

ONGON: A TALE OF EARLY CHICAGO

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Ongon: a tale of early Chicago by Dubois H. Loux

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DUBOIS H. LOUX

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EARLY CHICAGO**



"RESOLUTE AS A QUEEN . . . WHILE THE
STILL SMOKING PISTOL—"

ONGON

A Tale of Early Chicago

By

DUBOIS H. LOUX



NEW YORK
1902

TO MY
GREAT HEARTED WIFE

WHOSE CHEERFULNESS AND LOVING MINISTRATIONS
HAVE BEEN TO ALL HER FRIENDS
AN INSPIRATION

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED
BY THE AUTHOR

FOREWORD

BEFORE writing this tale, the author visited the places in Virginia connected with the story. In the ancient churchyard of Opequon, deep in the quiet of the Shenandoah Valley, are yet standing the simple monuments to the memory of the sturdy Scotch-Irish pioneers of Kentucky and Illinois. Here, upon the oldest tombstone in northern Virginia, Washington's hands must have been laid when, as a young Colonel he rode out from Winchester to worship at the only church near Fort Loudon. A few rods down the gentle slope, a century later Sheridan galloped in his famous ride from Winchester. To-day a new stone edifice has taken the place of the old Presbyterian meeting-house of Opequon. At its door a plain granite pillar has been erected by one of the leading families of Chicago in honor of its dead. In this valley Jean's childhood was passed.

The year 1833, in which the scenes of this book are laid, brought to Chicago and northern Illinois men and women of strong minds and affectionate hearts, whose forefathers prepared the way for the third and fourth generation. Ere yet the Indians were removed, Harriet Martineau, visiting Chicago, was astonished at the intellectual vigor and true refinement of its first citizens, who, enduring cheerfully every privation, set their faces steadfastly toward the future of the village. Meanwhile the Indians, completing a quarter of a century of loyalty and good will, drew on to the hour of their great desolation. From legend and history and the lives of their illustrious chiefs, we have a marvelous picture of these canoe and prairie tribes struggling against fate. That fate leaves a door ajar through which a superior race may do well to walk softly.

While spending a week with the Indians in Colorado last summer, the author was impressed with the ideals which, much writing to the contrary, are cherished by the red men. God needs not to apologize for having created the Indian. Philosophers may go to school to him; psychologists may find abundant material in him for a master-work on the slow but sure development and supremacy of mind; statesmen may trace in this American savage potentials of character that make for civic power; and ministers of the gospel may come to discover in him another justification of God's ways to man. A distinguished senator of Colorado, cheerfully giving the author of Ongon an hour of his vacation time, was bold to affirm that he

Foreword

thought the Indian a moral being and the Christian religion adapted to help the Creator complete his plan in every part of his great, ethical world. We smile when we put our affirmations into sentences; but many of us have held the tomahawk so close to our eyes that we have never really seen the Indian.

The author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to Schoolcraft's "Indian Tribes of the United States," prepared 1847 and published 1855, for the "Lake Song" printed in Ongon on page 98, and for the Indian chant on page 107. These were taken respectively from Part V, pages 562 and 612. On page 606 may be found the entire chapter of I Cor. 13 in the Indian tongue. The "Dog Dance," printed on page 139, is taken from "Haines' American Indian," page 533—a work far too valuable not to be found in either the Astor or the New York Public Libraries. Chicago possesses at least two copies, one at the Newberry, the other at the Public Library. Ongon's legend, which he tells on page 135, is adapted from Mathew's translation of the "Winter Spirit and His Visitor" in Mason's "Indian Fairy Book," published in 1856, page 261. Black Hawk in his biography, dictated by himself, 1833, speaks of the Indian's wooing enacted in the little play of chapter XLIII, in Ongon. Catherine Dale, as well as her early philosophy of religion, will be recognized by many. In another dress she is the saddened Russian artist who, with an American sphere, might have achieved health and happiness in the end. Sometimes in this book an authentic Indian quotation will be used or modified to show the Indian's fondness for figures of speech.

For their esteemed service in helping out a three-months' research, the librarians and assistants of the Congressional Library, Washington; the Newberry and Historical libraries of Chicago, and New York Astor and Public libraries are heartily thanked. The Chicago Public Library is so accustomed to distribute goodness without expecting gratitude that any mention of its thousand and one kindnesses would be considered a superfluous expense of energy. One may take from its shelves a hundred books to write a line, and only be asked, Be brief.

Ongon

I

THE CACHE

He who will take Jean to his heart shall learn why, for a season, she chose to be called Lurette. Then he will return to the warm, bright stillness of the early June afternoon, and understand what gratitude lay in her own heart, and how much more she meant than she expressed when her lips murmured that the playful ripples of Lake Michigan, brown and violet and blue, were myriads of eyes arching their brows and dancing with welcome for them on the shore.

"Oh, thousand years of unseen beauty, given for a moment of mind!" Very beautiful was Jean addressing the lake, lifting a face that seemed the human counterpart of the ever-changing delicate colors on the waters. From the depth of her woman's feeling, her countenance, too, suggested that, like the quiet Michigan, it might become storm-tossed with passion. Therefore, the highest light that played in her eyes and seemed to move upon her lips was the promise of a strength of self-mastery. Though just now she led in the playful mood, there was a tenderness even in her abandon. Had she spoken her real thoughts, they had been tears—and not unworthy of greatest joy.

Her maid and companion, now called Gurgling Water, and now Josie, was younger in years, Indian, and from her speech educated. Once Jean had called her pretty and roguish—the very spirit of a merry smile that had taken a fourteen-year-ply sunburn, and thence had turned up human and feminine. Then the mistress had been answered by a devotion of eyes. Savage is the delight for praise.

The two were kneeling in the sands with flowers, rejoicing in a strangely fascinating task. They had formed a cross of wild primroses, and the letters "O. A." of violets upon a delicate framework of primrose stems. The Indian girl had enjoyed the play of trying to make her fingers move as deftly as those of her mistress, while laughingly endeavoring as well to grasp with a quick mind the mystery of words.

Ongon

"Josie," said Jean, when the work was completed to their satisfaction and they had paused to feel its daintiness and to feast their eyes again upon the color scheme of sky and waters, "think of it, for days as these sands for multitude, this lake has slept and swept in brimming isolation from the world."

"Merrigo, has it, Lusette," replied the Indian maiden, tapping her forehead to settle the new words safely for definitions when interests should lull.

"How Ongon must look when he stands upon the shore. Heaven grant it to breathe with the air into his blood that the world was created in thought of him."

Her maid could understand such love, and was not forbidden the privilege of answering by placing a heart of violets in her mistress' hair. She knew also why the subject was changed so abruptly.

"Do you think, Gurgling Water, to these odd breadths of green and red in my robe any folds of admission cling that what we have adopted is not unadapted?—Do I look like a gypsy?"

"I would never take you for a gypsy," answered the girl, replying to the understood section of the sentence, with admiration for the red and green confusion of words, and genuine Indian fondness for the realities with which the body of her mistress was clad.

"It's my Scotch-Irish face, Josie, and all the training at the female seminary," said Jean, reopening the black box which they had discovered in the plundered *cache*.

"It was strange that they left the box and didn't find what was in it—and to think if my horse hadn't run away we should not have come here to give yours a drink before he must carry us both!"

"And not have discovered the *cache* made by Ongon had been opened by some one?—Nay, Josie, then must we have needs been drawn hither by other powers."

Josie was whispering it, "And to think, Lusette, your name in the box and that ring!"

"And this magazine, too, Gurgling Water; see Ongon has marked this for a study." It was an almost current number of the *Museum* with an engraving of Hogarth's painting "Marriage à la Mode"; the pencil marks were against a poem descriptive of the painting.

"In his own person centres all his pride,
And as his bride loves him, he loves his pride."

"The bridegroom has turned away from his bride in love with himself," read Lusette. "He is gazing in the mirror with delight in