

THE VINITA LEADER

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F. S. E. Amos, Editor

BILL ARP ON THE INDIAN

He relates some History of the Creeks and Cherokees.

From the Atlanta Constitution.

Fragments of Indian history have accumulated on me of late, and as they concern the Creeks and Cherokees and are of a romantic character, I am constrained to record them. These two tribes are our Indians and make up quite a chapter in the history of Georgia, Alabama and East Tennessee. North Georgia was especially the home of the Cherokees, as their chiefs lived near Rome as far back as we have their history, and the Creeks, or Muskogees, as they are more properly called, lived south of the Tallapoosa river. These tribes are not to be classed with savages, for they were of a higher grade, and but for the greed of the white man would no doubt have continued to advance in civilization and refinement under the lead of such chiefs as Ross, Ridge, Boudinot and McIntosh.

Everybody is familiar with the story of Pocahontas.

Longfellow wrote a beautiful story about Hiawatha, and

William E. Richards penned several pretty legends about the Indian girls of Tallulah falls, and so I will pen the story of John Ridge and Boudinot as given to me. This story was sent to me by Mrs. Ellen N. Gibbs, of Crystal Lake, Ill. Her mother, Mrs. Taylor, who died in 1878, wrote this romantic sketch in 1877, when she was 76 years of age, and left it for her children who have often heard her repeat it. By some strange coincidence I have recently received a letter from a lady, Mrs. Virginia Williams, of Bloomfield, Fla., giving the ancestry of John Ross, whose grandfather was a Scotch refugee named McDonald. The writer, Mrs Williams, traces her lineage back to the same McDonald tree. Her mother was a daughter of William Day, who married Agnes McDonald. Mrs Williams would like to learn more about Ross and his parents, and hopes this publication may attract the attention of some one who can inform her.

And now comes a marked copy of a New York paper called "Sabbath Reading," in which John Ross, a son of the old chief, appeals for preachers and teachers to come out to the Cherokee nation and help to educate and train the children in the Christian faith, and especially to teach them in their Sunday schools. This appeal is dated December, 1897, and Mr. Ross' address is No. 101 Gold street, New York.

And here is the VINITA LEADER, an able paper published in the nation, and contains General Andrew Jackson's letter to the Cherokees chiefs, written in 1835, and which urges and entreats them to accept the terms of the treaty and move at once to the

territory assigned to them.

And almost by the same mail comes an interesting and beautifully written sketch of the present condition of the Muskogees, or Creeks. It was written by W W Ramsay, of Maryville, Mo., a gifted and scholarly gentleman who is deeply interested in Indian affairs. Other fragments have come to me and if I do not abridge and compile and have them published in your paper, much valuable history of these Indians will be forever lost.

But to the story --

"In 1817 a foreign mission school was established in Cornwall, Conn. It was a charity school for Indians mainly, though there were some white pupils there, and some defrayed their own expenses. Students from several Indian tribes were there to acquire the English language, and went out as missionaries to the tribes. Besides the Chippewas and Choctaws and Cherokees, there were two from the Sandwich Islands.

"Mr. Daggett was the first principal of the school and Mr. Andrews the last. Every day there was a public exhibition and the Indian boys spoke on the stage, first in their own language and then in ours. They were genteel and graceful in their oratory. They sang songs in their native tongue, all waving their hands in harmony with the music. They were never allowed to go beyond the limits or into people's houses without invitation. When they visited us we laid aside our work and entertained them.

"Among these students was a Cherokee youth named John Ridge, the son of a chief -- a very noble young man of fine form and feature and a perfect gentleman in his manners and deportment. For two years he was afflicted with a hip disease. While he boarded at Mr. Northrup's and Mrs. Northrup had the care of him, sometimes her daughter, Sarah, a sweet and lovely girl, waited on him. One day Dr. Gould, who was my cousin, said to Mr. Northrup: 'John is about well. He has no physical disease about him and needs no medicine, but he is in trouble and you had better find out what is the matter.'

"That afternoon while Sarah was away her mother took her knitting and went to sit and talk with John. While there she took notice of his melancholy and begged him to tell her what had troubled him so much of late. At first he denied having any sorrow, but upon being pressed told her that he loved Sarah and knew he could never marry her because he was an Indian. 'Have you ever mentioned it to Sarah?' she asked. 'No,' said he, 'I dare not, but how could I help loving her?'

"When Sarah came home her mother said to her: 'Sarah, do you love John Ridge?' 'Yes, I do, mother.' she said. Then came the family trouble. Mr. Northrup at once took Sarah to her grandparents at New Haven and begged them to wean her from her Indian lover -- to give parties and introduce her to nice young men, which they did, but it was all in vain. She remained there three months and seemed to be pining away in silent grief. Her parents became

alarmed and brought her home. What was to be done, for it would be an awful thing for Sarah to marry him. As a last resort Mr. Northrup told Ridge to go home and stay two years, and if he got entirely well he might marry Sarah. He did so and when the time was out came back accompanied by his father, Major Ridge, the chief of the Cherokees. They traveled in princely style and were handsomely dressed. I remember that Major Ridge's coat was trimmed with gold lace.

"John and Sarah were married and went to the Cherokee nation to live, but not as missionaries, for John had to visit Washington quite often to transact business for the tribe. Sarah had servants to wait upon her and lived like a princess in a large two story dwelling.

"Not long after this the little town of Cornwall had another tumult and great excitement came into its social life. There was fever heat when it was announced that Elias Boudinot, who was John Ridge's cousin, was about to marry Harriet Gould, the fairest and best educated girl in all that region. She was the nearest perfection of any girl I ever knew. She was the idol of her family. Her brothers and sisters had all married into the finest families in the country and all lived well. Kindred came from neighboring towns to intercede with Harriet. Ministers called and pleaded, but all in vain. She declared that she would marry him and go with him to his people and be a missionary.

"Harriet's greatest distress was the meeting with her

brother, Stephen, who was nearest her age and devoted to her. She feared it would break his heart. When he came, she burst into tears and refused to meet him. He went away and did not attend the wedding, but after it was over he came, and the next morning waited upon them at breakfast and seemed in a measure reconciled. But he could not see them married. I made Harriet's wedding outfit and saw them married. Boudinot was a very handsome man. He had a charming voice and was a splendid singer. He was a very brave and fearless man, for the roughs of the town had sworn that he should never come into it alive, and, if he did, he should never go out alive, but they were awed by his presence.

"As a result, however, of these two marriages, the Cornwall Mission was discontinued.

"Boudinot and his wife went to the Cherokee Nation, where two children were born to them. Colonel Gould visited them there and was pleased with their surroundings, for they lived nearby to Sarah Ridge and their children were all happy together and both families had all the comforts of life and many of its luxuries. The two Cornwall girls had chosen most excellent husbands and had not regretted their choice.

"Boudinot taught school awhile at New Echota and published an Indian newspaper (New Echota is near Calhoun in Gordon county). After the removal to the territory in 1838, Ridge and Boudinot lived about a mile apart. Sarah had three children and Harriet had six, but died in giving birth to the last. Boudinot then went to Ver-

mont and married Harriet's cousin and she went to the territory with him. After his assassination, she returned to Cornwall and the children went with her and were distributed among their mother's kindred and were highly educated and mingled in social equality with the white people."

The remainder of the narrative as written by Mrs. Taylor and copied for me by Mrs. Gibbs relates to the story of the assassination of Major Ridge and John Ridge and Elias Boudinot, of which I have told your readers in a former letter and will not repeat it now. Boudinot's real Indian name was Kelle-kee-nah but while at school at Cornwall attracted the attention of Elias Boudinot, a Philadelphia philanthropist, who adopted him and gave him his name and left him a large legacy in his will. His son, Elias C. Boudinot, became distinguished in the nation. He was born in Vann's Valley, near Rome, Ga., in 1835, and died three years ago at Fort Smith, in Arkansas.

BILL ARP.