

Western Correspondence.

Wewaka, Seminole Nation, Indian Ter. February 2nd, 1874.

Mr. Editor:—Possibly a letter from this country, a "terra incognita" to most of your readers, may present some points of interest. It may or may not be known to you that the Seminoles are one of the five so called civilized tribes. This term, however, is rather a flattering one and must be taken merely as expressing their condition as compared with that of other tribes. These five tribes, the Cherokees, Creeks, Seminoles, Choctaws and Chickasaws occupy the eastern part of the Indian Territory. They have been here now for many years, and have long since abandoned their aboriginal customs in a great degree, and have been engaged in the pursuits of agriculture and—I was going to say the peaceful arts, but, in fact, agriculture with its concomitant craft. Stock-raising, alone engages their care. The Seminoles, it may be remembered, were brought here from Florida about 1845, after their conquest, succeeding a long, harassing and bloody war, by Gen's. Jackson, Taylor and Jessup. The Seminole nation is a scion of the great Creek or Muskokee nation, from whom they descended—the word Seminole meaning rebel, or rather, runaways. The two tribes are now on reservations adjoining each other, and the old inimical feeling originating in their separation, is now enhanced by the occupancy of certain land by the Seminoles to which the Creeks lay claim. This bitter feeling is never displayed in any overt act, but merely shows itself in a contemptuous way of speaking of the other. The two nations speak the same language and their customs, mode of life, &c., are to all intents similar, so that a description of the one gives a fair representation of the other, the only difference being in their judicial and legislative proceedings. The Seminole tribe is small compared with the Creeks, their numbers being, relatively, 2500 and 13,500. If there is any difference in the degree of civilization and culture attained by the two nations, the superiority is on the side of the Seminoles. This fact, (for my observation leads me to think it is a fact,) is owing to the smaller nation being, by its size, so much more easily acted upon by the good influences brought to bear upon it by the officials sent among them. All the eastern tribes have greatly improved by it, and now exhibit the benefit of the introduction of that policy by which the various religious bodies have the appointment of the Indian agents. A different and a better class of men have been sent, who, both by example and precept, have given the Indians a better opinion of white men and persuaded them to attempt to gain a character themselves for probity and industry.

The Seminoles are under the auspices of the Presbyterian church, and the agent sent by them is in all respects eminently adapted to his position. Dr. Breiner, was formerly a citizen of Perry county, and a practitioner of Medicine near your town. Old friends there may be glad to learn of the good he has effected here. He is unqualifiedly a christian gentleman, and has shown a disposition to faithfully perform the duties entrusted him that wins the respect of all. His energetic devotion to the interests of the Indians and conscientious management of their affairs show that he has their welfare at heart.

The advent of good and honest men among the Indians has been a blessing to them, carrying more benefits in its train beside the assurance of a just administration. Too long has the name of Indian agents been a synonym for one who comes only to despoil them of all their effects if he can. With such men among them as Dr. B., they see that the Government is disposed to treat them as in truth their "wards" for whom it has a parent's care, and not as the barbarians whose very existence, after being deprived of their country, they wish to terminate. In consequence they are encouraged to more earnestly endeavor to effect their social improvement, and earn by their progress the respect of the whole country, and the gratitude that is inherent even in an aborigine, makes them desire to maintain peaceful relations with the Government.

But the improvement spoken of must not lead you to suppose that the Indians are yet in a very advanced state of civilization. The progress of a barbarous race is very slow. In any nation between the era when the successes in war create for them a history, and that in which they are distinguished in the arts, there is a long period and a slow march. It is hardly fair to say that agriculture is in a primitive state here, for that suggests a want of proper implements. But here, all farming implements are easily obtained; it is only the inclination to use them that is wanting. Farming is conducted on a very different plan from that seen in the old Keystone state. Every citizen here is entitled to as much land as he chooses to enclose and cultivate. But the reservation is so large, and the people so lacking in energy and possibly in cupidly, that immense tracts of land are neither fenced nor plowed. To one coming from the eastern states, where every acre, possibly every yard of ground is under cultivation, it is an astonishing sight to see miles of magnificent land, with every advantage of soil, lying uncultivated. The climate is delightful—the heat of summer

being more endurable than in Pennsylvania, on account of the cool nights, and the winter's cold, never being excessive and always much shorter than in your latitude. The soil is very fertile, being a rich black loam, with sand intermixed sufficient to keep it loose and prevent baking, but not enough to cause it to wash. The country has a diversity of surface—broad prairies, rolling lands and mountains. Numerous streams flow through, and frequent rains supply moisture for vegetation. Every crop that has been planted here has given an abundant yield, corn, wheat, oats, rice, cotton, tobacco, do equally well, and considering the imperfect farming, produce generous harvests. Few sections of the United States are so favored by Nature.

The Indians we see here, in a state of transition from barbarism to civilization, are widely different both from the ideal Indians of Cooper and the romances of the New York Ledger, and from the blood thirsty, untamed and untaught Modocs or Comanche. He attempts to imitate the manners and mode of life of the white man, but his savage traits and customs are not yet wholly abandoned, nor will they be in this generation and one or, it may be, two succeeding. His dress is a striking combination of the savage taste for gaudy ornament and the more sober attire of the white man. A photograph of a Seminole farmer would present to you such a picture as this. From the rim of a soft hat, pulled down over his brows and decorated with one or more feathers, varying from an ostrich plume, such as ladies wear, of every bright color, to a "gray goose quill," hangs far over the shoulders a thick mass of jet black hair, coarse and straight clinging in rough strands of unequal length, that gives him a fierce and uncouth appearance. He wears a coat cut like a woman's sack with a very wide collar and loose sleeves, made of calico of the brightest hues and most flaring pattern that the stock of the merchant permits. The edges of the sleeves and collar are ornamented with fringe. A pair of buckskin pantaloons with fringe down the outside seams of the legs and a pair of shoes armed with spurs complete the costume. Some of them make a nearer approach to the costume of those in the states, as far as regards pantaloons, but the calico coat is almost in universal use. Many of the men and all the women wear ear-rings, and whatever articles of jewelry or tinsel they can afford. Very few of them talk English, though most of them can understand it. There seems to be an inability in them to pronounce certain English words. They are very sensitive to ridicule, and as they always laugh at the blunders of a white man attempting their language, they expect to be laughed at in turn; so they refrain from trying to talk it even when they can. I know of one who thought he had mastered English, and used his accomplishment with considerable pride, until on asking a store-keeper for apples he was handed marbles, whereupon, in disgust at his failure to make himself understood, he abandoned the language forever.

The houses are with few exceptions built of logs, and like all the log houses in the South, consist of two apartments connected by an open passage under the same roof, with broad verandas surrounding or only in front of the house. The stables are very small, a barn being a building unknown, and they are generally poorly constructed and open, hardly deserving the name of a shelter. The stock wanders at will over the prairies and in inclement weather seek the protection of the bush and bottom lands; and as frequent fires burn off the grass from the "ranges" they find but a poor sustenance and consequently in the Spring appear half starved. It seems never to occur to the owners that it is their duty to provide for the comfort of their stock.

The community of interest (that is, all the lands being held in common) and the natural aversion of the Indian to continuous labor, prevent anything like rivalry in farming, or an ambition to accumulate wealth. They only raise enough to live upon, and even those who have large herds of stock derive but a small income from them. Each house is surrounded by a lot of starved dogs; and the pigs, "razor backed" and wild as deer, wander through the forest and are shot when needed for food. Bread is made of corn and as there are few mills in the country, meal for each day's baking is made by pounding the corn in a big wooden mortar. There seems now, however, to be a disposition among many to show more enterprise in farming and adopt customs more conducive to comfort than those that have been so long in use; but it will be long before justice will be done to the fertility of the land. The time however must come when the Indians will not be permitted to retain their reservations to the exclusion of whites and permit so much valuable land to be unused. The country will be sectionized and the immigration of settlers from the states will create a new method of agriculture and another condition of social life, though this may not be for years to come. Well organized schools, and missionaries and native preachers labor to insure the mental and moral instructions of the people. There are many good, sincere christians among them. Indeed it is probable that in proportion to the population there are more church members than in most Eastern localities. There still exist among them some remains of their savage customs and superstitions and the practice of certain barbaric rites, as their dances at the end of harvest, a sort of heathen thanksgiving, and the pow-wows in the treatment of the sick which, I will describe in my next letter to you. These ceremonies are only retained by the least enlightened among them, and particularly among the Seminoles, are fast being abandoned. I have in this letter given you merely a general introduction to a description of the people. In another letter I shall tell you in greater detail, more about their home, life and the most marked traits of their character. A. W. C.

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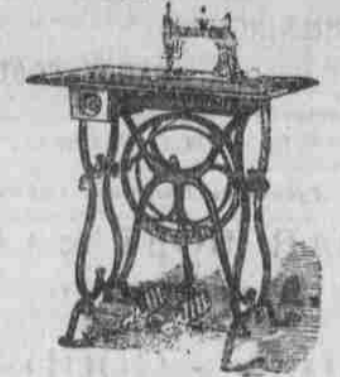
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SUNDAYS: For New York, at 5.30 a. m. For Allentown and Way Stations at 5.30 a. m. For Reading, Philadelphia and Way Stations at 2.00 p. m.

TRAINS FOR HARRISBURG, LEAVE AS FOLLOWS: Leave New York, at 9.00 a. m. 12.40 and 5.30 p. m. Leave Philadelphia, at 9.15 a. m. 3.30 and 7.15 p. m. Leave Reading, at 4.15, 7.10, 11.20 a. m. 1.50, 6.00 and 10.15 p. m. Leave Pottsville, at 6.00, 9.10 a. m. and 4.35 p. m. and via Schuylkill and Susquehanna Branch at 8.05 a. m. Leave Allentown, at 2.10 a. m. 12.25, 4.35 and 8.55 p. m. The 2.10 a. m. train from Allentown and the 4.15 a. m. train from Reading do not run on Mondays.

SUNDAYS: Leave New York, at 5.30 p. m. Leave Philadelphia, at 7.15 p. m. Leave Reading, at 4.15, 7.40 a. m. and 10.15 p. m. Leave Allentown, 2.10 a. m. and 8.55 p. m. J. E. WOOTEN, General Superintendent. Reading, January 20, 1874.

Pennsylvania R. R. Time Table.

NEWPORT STATION. On and after November 1, 1873, Passenger trains will run as follows:

WESTWARD: Pacific Express, 5.11 A. M. (flag) daily. Way Pass, 9.09 A. M., daily. Mail, 2.41 P. M., daily except Sunday. Mixed, 6.54 P. M., daily except Sunday.

EASTWARD: Mail, 7.05 P. M., daily except Sunday. Harrisburg Accom 12.22 P. M., daily. Sunday J. J. BAUGLAY, Agent.

DUNCANNON STATION.

On and after Sunday, Nov. 2nd, 1873, trains leave Duncannon, as follows:

WESTWARD: Pacific Express, 4.45 a. m. (flag) daily. Way Passenger, 8.44 a. m., daily. Mail, 2.10 p. m., daily except Sunday. Mixed, 6.16 p. m., daily except Sunday.

EASTWARD: Harrisburg Accom 12.50 p. m., daily except Sunday. Mail 7.37 p. m., daily. WM. C. KING, Agent.

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