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SAMUEL L. METCALFE

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NARRATIVES OF INDIAN WARFARE IN THE WEST (1799) (1821)

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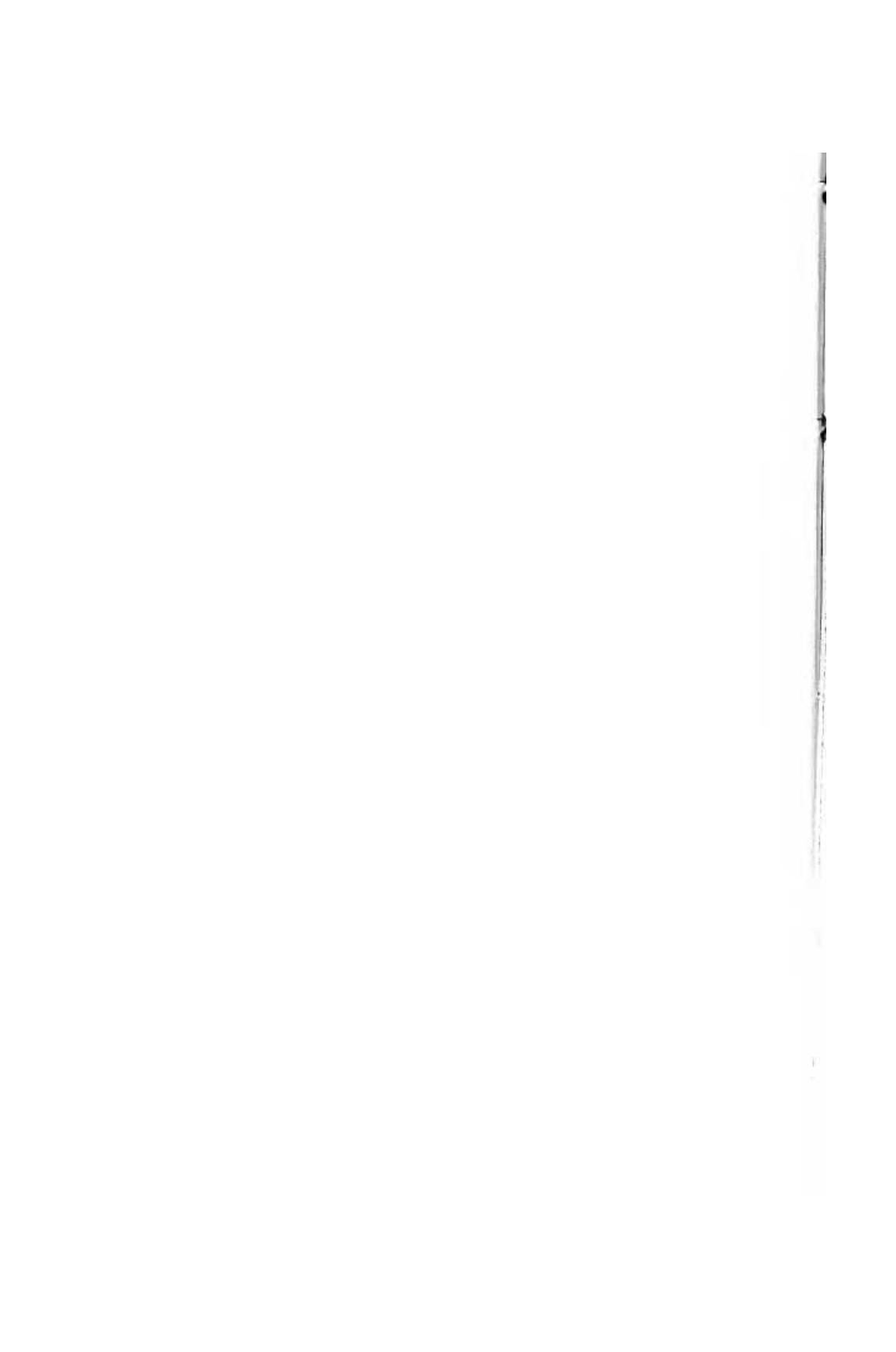
EDITOR'S PREFACE

ONE of the rarest items of Americana relating to the Indians is here presented to our subscribers—the first reprint, we believe, since 1821. It is a compilation of narratives which, in their original form, even at that date, had become scarce.

Books on early western adventure, printed in its section, are very rare. The Menzies copy, over thirty years ago, realized forty-five dollars, and would bring more now.

Notes have been added wherever there seemed need, but the spelling, capitalization of the original, etc., have been carefully followed.

For the notes on Smith's Narrative (which was originally published in 1799) we are chiefly indebted to Dr. Darlington's edition of 1870.¹



AUTHOR'S PREFACE

IF THE reader should receive any entertainment from the perusal of the following pages, he may consider himself indebted for it to the following incident:

In the spring of 1820, as the Editor was journeying through the southern part of this State, he called at an inn for lodging, where he was highly amused and gratified by the relation of some interesting anecdotes of Indian warfare, by an intelligent fellow-traveller, who was an early settler in Kentucky.* From this circumstance he was induced to believe that much interesting matter of this description might be obtained by a little exertion, which in a few years, if not collected, would be consigned to oblivion or found only in the traditions of the West. He has therefore, since that time, employed himself in making diligent search after such materials as would reflect light on the early settlement of the Western country generally; the result of which has enabled him to present the reader with the following narratives. They cannot fail to excite an interest in the people of the West, many of whose friends and relations were conspicuous actors in the scenes which are described. Some of them exhibit specimens of boldness and ferocity on the part of the savages, and of heroic intrepidity on the part of the early settlers, not surpassed in the annals of history. They also make us in some measure acquainted with the dangers and difficulties which our fathers underwent in penetrating and settling this vast wilderness. They were continually harassed by a treacherous and unrelenting foe. They fought in defence of a country whose plains were drenched with the blood of their fellow citizens. They abandoned the pleasures of civilized and polished society, and emigrated to these inhospitable wilds, under circumstances the most unfavorable; yet the spirit of enterprise

* Colonel Murrell, of Barren County, Ky.

which prompted them was not to be extinguished by the dangers which surrounded them. The luxuriant fertility of the country, the salubrity of its climate and the beauty of its scenery, were well calculated to excite and cherish in them the spirit of adventure.

A desire to trace the origin and progress of states, the decline and fall of nations, and the means by which great objects have been achieved, is perhaps natural to man. To rescue from oblivion some of the most important events connected with the early history of this country is the object of the following publication.

It must be peculiarly gratifying to every philanthropic mind to behold the happy change which a few years have effected in the condition of the Western States. Where a few years since nothing was heard but the Indian warwhoop and the howling of wild beasts, we now hear, in our halls of legislation, the voice of eloquence proclaiming the dignity and the rights of man; and in temples dedicated to the Most High our ears are saluted with the welcome sound of "peace and good will to men." In place of those gloomy forests once denominated the *Dark and Bloody Ground* we now behold a rich, delightful and highly cultivated country. Where lately stood a few dismal, smoky cabins, surrounded by woods and cane-brakes, are now to be seen fertile fields, flourishing orchards, blooming gardens, elegant and commodious houses, and rich, populous and refined cities.

How delightful to dwell in the midst of this highly favoured land, and contemplate its growing prosperity; a land affording in rich abundance all the luxuries of life, and decorated with all the variegated charms which nature can bestow. Here we might almost exclaim in the language of the poet:

Flumina jam lactis, jam flumina nectaris ibant
Flavaque de viridi stillabant ilice mella.

(Now milk and nectar flow through every field,
And green leav'd oaks delicious honey yield.)

Here civilization and the arts are fast advancing to perfection, and here genius, nurtured by science and philosophy and enriched by the improvements of former ages, is to shine forth in all the splendor of intellectual power.

In the publication of the following narratives it has not been our intention to perpetuate against the unfortunate Indians that spirit of prejudice and hatred which has been excited by their cruel massacres of the whites. With the liberal and enlightened there are many circumstances which palliate their inhumanity. They could not but consider us as the crafty usurpers of their native soil, which had been given to them by the *Great Spirit*. It should be recollected that independently of the many wrongs which they suffered from our encroachment on their dominions, they were stimulated to hostilities by the emissaries of France while that kingdom was contending with Great Britain for the possession of the Western country: and that after the commencement of the American Revolution they were urged on by the British themselves to the perpetration of the most horrid outrages. Allowance should be made for their want of information, and for the principles by which they were influenced. A superstition prevailed among them, common to the early Greeks and Romans, which induced them to suppose that "the *manes* of their deceased friends slain in battle were soothed by the blood of their captives."*

It has been very common among those who have described the aborigines of our country to represent them as a treacherous, cowardly and ferocious race, devoid of almost every virtue which constitutes the dignity and the glory of man. This, however, has arisen partly from prejudice and partly from an imperfect knowledge of their character. If there were writers among the Indians, the most honorable testimony might be given of their bravery, patriotism and generosity. But alas, they have no historian to record their valorous deeds; no poets to celebrate the virtues and

* Leur sang, disait-il, sera agreable à l'ombre de ce héros. FENELON: Telemaque.

achievements of their departed heroes. They are suffered to glide down the oblivious tide of time "unwept, unhonored and unsung." The whole race is diminishing in number with a rapidity unparalleled in the history of nations. Many of the most powerful tribes which inhabited the United States during the last century are now known only in name. If we are to judge of the future from the past, we must believe that in a short period the remaining tribes that still linger about the shores of the Lakes, and the tributary streams of the Mississippi and Missouri will pass away from the earth like a dream, no more to be remembered or regarded. "We are driven back", said an old warrior, "until we can retreat no further—a little longer, and the white men will cease to persecute us, for we shall cease to exist."

It is right to inform the reader that the following narratives have been obtained from sources of the most undoubted authenticity. Some of them have been before published in a collection by Archibald Loudon, and some in separate pamphlets, all of which have long since been out of print. Others have appeared in the *Western Review*, a work found in comparatively but few hands. Nearly all the facts have been furnished by persons who were immediately concerned in the transactions which they described.

It was the original design of the Editor to give a continued and methodical narrative of all the Indian wars in the Western country, from its first settlement to the treaty of Greenville (generally called Wayne's Treaty). This plan, however, he has been obliged to relinquish for want of time. The contents of this volume may be regarded merely as materials which the future historian must compress and arrange in chronological order.

S. L. METCALF