws, customs, manners, and habits, were continued; and, as remarked by one who was present, "the change of government would have hardly been known." The difficulties, however, between the mother country, and her colonies, were about to produce a change, which has been felt to the present day among the ancient inhabitants of the "Post." I refer to the capture of it by Gen. George Rogers Clark, February 23d, 1779,—sixty years from the day after the one, which we are now commemorating. Of this expedition, of its results, of its importance, of the merits of those engaged in it, of their bravery, of their skill, of their prudence, of their success, a volume would not more than suffice for the details. Suffice it to say, that in my opinion—and I have accurately and critically weighed and examined all the results produced by any contests in which we were engaged during the revolutionary war—that for bravery, for hardships endured, for skill and consummate tact and prudence on the part of the commander, obedience, discipline and love of country on the part of his followers; for the immense benefits acquired, and signal advantages obtained by it for the whole Union, it was second to no enterprize undertaken during that struggle: I might add, second to no undertaking in ancient or modern warfare. The whole credit of this conquest belongs to two men—Gen. George Rogers Clark, and Col. Francis Vigo. And when we consider that by it the whole territory now covered by the three great States of Indiana, Illinois,

and Michigan, was added to the Union, and so admitted to be by the commissioners on the part of Great Britain, at the preliminaries for the settlement of the treaty of peace in 1783; and but for the very conquest the boundaries of our territory west, would have been the Ohio, instead of the Mississippi, and so acknowledged and admitted both by our own, and the British commissioners at that conference—a territory embracing, as I have before remarked, upwards of two million of people, the human mind is lost in the contemplation of its effects; and we can but wonder that a force of one hundred and seventy men, the whole number of Clark's troops, should, by this single action, have produced such important results. That they did so, all history attests; that they did so, our very assembly here this day proves.

"It was on the 10th day of December, 1777, that Col. Clark opened the plan of the Illinois campaign, against the British interests in this quarter, to the celebrated Patrick Henry then Governor of Virginia." It is unnecessary now to go into all the causes which led to the adoption of the plan of a western campaign as suggested by Gen., then Col. Clark. Suffice it to say, that it was not without doubt as to its success, and great difficulty in preparing the material for the enterprize, that it was undertaken. Virginia herself, from whom the aid was demanded, and assistance in men and money was expected, was in the most critical period of her revolutionary struggle; her finance exhausted, her sons drawn from the cultivation of the soil, and from all the avocations of civil life,—for the most part in the field, battling for freedom,—it is not to be wondered at, "that the counsels which advised so distant an expedition should have been listened to with

doubt, and adopted with caution." Fortunately for the country they were not unheeded. Gov. Henry, encouraged by the advice of some of Virginia's most prominent and patriotic sons, yielded to the solicitations of Clark; and, on the 2d of January, 1778, he received two sets of instructions,—"one public, directing him to proceed to Kentucky for its defence; the other, secret, ordering an attack on the British Post at Kaskaskia,"—and with the instructions, *twelve hundred pounds* in *depreciated currency*, as his *military chest* for conquering an empire. On the 24th of June, 1778, and during a total eclipse of the sun,—a sad forboding, as the party thought, of their future success, but which ultimately proved "the sun of Austerlitz,"—this patriotic band of four companies, under the command of Captains Montgomery, Helm, Bowman, and Harrod, crossed the falls of the Ohio, on their apparently "forlorn expedition."

It is a well known matter of history, "that during the commencement of our revolutionary struggle, the heart-rending scenes and wide spread ravages of our Indian foes on the western frontier, were caused principally by the ammunition, arms, and clothing supplied at the British military stations of Detroit, Vincennes, and Kaskaskia,—then garrisoned by British troops." To divert the attention of the enemy from our own frontier, and to occupy them in the defence of their own positions, it was necessary to carry the war into their own dominions. The active mind of Clark saw that, by doing this, a diversion would be created in our favor. "His first intention was to march directly to Vincennes; but on receiving his troops, the paucity of the number, and the want of all the material necessary for the attack of a fortified town, induced him to abandon this object,

and to prosecute the one originally contemplated by his instructions, the capture of Kaskaskia." It forms no part of the plan of this address to enter into the details of that expedition. Suffice it to say, that it was eminently successful, without the loss of a single man; and that, on the 4th of July, 1778, Kaskaskia yielded to the supremacy of American enterprize and valor, and with Cahokia surrendered to the American arms.

It must be recollected, that previous to this event, a treaty of peace had been concluded between France and the United States. The intelligence of it had been communicated to Clark, on his descent down the Ohio. The effect of *this treaty* had a wonderful influence upon the subsequent events of the campaign. Among the individuals at Kaskaskia, at the time of its capture, was M. Gibault, the Roman Catholic priest at Vincennes. The capture of Vincennes, as Clark himself admits, "had never been out of his mind from the first moment he undertook the expedition westward." His success at Kaskaskia served only to inspire a wish for the accomplishment of the long desired achievment. Affairs being regulated at Kaskaskia, he sent for M. Gibault, and explained to him his views. This patriotic individual, who subsequently received the public thanks of Virginia for his services, and whose strong attachment for the American cause is well known, readily and cheerfully sustained him. Dispatched by Clark, to sound the French population here, over whom he had great influence, he, on his arrival, assembled them in the church, explained the object of his mission, the alliance with France, and the negotiations with which he was entrusted. He had no sooner finished, than the population en masse took the oath of allegiance to the

Commonwealth of Virginia. A commandant was elected, and the American flag displayed over the fort,—much to the astonishment of their Indian neighbors, who for the first time saw the glorious stars and stripes, instead of the Cross of St. George, unfurled to that breeze in which it has so often since waved triumphantly.

M. Gibault, returned to Kaskaskia with the gratifying intelligence of the perfect success of his mission; not less, it may be presumed, to the astonishment of Clark, than to his gratification. Capt. Helm was appointed commandant "and Agent for the Indian affairs in the department of the Wabash," and repaired to the "Post," at which it was the intention of Clark to place a strong garrison, on the arrival of the reinforcements expected from Virginia. These reinforcements never arrived; and a new and important leaf in the chapter of our history is about to be unfolded, and another individual no less celebrated, and to us equally dear with the conqueror, and whose name will go down to posterity with his, in the history of our place, and, on the same bright page which records the valor of the commander, is to be introduced to your notice.

It was on the first of August, 1778, that M. Gibault returned to Kaskaskia with the intelligence of the submission of the French inhabitants here, to the American government, and of the circumstances above detailed. It was well known that Governor Abbott, the commander here, at the time of Clark's expedition to the Illinois, had gone to Detroit on business; and that no great time would elapse before reinforcements would be sent from that post to Vincennes. Clark could not, even had he have desired it, detailed any of his own

command to garrison the place. Helm was here, a commandant in name simply, without a single soldier under his command. From the first of August, when M. Gibault returned, until the 29th of January, 1779, Clark had not received a single communication from Vincennes. How he obtained it, and the consequences resulting from the communication, it is now my purpose briefly to unfold.

Francis Vigo, better known to us under the military title of Col. Francis Vigo, a rank which he held during the territorial government, was born in Mondovi, in the kingdom of Sardina, in the year 1747. He left his parents and guardians at a very early age, and enlisted in a Spanish regiment as a private soldier. The regiment was ordered to the Havana, and a detachment of it subsequently to New Orleans, then a Spanish post, and which detachment Col. Vigo accompanied. At what time, and under what circumstances he left the army, is not actually known. It is believed, that his attention to his duties, his natural intelligince, and high-minded and honorable deportment, gained him the esteem and confidence of his commander; and that he received his discharge without any application on his own part. We find that shortly after his discharge—and probably by the aid of the same powerful friend who had obtained it—he was supplied with goods, and engaged in the Indian trade on the Arkansas and its tributaries; and that a few years after, he made a settlement at St. Louis, also a Spanish post, and was connected in the closest relations of friendship and business with the Governor of Upper Louisiana, then residing at the same place, and whose confidence and affection he enjoyed in the highest degree. That a private

soldier, a man without education—for he could but simply write his name—should in a few years, thus be enabled to make his way in the world, and, in so short a period, become so extensively engaged in business, so highly respected and beloved, as we know him to have been at the period to which I allude, as well as to the day of his death, shows him to have thus early been possessed of a goodness of heart, a purity of mind, a high, honorable, and chivalric bearing; qualities which grew with his growth and strengthened with his strength, until the very close of his long and useful life. At the time of Clark's capture of Kaskaskia, Col. Vigo was a resident of St. Louis, and extensively engaged under the patronage of the Governor in the Indian trade up the Missouri. A Spaniard by birth and allegiance, he was under no obligation to assist us.—Spain was then at peace with Great Britain, and any interference on the part of her citizens was a breach of neutrality, and subjected an individual, especially of the high character and standing of Col. Vigo, to all the contumely, loss, and vengeance, which British power on this side of the Mississippi could inflict. But Col. Vigo did not falter. With an innate love of liberty; an attachment to republican principles, and an ardent sympathy for an oppressed people struggling for their rights, he overlooked all personal consequences; and as soon as he learnt of Clark's arrival at Kaskaskia, he crossed the line—went there and tendered him his means, and his influence, both of which were joyfully accepted. Knowing Col. Vigo's influence with the ancient inhabitants of the country, and desirous of obtaining some information from Vincennes, from which he had not heard for several months, Col. Clark, in a conference with Col.

Vigo, proposed, that he should come here and learn the actual state of affairs at the Post. Col. Vigo did not hesitate a moment in obeying this command. With a single servant he proceeded on his journey; and when on the Embarras, he was seized by a party of Indians, plundered of every thing he possessed, and brought a prisoner before Hamilton, then in possession of the place, which, with his troops, he had a short time before captured, holding Capt. Helm a prisoner of war. Being a Spanish subject, and consequently a non combatant, Governor Hamilton, although he strongly suspected the motives of his visit, dared not confine him; he accordingly admitted him to his parole, on the single condition, that he should daily report himself at the Fort. On his frequent visits there, his acute and discerning mind, aided by the most powerful memory I ever knew, enabled him early to ascertain the state of the garrison, its numerical force, means of defence, position, in fine all the matter necessary to make an accurate report, as soon as liberated. Hamilton in the mean time embarrassed by his detention, besieged by the French inhabitants of the town, by whom he was beloved, for his release; and finally threatened by them, that unless released, they would refuse all supplies to the garrison, yielded, on condition that Col. Vigo would sign an article "not to do any act during the war injurious to the British interests." This he absolutely and positively refused. The matter was finally adjusted, on an agreement entered into on the part of Col. Vigo, "not to do any thing injurious to the British interests *on his way* to St. Louis." The agreement was signed, and the next day he departed in a periouge down the Wabash and the Ohio, and up the Mississippi with two voyagers

accompanying him. Col. Vigo faithfully and religiously kept the very letter of the bond; on *his way* to St Louis he did nothing injurious in the slightest degree to British interests. But he had no sooner set his foot on shore there, and changed his dress, than in the same periouge he hastened to Kaskaskia, and gave the information, and arranged the plan, through the means of which, and by which alone, Clark was enabled to succeed, and did succeed, in surprizing Hamilton, and making captives of him and his garrison. Spirit of the illustrious dead, let others judge of this matter as they may, we who have lived to see the immense advantages of that conquest to our beloved country—so little known, and so little appreciated when made—will do you justice, and we will also teach our children, and our children's children, who are to occupy our places, when we are gone, to read and remember, among the earliest lessons of the history of that portion of the country which is to be also their abiding place—*our own lovely valley*—that its conquest and subsequent attachment to the Union, was as much owing to the councils and services of Vigo, as to the bravery and enterprize of Clark.

It was on the 5th of February, 1779, that a Spartan band of one hundred and seventy men, headed by as gallant a leader as ever led men to battle, crossed the Kaskaskia river, on their march to this place. The incidents of this campaign, their perils, their sufferings, their constancy, their courage, their success, would be incredible, were they not matters of history. In my opinion, as I have before remarked, no campaign either in ancient or modern warfare,—taking into consideration the force employed, the want of material, the country passed over, the destitution of even the necessaries

of life, the object to be accomplished, and the glorious results flowing from it, is to be compared to it. And what is even yet more astonishing, is the fact, that a battle which decided the fate of an empire, a campaign which added to our possessions a country more than equal in extent to the United kingdoms of Great Britain, Scotland, and Ireland, has scarcely even a page of our revolutionary annals devoted to its details, or making even honorable mention of the brave and gallant men who so nobly and successfully conducted it.

Time would fail me, and your patience would be perhaps exhausted, were I to follow step by step, and day by day, this small, but brave, devoted, patriotic, and chivalrous corps, through the wilderness from Kaskaskia to this place. It would be but a repetition of daily sufferings, of fatigue, of peril, of constancy, of perseverence, and of hope. Day after day, without provisions, wading in ice and water to their necks, through the over-flowed bottoms of the Wabash, carrying their rifles above their heads, their gallant chief taking the lead, foremost in difficulty and in danger, did these patriotic soldiers struggle on, faint, weary, cold and starving, until the prize was in view, and their object was accomplished. Look around you, my friends, and see what this portion of our beloved Union is now. Look ahead, and tell me, if you can, what it is to be a half century hence, supposing the improvements to progress as they have the last twenty years—and the advancement will be geometrical—and then go back with me sixty years since, *this very day*, and learn from an actor in the scene—one holding command, and from whose unpublished journal, I make the extract, what the country was, and the difficulties and dangers, the perils and sufferings those endured

who conquered it for you, and yours: and should you, or those who are to come after you, to the latest generation forget them, "may your right hands forget their cunning."

"February 22nd, 1779. Col. Clark* encouraged his men, which gave them great spirits. Marched on in the water; those that were weak and famished from so much fatigue, went in the canoes. We came three miles farther to some sugar camps, where we stayed all night. Heard the evening and morning guns at the Fort. No provisions yet. THE LORD HELP US.

"23rd. Set off to cross a plain called Horse Shoe Plain, about four miles long, all covered with water breast high. Here we expected some of our brave men must certainly perish, the water having froze in the night, and so long fasting. Having no other resource but wading this lake of frozen water, we plunged in with courage, *Col. Clark being first.* We took care to have boats by, to take those who were weak and benumned with the cold into them. Never were men so animated with the thought of avenging the ravages done to their back settlements, as this small army was. About one o'clock we came in sight of the town. We halted on a small hill of dry land, called "Warren's Island," where we took a prisoner hunting ducks, who informed us that no person suspected our coming in that season of the year. Col. Clark wrote a letter by him to the inhabitants, as follows:—

"*To the Inhabitants of Post Vincennes.*

"GENTLEMEN: Being now within two miles of your village with my army, determined to take your Fort this night, and not being willing to surprize you; I

*See note D.

take this method of requesting such of you, as are true citizens, and willing to enjoy the liberty I bring you, to remain still in your houses. And those, if any there are, that are friends to the King, will instantly repair to the Fort, and join the HAIR-BUYER GENERAL, and fight like men. And if any such as do not go to the Fort, shall be discovered afterwards, they may depend on severe punishment. On the contrary, those who are true friends to liberty, will be well treated.

"G. R. CLARK."

In order to give effect to this letter, by having it communicated to the French inhabitants, the army encamped until about sun down, when they commenced their march, wading in water breast high, to the rising ground on which the town is situated. One portion of the army marched directly up along where the levee is now raised, and came in by the steam mill. While another party under Lieut. Bradley, deployed from the main body, and came in by the present Princeton road. An entrenchment was thrown up in front of the Fort, and the battle commenced from the British side by the discharge, though without effect, of their cannon, and the return on our side of rifle shot—the only arms which the Americans possessed. On the morning of the 24th, about 9 olclock, Col. Clark sent in a flag of truce, with a letter to the British commander, during which time there was a cessation of hostilities, and the men were provided with a breakfast—the *first meal which they had had since the* 18*th*, *six days before.* The letter of Clark is so characteristic of the man, so laconic, and, under such trying circumstances, shows so much tact, self possession and firmness, that I will read it:

"SIR—In order to save yourself from the impending

storm that now threatens you, I order you *immediately* to surrender yourself, with all your garrison, stores, &c. &c. For if I am obliged to storm, you may depend on such treatment as is justly due to a *murderer*. Beware of destroying stores of any kind, or any papers or letters that are in your possession, or hurting one house in town. For by Heavens, if you do, there shall be no mercy shown you. "G. R. CLARK.

"To Gov. HAMILTON."

Since the days of Charles the XIIth, of Sweden, I doubt whether ever such a cartel, under such circumstances was sent to an antagonist. Prudence, as Clark well knew would, indeed, have been a 'rascally virtue' on such an occasion. Hemmed in on one side by ice and water, with a fortified Post bristling with artillery in front, with one hundred and seventy soldiers—part Americans, part Creoles, without food, worn out, and armed only with rifles; it was, as Clark knew, only by acting the victor instead of the vanquished, (as was the real state of the case, if Hamilton had only known the fact) that he could hope to succeed. He acted wisely and he acted bravely; any other course, and he would have been a prisoner, instead of a conqueror. The very reply of Hamilton to this singular epistle shows he was already quailing:

"Gov. Hamilton begs leave to acquaint Col. Clark, that he and his garrison are not disposed to *be awed* into any action unworthy British subjects."

The battle was renewed; the skill of our western riflemen, celebrated even in our days, wounded several of the men in the Fort through the port-holes, the only place where a shot could be made effective. Clark with the skill of a practised commander, must have seen and felt from the answer returned to his communication,

that another message would soon be delivered to him from the same quarter; and he was not long in receiving it. The flag of truce brought him as follows:

"Gov. Hamilton proposes to Col. Clark a truce for three days, during which time he promises, that there shall be no defensive work carried on in the garrison, *on condition*, that Col. Clark will observe on his part a like cessation of offensive work; that is, he wishes to confer with Col. Clark, as soon as can be, and promises that whatever may pass between them two, and another person, mutually agreed on to be present, shall remain secret till matters be finished; as he wishes, that whatever the result of the conference may be, it may tend to the honor and credit of each party. If Col. Clark makes a difficulty of coming into the Fort, Lieut. Gov. Hamilton will speak with him by the gate.

24th Feb'y, '79. HENRY HAMILTON."

If Gov. Hamilton had known the man he was dealing with, he would have found ere this, that he would have made light of any difficulties "in getting into the Fort;" and if not already convinced of the daring of the foe, he was contending with, one would have supposed Clark's answer would have set him right:

"Col. Clark's compliments to Gov. Hamilton, and begs leave to say, that he will not agree to any terms, other than *Mr. Hamilton surrendering himself and garrison prisoners at discretion.*

"If Mr. Hamilton wants to talk with Col. Clark, he will meet him at the church with Capt. Helm."

Laconic enough surely, and easily understood; and so it was. For in less than one hour afterwards, Clark dictated himself the following terms, which were accepted, a meeting having taken place at the church:

"1st. Lieut. Gov. Hamilton agrees to deliver up to Col. Clark "*Fort Sackville*," as it is at present, with all its stores, &c.

2nd. The garrison are to deliver themselves as prisoners of war, and march out with their arms and accoutrements.

3rd. The garrison to be delivered up to-morrow at ten o'clock.

4th. Three days time to be allowed the garrison to settle their accounts with the inhabitants and traders.

5th. The officers of the garrison to be allowed their necessary baggage, &c.

Signed at Post St. Vincents, this 24th of February, 1779: agreed for the following reasons:

1st. The remoteness from succor. 2nd. The state and quantity of provisions. 3rd. The *unanimity* of the officers and men in its expediency. 4th. The honorable terms allowed—and lastly, the confidence in a generous enemy. HENRY HAMILTON,

Lieut. Gov. and Superintendant."

It was on the twenty-fifth day of February, 1779, about ten o'clock in the forenoon, that the British troops marched out, and the Americans entered that Fort, acquired with the tact, skill, judgement, bravery, peril, and suffering, which I have so briefly attempted to describe. The British ensign was hauled down, and the American flag waved above its ramparts; that flag,

> "Within whose folds
> Are wrapped, the treasures of our hearts,
> Where e'er its waving sheet is fanned,
> By breezes of the sea, or land."

Time would not permit me, my friends, to dwell on

the important results growing out of this conquest to our common country. A volume would be required to delineate fully, all the advantages which have been derived from it to that Union, a portion of which we now constitute. Calculate, if you can, the revenue which the Government already has, and will continue to derive from its public domain within the territory thus acquired. Bounded by the Lakes and the Miami on one side, and the Ohio and the Mississippi on the other, embracing three large states, with a population now of upwards of two millions, with a representation of six Senators in one branch of our National Councils, and eleven Representatives in the other; and which, within the last half century, was represented by a single Delegate, but, in the next half century to come, will have fifty Representatives;—mild in its climate, rich in its soil, yielding in the abundance, variety, and excellence of its products, perhaps, a greater quantity than the same space of territory in the civilized world; inhabited, and to be inhabited by a race of industrious, hard working, intelligent, high-minded, and patriotic people, attached to the institutions of their country; lovers of order, liberty and law; republicans in precepts and in practice; trained from their earliest infancy to revere and to venerate, to love and to idolize the Constitution adopted by their fathers, for the government of themselves and their posterity;—calculate if you can, the increase within this territory, of just such a population as I have described, within sixty years to come—its wealth, its influence, its power, its improvements, morally and socially—and when your minds are wearied in the immensity of the speculation, ask yourselves to whom all these blessings are to be attributed;

and whether national gratitude, in the fulness of national wealth and prosperity, can find treasures enough to repay those gallant men, and those who aided them in their glorious struggle, which I have thus attempted feebly to describe. But I am warned by the time which I have already occupied, that this address should close—not that the subject is exhausted, or can be. No other, that I can conceive of, presents a finer field for the historian; and the few incidents which have been gathered here and there, "few and far between," in relation to our early history, but stimulates to further enquiry. A brief notice of the principal events which have occurred since the capture by Gen. Clark, and I shall close this long, and, I fear from the nature of the subject, to you on this occasion, uninteresting address.

The first object to be obtained, after the fall of the Post, and the consequent change resulting from it, was the establishment of a civil government. Col. Clark returned to Kaskaskia, leaving Capt. Helm in command, both as civil and military commandant. The result of the campaign was made known as early as possible to the government of Virginia, and Col. Todd was sent out as the governor and commandant, by the Executive Council there. How long he remained, I do not know; probably long enough to form a provisional government; for we find that he delegated his power to M. Legras, as Lieut. Governor, and proceeded to Kaskaskia. I have had no opportunity of ascertaining from the records in Virginia, the continuation or names of the Governors after Col. Todd, until the transfer of the territory to the United States, and the territorial government then formed under the act of Congress.

The act of the Virginia Legislature, transferring the North Western Territory to the United States, passed on the 20th of December, 1783, and the Delegates on the part of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson, Samuel Hardy, Arthur Lee, and James Madison, by their deed of cession, conveyed, on the first of March, 1784, "all the right, title, and interest of the State of Virginia in the country acquired north-west of the river Ohio, to the United States." And in 1787, the celebrated ordinance for its government was passed by Congress; an ordinance, which in its effects, at least to us, is second only to the Constitution of the United States. An ordinance, which for its wise and wholesome provisions; for its beneficial and lasting results; for its effects not only upon those who were to be the immediate subjects of its action, but for the blessings and prosperity which it will carry down to the latest posterity, as long as we remain a part of the confederacy, is unequalled by any legislative act ever framed here or elsewhere. The author of this act, Nathan Dane, of Massachusetts, for it alone, if he had done nothing more, deserves a place in our affections, and in those of our children to the latest generation. The act provides, "that there shall be neither slavery or involuntary servitude within the territory thus ceded;" creates for its civil government, a Governor, Secretary, and three Judges: the Judges with the Governor "to make laws for the territory, subject to the approval of Congress."

The laws thus made were selected from the codes of other States, and applied to our local condition. They were few, but effective, and I doubt much whether all subsequent legislation has been enabled to frame a code supperior to that of the *old territorial code*.

Gen. Harmar, then commanding in the west, was appointed civil Governor and superintendant of Indian affairs. He was here in 1787, and I believe, had charge of our civil affairs by himself or deputy, until 1790, when Gen. St. Clair was appointed and took command. He came here in 1791, and went to Kaskaskia, from whence he made a long report to the Secretary of State in relation to the situation of affairs here. Some of his suggestions, considering our present advanced state of improvement, are singular enough. "He recommends the establishment of a printing press in the Western Territory;" and gives as a reason, "that as the laws are not binding upon the people until approved by Congress, there is no way of giving publicity to them, but by having them read in the courts." "But few people," says he, "understand them, and even the magistrates who carry them into execution are perfect strangers to them." There seems, however, to have been no great difficulty after all. The French complained that as the County Court was composed of five justices, three of whom were Americans, and but two Frenchmen, whereas, the French population was treble that of the Americans, that there was occasionally a little leaning by their Honors, on the American side of the bench, towards their countrymen; and, as none of the American governors assigned to keep the peace, understood French, there was some difficulty in making their cause fully understood. But there were no mobs; no tarring and feathering of the Judges; no pulling down of the court house. If the law was not well understood by these modern Mansfields, they decided the case, "ex equo et bono," according to equity and good conscience; and, in nine cases out of ten, no doubt, did more

complete justice to all parties, than with a row of "gentlemen learned in the law" before them, to confuse them with their sophistry, or perplex them with a quibble.

In 1800, Congress passed the act dividing the Indiana territory, from what was called the Territory North West of the river Ohio, and in 1801, Gen. William Henry Harrison was appointed Governor. There were at this period, but three settlements in the whole of this immense territory. The one at the Falls, called "Clark's Grant"—the one here, and the one on the Mississippi between Cahokia and Kaskaskia; the whole population of which did not exceed five thousand souls. It does not fall within the limits which I had assigned to this discourse, to trace our progress farther. The history of the town, the seat of government of the Territory until 1816, is the history of Indiana during that period; but the facts connected with it are familiar to you all. Suffice it to say, that our progress since has been onward, and will continue to be, should we be true to ourselves and to the interests committed to our hands.

Members of the "Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society" and citizens of Vincennes, I have finished the task assigned me on this occasion—not by any means in the manner it should be, or, indeed in the manner I propose to finish it hereafter, if I have leisure.

I have thrown together a few of the leading incidents of our history, fitted only to be woven into an address on the present occasion. The historian of our ancient borough, must gather for his work more materials than I have been furnished with, to do full justice to his subject. He should search the archives of other countries, of France, of England, the Colonial records of Canada, and

the revolutionary ones of Virginia; in fine, devote to it more time, labor, and research, than I have been enabled to do, in order to make it the work it should be. The history of this Post has been the history of the Western country. It has been the stake for which nations have played; the prize for which princes have contended—France, England, Virginia, and the United States have, in turn, held it in subjection—have governed it with their laws, and regulated it with their codes, civil and military. Our position has been an important one, while our history, but little known, has been more full of stirring incident, of revolution, of bloodshed, and of battle, than the history of any town on the continent. One hundred and thirty years since, we have seen it occupied as a Post in the wilderness, forming one link in the chain by which France attempted to hold her possessions in this country. Fifty years after, we have seen it yielding to British dominion and subject to British power. The war of the revolution, and the severing of those ties which bound us to our parent state, wrested *it* also from its conquerors. The bravery of Clark, and that of his compatriots in arms, formed a new era in its eventful career. It became the emporium of an empire—the seat of government of a territory now composing three large states. The history of our town, since the division of the territory is familiar to you all. But even since then it has not been without its interest. The same stern devotion to country, the same love of liberty, the same valor and patriotism, has been displayed in modern times by its citizens, which gave to it an eclat in times gone by. The battle field of Tippecanoe was fertilized by the blood of our brethren. And more daring, brave, chivalrous and

patriotic men never gathered under their country's banner, than rallied in its defence on that eventful field, from the town in which we are now assembled.

And am I right in saying, that the same spirit still exists here? That should our country again make its call "to arms," that here, in the very cradle of liberty, on this side of the Alleghanies, the spirit which animated Clark and his followers, has been handed down to those whom I address; and that if occasion offered, you would emulate them in the privations they underwent, the sufferings they endured, and the glory they acquired. Am I right in saying this? Fellow-citizens, *I know that I am right.* The response to this question in the affirmative, is answered by every breath that heaves from the bosoms of those who hear me. It is answered by the silent homage which you yourselves, on this occasion, have paid to bravery and patriotism, such as I have delineated.

Young men of this assembly, this feeling must be kept alive—you must neither forget your origin or your destiny. Many of us will soon pass off the stage of action:—

> "The eternal surge
> Of time and tide rolls on, and bears afar
> Our bubbles; as the old burst, new emerge,
> Lash'd from the foam of ages; while the graves
> Of empires heave but like some passing waves."

Generation after generation will succeed us. But let it be ever impressed on your minds, and the minds of those who come after you to the latest posterity, that the same wisdom and valor which acquired the "Post," must always *sustain*, *protect* and *defend* it.

APPENDIX.

Note A.

The Map of "Lac Tracy," otherwise called Lake Superior, and part of Lakes Huron and Michigan including Mackinaw and the "Sault St. Marie," although not immediately connected with the subject matter of my address, I have been induced to annex to it, from its antiquity and rarity. I know of no other, at least on this side of the Alleghany mountains. It is possible it may be in some of the public libraries East; but if so, it is unknown to me. The map is taken from an old volume of the "Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses," published at Paris, in 1748, for the "Society of Jesuits," and printed from the original plat of "Fathers Marquette and Allouez," made in 1668. When we reflect that this long voyage and critical survey was made by these good fathers, in a bark canoe, with few instruments, often suffering the privations incident to such an undertaking at this early period, the mind is lost in wonder at their perseverance, their courage, and their success. It was while making this survey that Marquette learnt from the Indians the existence of the "Meschasippi," and avowed his determination (subsequently carried into execution) of exploring it.

I am indebted for the copy to my friend Bishop Bruté, Catholic Bishop of Vincennes, whose profound learning, classical attainments, and antiquarian zeal, are only equalled by the purity of his heart and the amenity of his manners.

Note B.

Since the delivery of the foregoing address, I have read article 2d in the January number of the North American Review, being a review of the "Life of Father Marquette" by Jared Sparks—"Library of American Biography, Vol. 10th." The original work of Mr. Sparks, the "Life of Father Marquette," contained in the 10th volume of his American Biography, I never have seen.

The reviewer, however, in the article referred to, has, I conceive, made a sad mistake in relation to the "labour of love" of Father Mermet to the "Mascoutens," a tribe of Indians now extinct, or, what is more probable, amalgamated with other tribes, and hence have lost their original appellation. The "Mascoutens" were a branch of the "Miamis"—vide Mr. Gallatin's letter published in the "Transactions of the American Historical and Antiquarian Society;" they never lived on the Ohio, but occupied the country along Lake Michi-

gan, and down the River Wabash. In page 99 of the article referred to, the reviewer says: "An attempt was also made to build up a settlement at the point where the Ohio and the Mississippi join, at all times, a favorite spot among the planners of towns, and at this moment, if we mistake not, in the process of being made a town. The first who tried this spot was Sieur Juchereau, a Canadian gentleman, assisted by *Father Mermet*, who was to Christianize the *Mascoutens*, of whom a large flock was soon gathered." The reviewer then goes on to describe the "modus operandi," by which Father Mermet *syllogistically* undertook to confound the high priests of this deluded band, and gives an account of his conference with their principal medicine men, very similar to that given in the preceding address. Now the only matter in relation to which we differ is the "*venue*." I assert that the conference and "theological discussion" took place on the banks of the Wabash, and not "at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi;" and that it happened at the "Post," or the "O Post," (contraction for the French word "au,") or, par excellence, "The Post Vincennes." And I believe I prove it from two circumstances; the one referred to, to wit—the "Mascoutens" were a branch of the Miamis, and inhabited the country watered by the Wabash; they never occupied any portion of the country bordering on the Ohio. If the object of the good Father was, (as Father Marest states it was —and we both derive our account of the matter from him,) the conversion of the "Mascoutens," he would go where they dwelt, which was on the Wabash, and not on the Ohio; and if Father Mermet was with the Sieur Juchereau at the mouth of the Ohio, it is hardly credible, that the Mascoutens would "gather in a large flock from a distance of upwards of two hundred miles, from the banks of the Wabash, to the confluence of the Ohio and the Mississippi, for the mere sake of a public discussion on "mooted points of theology," between their "Medicine Men" and Father Mermet. They might follow the chase or their enemies that distance, but I doubt much, whether they would travel that far, to learn whether the "Manitou" of the Frenchman or the "Manitou of the Mascouten" was the one to be worshipped.

In the second place. The French had a settlement on the Ohio in the early part of the 18th century—by a settlement I mean a fixed establishment, a garrison, a town. Sieur Juchereau, for aught I know, may have had a trading house there, but there was no regular French establishment; and, according to Father Marest, it was to such an establishment already garrisoned—"a Fort," that Father Mermet went with the primary object of accomplishing the conversion of the "Mascoutens" to the true faith. I quote from the original letter of Father Marest to Father Germon, volume 6th, page 333 of the "Lettres Edifiantes et Curieuses," dated Kaskaskia, November 9th, 1712:

"Les Francois etoient etabli un FORT sur le fleuve '*Ouabache*,' ils demanderent un Missionaire; et le Pere Mermet leur fut envoyé. Ce Pere crut devoir aussi travailler a la conversion des *Mascoutens* qui

avoient fait un village sur les bords du meme fleuve—c'est une nation des Indians qui entend la langue Illinoise."

Now I have mentioned the fact, and given the reasons why the Ohio was called "Ouabache" by the same Father, and by others; a reason, as it appears to me, perfectly satisfactory. And as the French settled Vincennes, and established a *Fort* there early in the 18th century; and as the "Mascoutens" were located on that stream, and not on the Ohio, and being a branch of the Miamis, and a portion of the Algonquin race, of course supposed to understand the "Illinoise," I think it conclusive that the "local" of Father Mermet's labors was the "Post" or "Fort" at Vincennes, and not the scite at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi, where Sieur Juchereau may, or may not, have made a settlement. At any rate, until some further evidence is produced, I shall, as I have done in the text, claim the honor of Father Mermet's first visit for "*Post Vincennes*."

Note C.

It was a very difficult matter to induce the French inhabitants at Kaskaskia, after Clark's arrival there and capture of the place, to take the "Continental paper," which Clark and his soldiers had brought along with them; and it was not until after Col. Vigo went there, and gave his guaranty for its redemption, that they would generally receive it. Peltries and Piastres were the only currency known to these simple and unsophisticated Frenchmen. They could neither read nor write, and Col. Vigo had great difficulty in explaining the operations of this new financial arrangement to them. "Their commandants never made money," was the only reply to the Colonel's explanations of the policy of the "Old Dominion" in these issues. But notwithstanding the Colonel's guaranty, the paper was not in good credit, and ultimately became very much depreciated. The Colonel had a trading establishment at Kaskaskia after Clark's arrival. Coffee was one dollar per pound. The poor Frenchman coming to purchase, was asked "what kind of payment he intended to make for it?" "*Douleur*," said he. And when it is recollected that it took about twenty continental dollars to purchase a silver dollar's worth of coffee, and that the French word "douleur" signifies "grief," or "pain," perhaps no word either in the French or English languages expressed the idea more correctly, than "douleur" for "continental dollars." At any rate it was truly "*douleur*" to the Colonel; for he never received a *single dollar* in exchange for the large amount he had taken in order to sustain Clark's credit. The above anecdote I had from the Colonel's own lips.

Note D.

I am indebted, and much indebted, to my friend Prof. Bliss of Louisville, Kentucky, for the letters of Gen. Clark and the extract from

Major Bowman's journal of the capture of Vincennes, now for the first time published. I cannot but again repeat, what I have in the address so pointedly remarked, how little is known of the campaign of 1778, 1779, and the capture of Kaskaskia and Vincennes by Clark and his gallant followers. With the exception of a short notice of this in "Marshall's Life of Washington," and the more extended one of Butler's in his "History of Kentucky," a modern work, the incidents of that campaign are hardly noticed. Yet it was, as it regards its ultimate effects to the Union, decidedly the most brilliant, and useful of any undertaking during the revolutionary war. Clark by that campaign added a territory embracing now *three* of the finest States in the Union, to the Confederacy, to wit, *Indiana*, *Illinois*, and *Michigan;* a territory, which, but for this very conquest, must now have been subject to British dominion, unless like Louisiana it had since, been acquired by purchase. For the only pretence of title which our commissioners, in the negotiations which resulted in the Treaty of peace in 1783, set up to this immense territory, was "the capture of it by Clark and the possession of it by the Americans at the date of the conference." The argument of "uti possidetis" prevailed; and the mind would be lost in the calculation of dollars and cents, to say nothing of the other matters "which constitute a State,"—men "who know their rights" inhabiting it, and which the government has gained from the contest,—as to what will be the wealth and population of this same North Western Territory a half century hence?

Professor Bliss is now preparing for publication a "Life of Gen. Clark." With the talent and research which he possesses, and with the materials which he has already collected, I have no hesitation in saying, that it will be one of the most interesting works which has ever issued from the American press.

Most of the facts connected with the capture of Kaskaskia are derived from "Butler's History of Kentucky," a new edition of which has lately been published. It is a very useful and valuable work, and contains more incidents connected with western history, particularly the campaign of Clark in Illinois in 1778 '9, than any work heretofore published.