

Eggleston George Cary

**Red Eagle and the Wars With  
the Creek Indians of Alabama.**



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# George Cary Eggleston Red Eagle and the Wars With the Creek Indians of Alabama

## PREFACE

A work of this kind necessarily makes no pretension to originality in its materials; but while all that is here related is to be found in books, there is no one book devoted exclusively to the history of the Creek war or to the life of William Weatherford, the Red Eagle. The materials here used have been gathered from many sources – some of them from books which only incidentally mention the matters here treated, touching them as a part of larger subjects, and many of them from books which have been long out of print, and are therefore inaccessible to readers generally.

The author has made frequent acknowledgments, in his text, of his obligations to the writers from whose works he has drawn information upon various subjects. By way of further acknowledgment, and for the information of readers who may be tempted to enlarge their reading in the interesting history of the South-west, he appends the following list of the principal books that have been consulted in the preparation of this volume:

Parton's "Life of Andrew Jackson."

Eaton's "Life of Andrew Jackson."

Pickett's "History of Alabama."

Drake's "Book of the Indians."

McAfee's "History of the Late War in the Western Country."

Claiborne's "Notes on the War in the South."

Meek's "Romantic Passages in South-western History."

"Indian Affairs, American State Papers."

Kendall's "Life of Jackson."

Waldo's "Life of Jackson."

Russell's "History of the Late War."

Brackenridge's "History of the Late War."

# **CHAPTER I.**

## **SHOWING, BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION, HOW RED EAGLE HAPPENED TO BE A MAN OF CONSEQUENCE IN HISTORY**

It is a long journey from the region round about the great lakes, where Tecumseh lived, to the shores of the Alabama and the Tombigbee rivers, even in these days of railroads and steamboats; and it was a much longer journey when Tecumseh was a terror to the border and an enemy whom the United States had good reason to fear. The distance between Tecumseh's home and that of Red Eagle is greater than that which separates Berlin from Paris or Vienna; and when Tecumseh lived there were no means of communication between the Indians of the North-west and those of the South, except by long, dangerous, and painful journeys on foot.

A man of smaller intellectual mould than Tecumseh would not have dreamed of the possibility of establishing relations with people so distant as the Creeks were from the tribes of the North-west. But Tecumseh had all the qualities of a man of genius, the chief of which are breadth and comprehensiveness of view and daring boldness of conception. The great northern chieftain

did many deeds in his day by which he fairly won the reputation he had for the possession of genius, both as a soldier and as a statesman; but nothing in his history so certainly proves his title to rank among really great men as his boldness and brilliancy in planning the formation of a great confederacy of the tribes, which extended in a chain from the lakes on the north to the Gulf of Mexico on the south. He was wise enough to learn of his foes. He saw that their strength lay in their union; that it was by "joining all their camp-fires," as he phrased it, that they made themselves irresistible; and as he saw with consternation that the great tide of white men was steadily advancing westward, he understood, as few men of his race were capable of doing, that there was but one possible way for the red men to withstand the ever-encroaching stream. Separately the tribes were powerless, because separately they could be beaten one by one. Troops who were engaged in reducing an Illinois tribe during one month could be sent the next to oppose another tribe in Mississippi or Alabama. Thus the secret of the white men's success, Tecumseh saw, lay in two facts: first, that the whites were united, working together for a common purpose, and helping each other in turn; and, second, that the whites used the same troops over and over again to fight the separately acting tribes.

Seeing all this and understanding it, Tecumseh conceived his great plan – a plan equally great, whether we regard it as a stroke of statesmanship or a brilliant scheme of military combination. He determined, as he said, to build a dam against the stream. He

undertook to form a confederacy of all the tribes from north to south, to teach them to act together, and to oppose the advance of the white men by uniting that power which they were wasting separately.

It was in execution of this plan that Tecumseh made that journey to the South in the year 1811 which, in combination with other causes to be mentioned in their place, induced the Creeks of Southern Alabama to abandon all that they had gained of civilization, and to plunge first into a war among themselves, and afterward into that struggle with the white men which destroyed their nation almost utterly.

In that war there was one man more conspicuous than any other – more relentless, more daring, more desperate in his refusal to give or to accept quarter, and at the same time more brilliant in attack and defence, abler in counsel, and having greater skill in the field than any of his fellow-chiefs – a man who fought Jackson, Claiborne, Flournoy, Floyd, and Coffee, whose troops, coming from different quarters of the country, surrounded him on every side and outnumbered him on every field; fighting them with credit to his own skill and daring, and with no little damage to these skilled enemies – a man of whom Jackson said, "He is fit to command armies."

This man was Red Eagle, or, in his native Muscogee tongue, Lamochattee.

To the white men with whom he lived a great part of his life, and to his enemies in war, he was better known as William

Weatherford; and as the historical accounts of the war in which he won his renown were all written by white men, because Red Eagle could not write, his white name, Weatherford, is the one by which he is generally known in books. His fame was won as an Indian, however; it was the Indian warrior Red Eagle, not the half-breed planter Weatherford, who did the deeds which gave him a place in American history; and this neglect of his Indian name in all historical works which refer to him is an example of the sarcasm of destiny. It reminds one of the hero of whom Byron tells us, who, falling in battle covered with glory, lost his only chance for fame by the blunder of a printer, who misspelled his name in the gazette. We have preferred to call the great commander of the Creeks by his Indian name, Red Eagle, on the title-page of this book, but in writing of him it will be necessary frequently to use the name Weatherford instead.

The story of the Creek war naturally follows the life of Tecumseh, with which this series of Indian biographies was introduced; and indeed the one story is necessary to the complete telling of the other. It may be best told in the form of a life of Red Eagle, who commanded on one side, and whose genius for command alone made the war an affair worth writing about; but, unluckily for the biographer, the materials for a biography of Red Eagle, in the strict sense of the word, are meagre and difficult to get at.

I hinted at the chief cause of this meagreness and obscurity when I said, just now, that Red Eagle could not write. I always

thought, in reading Cæsar De Bello Gallico, that the Roman commander had a great advantage over the poor Gauls in his rather remarkable dexterity in the use of the pen. We do not know how good or how bad his handwriting was; but whether he wrote with perfect Spencerian precision or in a scrawl as illegible as Mr. Greeley's, Cæsar knew how to tell his side of the story, and there was nobody to tell the other side. Perhaps the tale would read very differently if some clever Gaul had been able to write an account of the war in classic Latin for the school-boys of the nineteenth century to puzzle out with the aid of a dictionary. So Red Eagle, if he had known how to write, would probably have given us a view of the things done in the Creek war which we do not get from his enemies.

It is not merely in the military sense that the word enemies is here used, but in the literal one as well; for very nearly all the information we have about Red Eagle and his performances is drawn from the writings and the spoken testimony of men who hated him with a degree of violence of which one can scarcely conceive in our time. These men wrote while boiling with the passions of a war which seriously threatened the existence of this American nation, and they hated Red Eagle as one of the men who added very greatly to the country's peril, and sorely taxed its resources when its resources were fewest. Their hatred was so violent that they could not restrain its expression; while they granted to Red Eagle the possession of courage and ability, they could not write of him without flying into a passion and heaping

hard names upon his head.

One of them, in a grave treatise about the war, scolded in this way about him:

"Among the first who entered into the views of the British commissioners was the since celebrated Weatherford, with whom it may not be amiss to make the reader better acquainted at this time. Weatherford was born in the Creek nation. His father was an itinerant pedler, sordid, treacherous, and revengeful; his mother a full-blooded savage of the tribe of the Seminoles. He partook of the bad qualities of both his parents, and engrafted on the stock he inherited from others many that were peculiarly his own. With avarice, treachery, and a thirst for blood, he combines lust, gluttony, and a devotion to every species of criminal carousal."

That, certainly, is as pretty a bit of angry vituperation as one hears from the lips of the worst of scolds, and so wholly did the distinguished author of the book from which it is taken lose his temper, that he lost his discretion with it, and forgot that so coarse and brutal a fellow as he here declares Red Eagle to have been – a man so wholly given over to debauchery – is sure to show in his face, his person, and his intellectual operations the effects of his character, impulses, and habits. In the very next paragraph this writer tells us certain things about Red Eagle which forbid us to believe that he was a drunkard, a debased creature, a glutton, or a brute. He says:

"Fortune in her freaks sometimes gives to the most profligate

an elevation of mind which she denies to men whose propensities are the most virtuous. On Weatherford she bestowed genius, eloquence, and courage. The first of these qualities enabled him to conceive great designs, the last to execute them; while eloquence, bold, impressive, and figurative, furnished him with a passport to the favor of his countrymen and followers. Silent and reserved, unless when excited by some great occasion, and superior to the weakness of rendering himself cheap by the frequency of his addresses, he delivered his opinions but seldom in council; but when he did so he was listened to with delight and approbation."

That does not read like an account of the parliamentary methods of a brutish man, degraded by vice and debauched with drunkenness and gluttony; it sounds rather like a description of the wise ways of some Webster or Clay. Drunken men with the gift of eloquent speech do not hoard it and use it in this adroit way. This is not all, however. Men who are given over to vice, gluttony, and drunkenness usually carry the marks of their excesses in their appearance and their ways of thinking; but our writer who has told us that Weatherford was such a man, tells us how he looked and acted, and what his ability was, in this wise:

"His judgment and eloquence had secured the respect of the old; his vices made him the idol of the young and the unprincipled. It is even doubted whether a civilized society could behold this monster without interest. In his person tall, straight, and well-proportioned; his eye black, lively, and penetrating, and

indicative of courage and enterprise; his nose prominent, thin, and elegant in its formation; while all the features of his face, harmoniously arranged, speak an active and disciplined mind." A little further down the page this writer calls Weatherford "the key and corner-stone of the Creek confederacy," and characterizes him as "this extraordinary man."

Our purpose is not now to defend Red Eagle's memory or to extol his character, though there is good reason to remember him with honor for his courage in war and for his good faith in peace; and there are abundant proofs that the praise which the hostile writer whom we have quoted could not deny to the fallen chieftain, was far juster than the abuse he heaped upon him. We have made these extracts merely to show in what spirit of unfair prejudice all the contemporaneous accounts of Weatherford's life and deeds were written. It will be better to form our own opinions of the Creek warrior's character after we shall have reviewed the events of his life; and no one who so examines the facts, although they come to us only from his enemies, can fail to form a much higher opinion of the unfortunate man than that which the chroniclers of his day have offered to us ready-made.

The enmity and prejudice of which we have spoken operate still more strongly in another way to embarrass the biographer who seeks to learn details of Weatherford's life. Where the writers of his day have misrepresented his character or conduct, it is not difficult to discover the fact and to correct the misjudgment; but, unluckily, they too often neglected even to

misrepresent him. Caring only for their own side and their own heroes, these historians, who were generally participants in the events they chronicled, took the utmost pains to tell us just where each body of American troops fought; who commanded them in the first, second, third, and so on to the tenth degree of subordinate rank; how many Americans and how many friendly Indians there were in each part of every field; how many of these were killed and wounded – every thing, in short, which they could find out or guess out about the details of their side of the fight, while the other side seemed to them unworthy of any thing more than the most general attention. They were so careless indeed of the Indian side of these affairs that it is in many cases impossible to discover from any of the accounts what chiefs commanded the Creek forces in important battles, or even what chiefs were present. In other cases this information is given to us by accident, as it were, not in the accounts of the battles, but by means of a casual reference in an account of something else. Thus one of the writers devotes many pages and a good deal of stilted rhetoric to his account of the Fort Mims massacre, a bloody affair, in which Weatherford won solely by reason of the fact that he was a better and more skilful officer than the American commander, manifesting indeed some of the best qualities of an able general; but with all this historian's minuteness of detail, he wholly forgets to mention the fact that Weatherford had anything to do with the matter. His neglect is not the result of any want of information, as is shown by the fact that, in writing of other things afterward,

he incidentally mentions the Creek warrior as the leader of the Indians at Fort Mims.

To the carelessness of the contemporaneous writers, to whom alone we can at this day look for information upon detailed points of interest, must be added, as a cause of the meagreness of the record, their lack of opportunity. The Indians kept their own secrets. They were fighting to destroy the whites, not to win renown; and the Americans who fought them had little chance to hear news of any kind from the forces on the other side.

Notwithstanding this lack of detailed information respecting Red Eagle's life and deeds, however, we know with certainty that he was, as the writer quoted a few pages back said, the "key and corner-stone of the Creek confederacy," the commander of the Creek armies, the statesman who guided the Creek councils, and the general who planned and conducted the Creek campaigns. His was the master mind on the Indian side, as positively as Jackson's was on the side of the Americans; and therefore while there is an unfortunate lack of information of a strictly biographical nature concerning this remarkable man, it is still possible to write his life by writing an account of the Creek war. After all, it is the things a man does which make up his life; and the story of his deeds is his biography, whether or not it includes the dates of his birth and his death, or tells with precision when or how he did this or that.

Accordingly, instead of beginning this story of Red Eagle's life with a chapter about his birth and parentage, after the

customary manner of grave biographers, and following his career incident by incident, confining the narrative to an account of his direct, personal share in each transaction, I shall write an account of the war he made, regarding the whole series of events as properly parts of one great affair which Red Eagle devised and executed.

To make such an account clearly intelligible, however, it will be necessary first to recount briefly the history of the Southern Indians, and to show who and what the Creeks were, what their condition was at the time of the war's beginning, and what they hoped to gain by their contest with the whites – which was not by any means a mere outbreak of savagery like some of the Indian troubles of our time, but rather a war deliberately undertaken with very definite purposes, after long consideration and no little getting ready.

Upon many points the best authorities are conflicting, partly because their works were written each with a special purpose and from a special point of view, and partly because of carelessness in the collection and weighing of facts; but it is still possible to arrive at the truth in all essential particulars, and to construct, out of the fragmentary materials at command, a consecutive account of the brilliant campaign of 1813-14, in which Red Eagle was the foremost figure on one side, and Andrew Jackson the master spirit on the other.

## CHAPTER II.

# RED EAGLE'S PEOPLE

Red Eagle, or William Weatherford, was only in part an Indian, as we shall see presently; but his life was so entirely the life of an Indian, in that part of it at least which gave him his title to a place in history, that we must naturally think of him as a member of his mother's race, rather than as a white man, and we must regard the Indian nation to which he belonged as his people. He was born a Creek, and not only so, but a great chief of the Creek nation; that is to say, a chief of the highest hereditary rank.

The Creek nation was not a tribe, but a confederacy of tribes, united as the Roman Empire was by successive conquests. The original Romans in this case were the Muscogeas, a tribe of Indians so much further advanced toward civilization when white men first encountered them than most of the Indian tribes were, that they had been able to preserve greatly more of their own history than savages are ordinarily able to do. They had fixed laws, too, not merely rules of the chase, but laws by which they were governed in the ordinary affairs of life; and many of their practices when the tribe was first known to white men indicate that they were then rapidly working out a system of government and semi-civilization for themselves, or else that,

as they themselves believed, they were descended from a race formerly civilized, of whose civilization they still retained traces in their customs.

About the year 1775, an adventurous young Frenchman named Le Clerc Milfort visited the Creeks, and marrying a woman of the nation became a chief among them. After living with them for twenty years, he returned to France and was made a brigadier-general. In the year 1802, Milfort published a book about the strange people among whom he had lived half a lifetime, and from him, or rather through him, the world has learned what the Creeks believe to be the history of their nation.

This history, Milfort says, existed in the shape of a sort of record – not a written record, of course, but not merely oral tradition. The Creek historians had certain strings of beads, shells, and pearls which aided them somewhat as written books aid civilized men to preserve the memory of their nation's past. These beads meant different things according to their arrangement, and by their aid the historians were able to remember and transmit the traditions committed to their charge with something like accuracy.

The story, as they tell it, is probably apocryphal in most of its details, but it is less improbable, at worst, than is the story of the foundation and early history of Rome. According to the Creek historians, the Muscogees fought with the Aztecs against Cortez, and when the Spanish invader gained a secure foothold in Mexico they took up their march northward. On their

way they encountered the Alabamas, whom they drove before them for years, following them from one part of the land to another, and giving them no rest. They chased the Alabamas to the Missouri River, thence to the Ohio, and thence to Alabama, whither they followed their steps. Finally, in the early part of the eighteenth century, the persecuted Alabamas despaired of finding a secure refuge from their relentless persecutors, and to save themselves from further destruction consented to form a close alliance with the Muscogeese, submitting to the laws of their conquerors and becoming in effect Muscogeese. This was the beginning of that confederacy which afterward became the Creek Nation. The Tookabatcha tribe, fleeing from their enemies in the north, sought the protection of the Muscogeese next and became members of the nation. Other tribes were added to the nation one after another, until the confederacy, whose seat was in the region along the Alabama, Coosa, and Tombigbee rivers, became an empire, embracing in its rule all the people round about them, and carrying terror even to the tribes beyond the Savannah River.

The country which the Muscogee confederacy inhabited was and still is singularly well watered and fertile. Their two great rivers, the Alabama and the Tombigbee, are fed by numberless creeks of large and small size, and the number of these streams prompted the white men who traded with the Muscogeese to call their land the Creek country, and from the land the name was transferred to its people, who were thereafter called the Creeks.

These Creeks, as we have said, had a sort of semi-civilization of their own when the whites first visited them. They had fixed rules and customs governing marriage and divorce. They lived in houses, wore scanty but real clothing, and were governed by a rude system of laws. Curiously enough, they even had a system of social caste among them, a sort of graduated order of nobility. There were certain families who held high hereditary rank, hereditary privileges, and hereditary authority – the family of the Wind, the family of the Bear, the family of the Deer, etc.; and of these the family of the Wind was the highest in rank and authority. They constituted, indeed, a sort of royal family, the family of the Bear ranking just below them.

When Colonel Benjamin Hawkins was sent on an important mission to the Creeks in the year 1798 he found an organized and somewhat complicated system of government in existence among them. Each town had its separate local government, presided over by a Micco, who belonged always to one of the chief families. They had their public buildings and pleasure houses, their fixed rules for the conduct of public business, for the promotion of warriors, and for all the other things which need systematic regulation.

Beginning thus with a foundation of recognized customs upon which to build a civilization, the Creeks improved rapidly under the influence of the white men when they were brought into contact with them. They already cultivated the ground, and, according to their tradition, had always done so. From the white

men they learned to trade, to carry on their commerce with regularity, and even to manufacture cloths and other needed articles. They lived generally in peace with the white men, and, when the war that destroyed all this good beginning came, these people had their horses and their houses, their farms, their hoes, and their looms. They were not yet civilized, but they were well advanced toward the acquisition of the arts of peace. They had too much hunting land, and the spontaneous or nearly spontaneous productions of their rich soil and genial climate made living somewhat too easy for their good; but in spite of these strong incentives to idleness, the Creeks were steadily improving. Many of them intermarried with the whites, and in part adopted white men's modes of living. Missionaries went among them, and even the traders were in an important sense missionaries. Many of the Creeks learned to read and write, a few were educated men, most of these being half-breeds, whose fathers sent them north to attend schools.

Their condition was made the more favorable for advancement by the good treatment they received at the hands of the United States Government. It is constantly said in our time that the government has never dealt justly or kept honest faith with the Indians, and this reproach is usually coupled with a reference to the wiser, better, and more humane methods of the British in Canada; but if one were disposed to argue the question, it might easily be shown that both the assertion of the uniform failure of the Americans to deal justly with Indians, and the implication

that the English have as uniformly treated the savages well, are false. In the case of the Creeks, it appears to be certain that the American Government did all that could be done to elevate the savages, and was only thwarted in the attempt by the interference of British agents – red and white – who incited Red Eagle's people to undertake the war which resulted in the destruction of their prosperity and their ultimate removal from the land they inhabited.

Mr. Nathaniel Herbert Claiborne, a prominent citizen of Virginia, and a man specially well informed on the subject, in a work which was written immediately after the Creek war ended, wrote as follows on the subject of the government's treatment of the Creeks:

"It has been demonstrated that the conduct of the United States to the Creek Indians was both just and honorable. Without any consideration save that which arises from the consciousness of doing a good act, the government of the United States had, for more than twenty years, endeavored to reclaim them from a savage to a civilized state. By the exertions of government, bent only on augmenting the stock of human happiness, it was evident that the situation of the Creeks was greatly ameliorated. Many of them spoke and wrote our language. Pious men were sent, at the expense of government, to instruct them in the religion of Christ. The rising generation were instructed in numerous schools... A sentiment of pity, a fit cement for lasting friendship, had taken possession of the American breast toward

the Indians; and our citizens and government vied with each other in acts of benevolence and charity toward them. They were instructed in the fabrication of the implements of husbandry. The loom and the spinning-wheel were in full operation through the whole nation; while the art of house-building, so essential to the accommodation of man and his protection from the winds and waters of heaven, was rapidly approximating to perfection. If any of our citizens injured them a punishment was provided by law, and the temper of the nation, in unison with the temper of the government, rendered its infliction certain. And such was the progress of the Creeks in civilization, and the obligations they were under to the United States, that no one believed they could be cajoled into a confederacy against us."

One other point must not be overlooked, because, although its bearing upon the prospects of the Creeks may not be fully evident to readers who have given the subject no attention, it was really the most promising thing in their situation. The tribal relation among them was weakening. They were taking the first steps from communism, which is the soul of savage life, to that individualism which is the foundation of civilization. They were beginning to hold individual property, and thereby to become men, with interests and wills of their own, instead of mere members of a tribe. This was brought about in part by their trading with the whites and in part by their intermarriages. The traders who married Creek wives and lived in the nation were shrewd fellows, strongly inclined to look sharply after their own

interests; and their half-breed children, who retained their rank as Creeks, many of them being chiefs of high degree, inherited their fathers' instincts and learned their fathers' ways. It would not have required many years of peace in these circumstances to have made of the Creeks a nation of civilized men. Until the seeds of hostility to the Americans were sown among them by the agents of the British and the Spanish, their advancement was steady, and the effort which the Americans were making to civilize them was the fairest and most hopeful experiment perhaps that has ever been made in that direction on this continent.

# CHAPTER III.

## RED EAGLE'S BIRTH AND BOYHOOD

William Weatherford, the Red Eagle, was born in the Creek country, and born a chieftain. The exact date of his birth is not known, but as he was a man of about thirty or thirty-five years of age when the Creek war broke out in 1813, his birth must have occurred about the year 1780. He is commonly spoken of in books, and especially in books that were written while a feeling of intense antipathy to him continued to exist, as the son of a Scotch pedler, or the son of a Georgia pedler, the phrase carrying with it the suggestion that Red Eagle was a man of contemptible origin. This was not the case. His father was a Scotch pedler, certainly, who went to the Creek country from Georgia, but he was by no means the sort of person who is suggested to our minds by the word pedler. He was a trader of great shrewdness and fine intellectual ability, who managed his business so well that he became rich in spite of his strong taste for the expensive sport of horse-racing.

Besides this, men usually have two parents, and Red Eagle was not an exception to this rule. If he was the son of a Scotch pedler from Georgia, he was also the son of an Indian woman, who belonged to the dominant family of the Wind; that is to say,

she was a princess, her rank among the Creeks corresponding as nearly as possible to that of a daughter of the royal house in a civilized monarchy.

Red Eagle's connection with persons of distinction did not end here. He was the nephew of the wife of Le Clerc Milfort, the Frenchman mentioned in a former chapter, who, after a twenty years' residence among the Creeks, returned to France and received a brigadier-general's commission at the hands of Napoleon. Red Eagle was the nephew, through his mother, of Alexander McGillivray, a man of mixed Scotch, French, and Indian blood, who by dint of his very great ability as a soldier, a ruler of the Creeks, and a wily, unscrupulous diplomatist, made a prominent place for himself in history. He was commissioned as a colonel in the British service; later he became a commissary of subsistence in the Spanish army, with the rank and pay of colonel; and finally he received from Washington an appointment as brigadier-general, with full pay. He is described by Mr. A. J. Pickett, in his *History of Alabama*, as "a man of towering intellect and vast information, who ruled the Creek country for a quarter of a century." Another writer says that Alexander McGillivray "became the great chief or emperor, as he styled himself, of all the confederate Muscogee tribes;" and adds, "He was a man of the highest intellectual abilities, of considerable education, and of wonderful talents for intrigue and diplomacy. This he exhibited conspicuously through the period of the American Revolution, in baffling alike the schemes of our

countrymen, both Whig and Tory, of the Spaniards in Florida, of the British at Mobile, and of the French at New Orleans, and by using them simultaneously for his own purposes of political and commercial aggrandizement. A more wily Talleyrand never trod the red war paths of the frontiers or quaffed the deceptive black drink at sham councils or with deluded agents and emissaries."

Reading these descriptions of the character and abilities of his uncle, knowing how shrewd a man his father was, and remembering that his mother was a member of that family of the Wind who had for generations managed to retain for themselves the foremost place in the councils and campaigns of their warlike race, we may fairly assume that Red Eagle came honestly by the genius for intrigue and for command which brought distinction to him during the Creek war. He may fairly be supposed to have inherited those qualities of mind which fitted him to be a leader in that fierce struggle, and as a leader to hold his own surprisingly well against greatly superior numbers of good troops, commanded by Andrew Jackson himself.

When Charles Weatherford, the Scotch trader from Georgia, married the sister of General Alexander McGillivray, or Emperor Alexander McGillivray, as he preferred to be called, he acquired by that alliance a measure of influence among the Creeks which few men even of pure Muscogee blood could boast. This influence was strengthened as his shrewdness and the soundness of his judgment made themselves apparent in the councils of the nation. More especially he made himself

dear to the hearts of the Creeks by his skill in managing their diplomatic relations with the Spanish authorities in Florida, and the American agents.

In all this, however, the wily Scotchman served himself while serving the nation, and he rapidly grew to be rich. He lived, literally as a prince, at his home on the eastern bank of the Alabama River, on the first high ground below the confluence of the Coosa and Tallapoosa rivers.

Here he built for himself a home, and, still retaining his interest in commerce, set up a trading house. His love of horse-racing has already been mentioned, and now that he was a man of wealth and consequence it was natural that he should indulge this taste to the full. He laid out a race-track near his trading house, and devoted a large share of his attention to the business of breeding fine horses. Even in thus indulging his passion for horse-racing, however, Charles Weatherford was shrewd enough to make the sport contribute to his prosperity in other ways than by means of profitable gambling. He so managed the races as to attract his neighbors, principally the Alabamas, to his place of business, and so secured to himself their trade, which would otherwise have gone to the traders on the opposite side of the river, in the village of Coosawda.

Here William Weatherford was born, the son of the wealthiest man in that part of the country, and by inheritance a chief of the ruling family of the nation. He had for tutors no less competent men than his two uncles, Alexander McGillivray,

and the accomplished Frenchman Le Clerc Milfort. Young Weatherford evinced the best capacity for acquiring knowledge, but it was only such knowledge as he wanted to acquire. Caring nothing about reading and writing, he refused to learn to read and write, and no persuasions would overcome his obstinacy in this particular. He took pains, however, to acquire the utmost command of the English language, partly because it was useful to him as a means of communication with the Americans, and partly because he found that command of a civilized tongue gave him a greater force in speaking his native Creek language, and it was a part of his ambition to be distinguished for eloquence in council. He learned French, also, but less perfectly, and acquired enough of Spanish to speak it in ordinary conversation. He travelled, too, for improvement, making several journeys while yet a boy to Mobile and Pensacola, picking up as he went whatever information there was to acquire.

He thus became in an important sense an educated man. He could not read or write, it is true; but it is probable that Homer was equally ignorant, and not at all certain that Hannibal or Richard Cœur de Lion, great commanders as they were, were much better scholars.

The chief function of education is to train the mind, and the chief difference between the educated man and one who is not so is that the mind of the one has been trained into a state of high efficiency while that of the other has not. Reading and writing offer the shortest roads, the simplest means, to this end; but they

are not the only ones, and if Red Eagle had little or no knowledge of letters, he had nevertheless an active intellect, trained under excellent masters to a high degree of efficiency, and hence was, in the true sense of the term, a man of education.

In his tastes and instincts this son of a Scotchman was altogether an Indian. He devoted himself earnestly to the work of acquiring the knowledge of woodcraft and the skill in the chase which his people held in highest esteem. He was a notable huntsman, a fine swimmer, a tireless walker. He was a master marksman, alike with the bow and with the rifle. He was passionately fond of all athletic sports, too, and by his skill in them he won the admiration – almost the worship – of all the youth of his nation. He was the fleetest of foot of all the young men who ran races in the Creek villages, and his fondness for the sports of his people was so great that he was never absent from any gathering of the young men for contests of strength, activity, or skill, however distant the place of meeting might be. He was their chief by right of his accomplishments, as well as by inheritance as the son of Sehoj the princess. Especially in the great Creek game of throwing the ball – a game which closely resembled a battle between hundreds of men on each side, and one in which success was achieved only by great personal daring and endurance added to skill, bones being broken frequently in the rude collisions of the opposing forces, and men being killed and trampled under foot not infrequently – the young Red Eagle was an enthusiastic and successful player.

While yet a little child, Red Eagle showed that he had inherited his father's love for horses, and his persistence in riding races, breaking unruly colts, and dashing madly over the roughest country on the back of some one of his father's untamed animals, gave him the finest skill and most consummate grace of a perfect horseman. An old Indian woman who knew the young chief in his youth, telling of his daring, his skill, and his grace as a horseman, said, "The squaws would quit hoeing corn, and smile and gaze upon him as he rode by the corn-patch."

All these things added to Red Eagle's popularity with the old and young of his nation, and the daring and enthusiasm which he showed in the sports of his people were exercised frequently in their service. In the wars of the Creeks with neighboring nations, the Choctaws and the Chickasaws, and in their campaigns on the borders of Tennessee, Red Eagle distinguished himself for courage, tireless activity, and great skill in warfare, even before he had reached manhood, so that when his growth was fully gained he was already a man of the widest and most controlling influence among the Creeks, by reason both of his birth and of his achievements.

His popularity was enhanced doubtless by the beauty of his face and the comeliness of his person, for all the writers who have described Red Eagle, and all the men of that time who have given oral accounts of him, agree in telling us that he was a singularly handsome man, with brilliant eyes, well-cut features, shapely limbs, and imposing presence.

That nothing which could help him to influence and power might be lacking, Red Eagle was gifted with eloquence at once stirring and persuasive. His natural gift had been cultivated carefully, and, as we have seen in a former chapter, he adroitly hoarded his power in this respect, taking care not to weaken the force of his oratory by making it cheap and common. He would not speak at all upon light occasions. While others harangued, he sat silent, permitting decisions to be made without expressing any opinion whatever upon the matters in dispute. It was only when a great occasion aroused deep passions that Red Eagle spoke. Then his eloquence was overwhelming. He won his audience completely, and bent men easily to his will. He knew how to arouse their passions and to play upon them for his own purposes. Opposition gave way before the tide of his speech. His opponents in debate were won to his views or silenced by his overwhelming oratory; and he who was his people's commander in the field was no less certainly their master in the council on all occasions which were important enough to stir him to exertion. He had vices, certainly, but they were the vices of his time and country, and there is no sufficient evidence that he carried them to excess, while his retention of physical and intellectual vigor afford the strongest possible proof of the contrary.

## CHAPTER IV.

# THE BEGINNING OF TROUBLE

We all know how trouble begins. Whether a big or a little quarrel is the thing about which we inquire, and whoever the parties to the dispute may be, the trouble may always be traced back to some small occurrences which led to larger ones, which in their turn provoked still greater, until finally the trouble came.

We have seen that there was peace and justice between the Americans and the Creek Nation, and that the Creeks had every reason in their own interest to continue living upon friendly terms with the whites. A good many of them fully understood this, too, and sought to persuade others of it; and it is probable that when the first troubles came the great majority of the Creeks earnestly wished to keep the peace, and to make use of the means of advancement offered to them by the American Government and people. Unluckily, they were the victims of bad advice, and the old story followed: one thing led to another.

It is not easy, in this case, to say precisely what the one thing was which led to another. That is to say, it is not easy to determine what was the first of the long chain of events which led the prosperous and improving Creeks into dissensions, and thence into the war out of which they came a broken and disheartened remnant of a once powerful nation; but tracing the matter as far

back as it is necessary to carry the inquiry, we discover that a public road was one of the earliest causes of the trouble.

The Creeks were made masters of their own country by the Treaty of 1790, and their absolute title to their lands was respected by the United States Government, which defended them rigorously against encroachments upon their domain. That government, having become possessed of a wide tract of territory lying west of the Creek Nation, toward which the tide of emigration was rapidly turning, wished to provide a more direct and better road than any that existed, and with that end in view sought permission of the Creeks to run the new Federal Road, as it was called, by a direct route through the Creek territory. The principal chiefs, beginning to learn some of the natural laws that govern commerce, saw that the passage of a good road through the heart of the nation would necessarily benefit them, and make their commerce with the outer world easier and more profitable. Accordingly these chiefs gave the Creek Nation's consent, and the road was made. Over this the people quarrelled among themselves, dividing, as wiser people are apt to do, into two fiercely antagonistic parties. Those of them who objected to the thoroughfare were seriously alarmed by the great numbers of emigrants who were constantly passing through their country to the region beyond. They said that they would soon be walled up between white settlements on every side. The land on the Tombigbee River was already becoming peopled to such an extent that the hope, which many of the Creeks had secretly

cherished, of driving the whites away from the banks of that river and recovering the territory to themselves must soon be abandoned, and they held, therefore, that in granting the right of way for the road the chiefs had betrayed the nation's interests.

There never yet was a quarrel which somebody did not find it to his interest to stimulate, and in this case the Spanish settlers, or squatters as they would have been called if they had lived thirty or forty years later, did all they could to increase the bitterness of the Creeks toward those chiefs who were disposed to be friendly with the Americans, and toward the Americans. These Spaniards still insisted that the territory in which they lived, and from which they were gradually driven away, belonged of right to Spain, and they saw with great jealousy the rapid peopling of that territory with Americans. The agents of the British, with whom the United States was on the point of going to war, added their voice to the quarrel, stimulating the Spanish and the Indians alike to hostility. It was very clearly seen by these agents that an Indian war, especially a war with the powerful Creeks, would greatly weaken this country for its contest with Great Britain. Emissaries of the British infested the Creek country, stirring up strife and sowing the seeds of future hostility among them. The Spanish in Florida, although our government was at peace with Spain, willingly became the agents for the British in this work, and secret messages were constantly sent through them promising arms, ammunition, and aid to the Creeks in the event of a war.

All these things gave great anxiety to Colonel Hawkins, the

agent who had charge of the Creeks, but the trouble was not yet in a shape in which he could deal vigorously with it. He called a council, and did all that he could to convince the Indians of the government's kindly disposition. The friendly chiefs assured him of their constancy, and their assurance lulled his suspicions somewhat. He knew these chiefs to be sincere, but neither he nor they knew to what extent their influence with the nation had been weakened.

Then came Tecumseh, who, in the spring of the year 1811, arrived in the Creek country, accompanied by about thirty of his warriors. He came with a double mission: as the agent of the British he was charged with the duty of preparing the tribes of the South to join in the approaching war, as soon as a state of war should be declared; as Tecumseh he came to execute his own purpose, namely, the formation of a great offensive and defensive alliance between the tribes of the North and those of the South, against the American nation and people.

Tecumseh did not come as a stranger to the Creeks. The fame of his exploits in the North had reached them, and he was known to them even more favorably in another way. Nearly twenty-five years before, Tecumseh, then a young man, had dwelt among the Creeks for about two years, and the stories of his feats as a hunter had lived after him as a tradition. Hence when he came again in 1811 he was a sort of hero of romance to the younger Creek warriors, a great man of whose deeds they had heard stories during their childhood.

On his way to the South, Tecumseh tarried awhile with the Choctaws and the Chickasaws, trying to win them to his scheme, but without success. In Florida, he made easy converts of the warlike Seminoles; and returning thence he visited the Creeks, arriving in October. While Colonel Hawkins was holding the Grand Council at Tookabatcha, of which we have spoken, and was trying to placate the Creeks, Tecumseh, followed by his warriors, dressed in their most impressive savage costumes, consisting of very little else than buffalo tails and other ornaments, marched into the meeting. Marching solemnly round and round the central square of the town, Tecumseh, when he had sufficiently impressed the lookers-on with a proper sense of his dignity, went through the most solemn ceremonies of friendship with his hosts. Greeting the chiefs in the most cordial fashion, he and his followers exchanged tobacco with them – a proceeding which attested their fellowship in the strongest possible way.

In the main the Creeks received Tecumseh cordially, returning his protestations of brotherhood in kind; but one chief, Captain Isaacs, whose fidelity to his obligations as a friend of the whites was proved afterward on the battle-field, rejected the overtures of the men from the North. He shook his head when asked to shake hands; he refused to exchange tobacco; and, with the frankness of a brave man convinced of his duty, he told Tecumseh to his face that he was a bad man, and added, "You are no greater than I am."

Tecumseh had come to the council for the purpose of using

it for his own ends, but while Colonel Hawkins remained he made no effort to put his plan into execution. Colonel Hawkins could have thwarted him, in part at least, if the wily Indian had openly avowed the object of his visit; but Tecumseh was too shrewd to do that. Colonel Hawkins prolonged the council from day to day, but still Tecumseh kept silence. Each day he would say, "The sun has gone too far to-day; I will make my talk to-morrow." But the to-morrow of the promise did not come while Colonel Hawkins remained, and finally, worn out with the delay, that officer brought his conference with the chiefs to an end and departed.

Then Tecumseh opened his lips. Calling the people together, he made them a speech, setting forth his views and urging them upon the Creeks. He told them that the red men had made a fatal mistake in adopting the ways of the whites and becoming friendly with them. He exhorted them to return at once to their former state of savagery; to abandon the ploughs and looms and arms of the white men; to cast off the garments which the whites had taught them to wear; to return to the condition and customs of their ancestors, and to be ready at command to become the enemies of the whites. The work they were learning to do in the fields, he said, was unworthy of free red men. It degraded them, and made them mere slaves. He warned them that the whites would take the greater part of their country, cut down its forests and turn them into cornfields, build towns, and make the rivers muddy with the washings of their furrows, and then, when they

were strong enough, would reduce the Indians to slavery like that of the negroes. There is every reason to believe that Tecumseh was convinced of the truth of all this. He was convinced, too, that the whites had no right to live on this continent. He told the Creeks, as he had told General Harrison, that the Great Spirit had given this land to the red men. He said the Great Spirit had provided the skins of beasts for the red men's clothing, and that these only should they wear. Then he came to the subject of the British alliance, telling the Creeks that the King of England was about to make a great war in behalf of his children the red men, for the purpose of driving all the Americans off the continent, and that he would heap favors upon all the Indians who should help him to do this.

A prophet who accompanied Tecumseh followed him with a speech, in which he reiterated what his chief had said, but gave it as a message from the Great Spirit; still further to encourage the war spirit among them, this teacher by authority promised a miracle in behalf of the Creeks. He assured them that if they should join in the war they would do so at no personal risk; that not one of them should be hurt by the enemy; that the Great Spirit would encircle them wherever they went with impassable mires, in which the Americans would be utterly destroyed, with no power or opportunity to harm the divinely protected Indians.

All this was well calculated to stir the already moody and discontented Creeks to a feeling of hostility, and when the speech-making was over there was a strong party, probably

more than a majority of the Creeks, ready and anxious to make immediate war upon the Americans. Colonel Hawkins's long labors in the interest of peace had been rendered fruitless, and the war party in the nation was more numerous and more firmly resolved upon mischief than ever.

Tecumseh's labors were not yet finished, however. As a shrewd politician works and argues and pleads and persuades in private as well as in his public addresses, so Tecumseh, who was a particularly shrewd politician, went all through the nation winning converts to his cause. He won many, but although he was received as an honored guest by the chief Tustinnuggee Thlucco, or the Big Warrior, he could make no impression upon that wise warrior's mind. It was not that Big Warrior was so firm a friend to the whites that nothing could arouse him to enmity. He had his grudges, and was by no means in love with things as they were; but he foresaw, as Tecumseh did not, that the war, if it should come, would bring destruction to his nation. He estimated the strength of his foes more accurately than his fellows did, and was convinced that there was no hope of success in the war which Tecumseh was trying to bring about. He was valorous enough, but he was also discreet, and he therefore obstinately remained true to his allegiance. His obstinacy at last roused Tecumseh's ire, and it was to him that Tecumseh made his celebrated threat that when he reached Detroit he would stamp his foot on the ground and shake down all the houses in Tookabatcha – a threat which it is said that an earthquake afterward led the Creeks to believe

he had carried out. The story of the earthquake is repeated by all the writers on the subject, but some of the accounts of it contradict facts and set dates at defiance; and so, while it is not impossible and perhaps not improbable that an opportune earthquake did seem to make Tecumseh's threat good, the story must be received with some caution, as the different versions of it contradict each other. So, for that matter, it is not safe to trust the records upon any point, without diligent examination and comparison. Thus the fact that the battle of Tippecanoe was fought during this Southern journey of Tecumseh makes it certain that the mission was accomplished in the year 1811; yet Pickett, in his History of Alabama, gives 1812 as the year, and several other writers follow him. Again, some of the writers to whom we must look for the facts of this part of American history confound Tecumseh's two years' sojourn among the Creeks about the year 1787 with his visit in 1811, saying that that visit lasted two years – a statement which would make great confusion in the mind of any one familiar with the history of events in the North in which Tecumseh bore a part. A careful comparison of dates shows that Tecumseh started to the South in the spring of the year 1811, and returned to the North soon after the battle of Tippecanoe was fought – that is to say, near the end of the same year.

# CHAPTER V.

## RED EAGLE AS AN ADVOCATE OF WAR – THE CIVIL WAR IN THE CREEK NATION

We have called Tecumseh a wily politician, and in whatever he undertook his methods were always those of the political manager. He was quick to discover the temper of individuals as well as of bodies of men, and he was especially shrewd in selecting his agents to work with him and for him. He was not long in picking out Red Eagle as the man of all others likely to draw the Creeks into the scheme of hostility. Red Eagle's tastes and temper, as we have already seen, were those of the savage. He was a rich man, and had all the means necessary to the enjoyment of those sports and pastimes which he delighted in; but above all else he was an Indian. He looked upon the life of the white men with distaste, and saw with displeasure the tendency of his people, and more especially of his half-breed brothers, to adopt the civilization which he loathed. Moreover, he cherished a special hatred for the Americans – a hatred which his uncle and tutor, General McGillivray, had sedulously instilled into his mind in his boyhood; and this detestation of the Americans had been strengthened by the British and Spanish at Mobile and Pensacola,

during his frequent visits to those posts. His favorite boast was that there was "no Yankee blood in his veins."

Besides his prejudice, Red Eagle's judgment taught him to fear the encroachments of the Americans, and men are always quick to hate those whom they fear. Red Eagle saw with genuine alarm that the white men were rapidly multiplying in the Tombigbee country, and he knew that the Americans had made acquisitions of new territory which would still further invite American emigration into the neighborhood of the Creek Nation. All this he saw with alarm, because he was convinced that it boded ill to his people. With many others he feared that the race which held black men in a state of slavery would reduce red men to a similar condition as soon as their own numbers in the country should be great enough to render resistance useless. Convinced of this, Red Eagle believed that it was the part of wisdom to make a fight for freedom before it should be forever too late.

Tecumseh, finding in the young chief a man of the highest influence in the nation, whose prejudices, fears, and judgment combined to make him an advocate of war, took him at once into his councils, making him his confidant and principal fellow-worker. Red Eagle eagerly seconded Tecumseh's efforts, and his influence won many, especially of the young warriors, to the war party in the nation. His knowledge of the Creeks, too, enabled him to suggest methods of winning them which his visitor would not have thought of, probably. One of these was to work directly upon their imaginations, and to enlist their superstition on the

side of war through prophets of their own, who, by continuous prophesyings, could do much to counteract the influence of the older Creek chiefs, most of whom were attached to the Americans, and being well-to-do were opposed to war, which might lose them their houses, lands, cattle, and negro slaves. The possession of property, even among partly savage men, is a strong conservative influence always.

Acting upon Red Eagle's hint, Tecumseh directed his prophet to "inspire" some Creeks with prophetic powers. The first man selected for this purpose was wisely chosen. He was a shrewd half-breed named Josiah Francis, a man whose great cunning and unscrupulousness fitted him admirably for the business of "prophet."

The prophet of the Shawnees took Francis to a cabin and shut him up alone for the space of ten days. During that time the inspiring was accomplished by the Shawnee, who danced and howled around the cabin, and performed all manner of rude gesticulations. At the end of the ten days he brought the new prophet forth, telling the people that he was now blind, but that very soon his sight – which may be said to have been taken away to be sharpened – would be restored to him, so improved that he could see all things that were to occur in the future.

Francis, of course, lent himself willingly to this imposture, and consented to be led about by the Shawnee prophet, stepping like a blind man who fears to stumble over obstacles. Suddenly he declared that he had received his vision, duly made over, with

modern improvements and prophetic attachments.

Francis used his new powers both directly and by proxy in the interest of the war party, creating many other prophets to help him, among them Siquista and High Head Jim; and the diligence with which all these workers for war carried on their prophesyings, pleadings, and speech-making increased the numbers of the war party, and added to the ill-feeling, which was already intense, between the Creeks who wished to make war and those who sought to keep the peace. The Creek nation was ripe for a civil war – a war of factions among themselves; it only needed a spark to create an explosion, and the spark was not long in coming, as we shall see.

Tecumseh, having secured so good a substitute for himself in Red Eagle, felt that his own presence was no longer needed in the Creek country. He accordingly took his departure for the north by a circuitous route, in order that he might visit the tribes on the Missouri River and in Illinois, and stir them up to hostility. He took with him the Creek chief Little Warrior, and thirty men of the nation. These Creeks accompanied him in all his wanderings until they reached Canada, where they remained a considerable time, receiving attentions of the most flattering kind from British officers and from the secret agents of the British. Upon their departure for the return journey, they were provided with letters which directed the British agents at Pensacola to provide the Creeks with arms and ammunition in abundance.

On their way back they committed an outrage which, although

it had no direct bearing upon the quarrel among the Creeks at home, proved in the end to be the beginning of that civil war which grew into a war with the whites. In the Chickasaw country they murdered seven families, and making a prisoner of a Mrs. Crawley, carried her with them to their own country. This outrageous conduct was at once reported by the Chickasaw agent to Colonel Hawkins, the agent for the Creeks, and he immediately demanded the punishment of its perpetrators. Under the compact which existed between the Creeks and the government, the chiefs of the tribe were bound to comply with this demand, upon pain of bringing the responsibility for the misdeed upon the nation, and as we have said the majority of the chiefs were anxious to fulfil their duties and thus to preserve peace. Accordingly, a council of friendly chiefs determined to arrest Little Warrior's band and punish them. They sent two parties of warriors to do this, one under command of Chief McIntosh, and the other led by Captain Isaacs. These forest policemen speedily accomplished their mission, pursuing and fighting the offenders until all of them were put to death. This was in the spring of 1812.

Justice being satisfied, the Creeks might now have remained at peace with the whites if they had joined the older chiefs in wishing to do so; but unfortunately that which placated the whites only served to incense the war party among the Creeks against both the whites and the peaceful men of their own nation. Murders and other outrages occurred frequently. The men of the

war party became truculent in their bearing, and matters were in a ferment throughout the nation. The prophets prophesied, and the orators made speeches denouncing the "peacefuls," as they called the Creeks who opposed war, as bitterly as they did the whites. The Alabamas were especially violent, probably in consequence of their close neighborhood with Red Eagle, whose influence over them was almost without limit. They committed outrages especially designed to force the beginning of war, among other things killing a mail-carrier, seizing the United States mail and carrying it to Pensacola, where they robbed the bags of their contents.

Big Warrior, who had stood so firmly against Tecumseh's threats, still held out, but he was now thoroughly aroused. He invited the chiefs of the war party to a council, but they scorned to listen to his pleas for a hearing. Failing to bring them to him, he sent a messenger to them with his "talk," which was in these words: "You are but a few Alabama people. You say that the Great Spirit visits you frequently; that he comes in the sun, and speaks to you; that the sun comes down just above your heads. Now we want to see and hear what you have seen and heard. Let us have the same proof, then we will believe. You have nothing to fear; the people who did the killing on the Ohio are put to death, and the law is satisfied."

This was a perfectly sensible, logical, reasonable talk, and for that reason it angered the men to whom it was sent. Men in a passion always resent reason when it condemns them or stands in

the way of their purposes. The Alabamas answered Big Warrior's sensible proposition by putting his messenger to death. Thus the civil war among the Creeks, for it had become that now, went on. The peaceful Indians remained true to their allegiance, and fought their hostile brethren when occasion required, although they did what they could to avoid collisions with them.

In such a time as that even civilized men become disorderly, and the hostile Creeks grew daily more and more turbulent. They collected in parties and went upon marauding expeditions, sometimes sacking a plantation, sometimes murdering a party of emigrants, sometimes making a descent upon the dwellings of peaceful Creeks, and doing all manner of mischief.

The long-threatened war between the United States and Great Britain had been formally declared in the year 1812, and it was now the spring of 1813. The Americans at the beginning of the war had asserted their title to the town and harbor of Mobile, which, although a part of the territory ceded many years before to this country by the French, had until now been held by the Spanish. The affair was so well managed that the place was surrendered without bloodshed and occupied by the American forces; but its surrender served to increase the hostility of the Spanish in Florida, and although we were nominally at peace with Spain, the Spanish authorities at Pensacola, who had already done much to stir up Indian hostilities, lent themselves readily to the schemes of the British. During the latter part of August, 1812, they went so far as to permit a British force to land at

Pensacola, take possession of the fort there, and make the place a base of military operations against us.

From the very beginning of the troubles the Indians had maintained communication with Pensacola, and parties of them went thither frequently to procure arms and ammunition, which were freely furnished. It was with one of these parties, on their return from Pensacola, that the first battle of the Creek war was fought. Of that we shall hear in another chapter. Meantime it is worth while to explain how the plans of the war party were discovered in time to save many lives.

A friendly half-breed, McNac by name, was driven from his home by one of the petty marauding parties spoken of a few pages back, and his cattle were carried to Pensacola by the marauders, and sold. After hiding in the swamps for some time, McNac at last ventured out at night to visit his home and see precisely what damage had been done. He was unlucky enough to meet High Head Jim at the head of a party of hostile Indians, and as there was no chance of safety either in flight or fight, McNac resorted to diplomacy, which in this case, as in many others, meant vigorous lying. He declared that he had abandoned his peaceful proclivities, and had made up his mind to join the war party. McNac appears to have had something like a genius for lying, as he succeeded in imposing his fabrications upon High Head Jim, who, suspicious and treacherous as he was, believed McNac implicitly, and confided to him the plan of the hostile Creeks. This plan was to kill Big Warrior, Captain

Isaacs, McIntosh, Mad Dragon's Son, and the other friendly chiefs, before going finally upon the war-path, and, having thus deprived the friendly Creeks of their leaders, to compel them to join in the war upon the Americans. Then, High Head Jim said, the war would begin by simultaneous attacks upon the various settlements. Having exterminated the whites upon their borders, they were to march in three columns against the people of Tennessee, Georgia, and Mississippi, receiving assistance from the Choctaws and the Cherokees.

McNac bore this information at once to the intended victims, and thus enabled them to secure their safety in various ways; but the civil war increased in its fury. The hostile bands still confined themselves as yet chiefly to attacks upon the peaceful members of their own nation, destroying their houses, killing or driving off their cattle, and stealing whatever portable property they possessed.

Colonel Hawkins still hoped for peace, rather unreasonably, it must be confessed, and avoided interference as far as possible; but he extended protection to Big Warrior, and with the assistance of a force of friendly Creeks rescued that chieftain and escorted him to a place of safety.

In such a state of affairs, of course, a collision between the whites and the Indians was inevitable, and when it came, as will be related in the next chapter, the Creek war of 1813 was begun.

## CHAPTER VI.

# THE BATTLE OF BURNT CORN

In the month of July, 1813, Peter McQueen, High Head Jim, and the Prophet Francis, having collected a large amount of plunder in their descents upon the homes of peaceful Indians and the plantations of half-breeds, sought a market for their booty. Collecting their followers to the number of about three hundred men, they loaded a number of pack-horses, and set out for Pensacola, driving a herd of stolen cattle before them. It was their purpose to exchange these things at Pensacola for arms, ammunition, whiskey, and whatever else they wanted; and combining pleasure with business, they amused themselves on the route by burning villages and committing murders upon Indians who persisted in their friendship for the whites.

Meantime the white people had at last become thoroughly alarmed. The news which McNac brought of his conversation with High Head Jim convinced even the most sceptical that a war of greater or smaller proportions was at hand, and it was the conviction of the wisest men among them that the best way to save themselves from impending destruction was to strike in time. The British had now begun seriously to threaten a descent upon the south-west, and it seemed to be more than probable that the savages were only delaying their general outbreak until

their allies the British should appear somewhere upon the coast, and force the militia of the Tensaw and Tombigbee settlements to march away to meet them. Then the country would be defenceless, and the Indians could easily exterminate all that remained of the white population.

The pioneers who lived in that part of the country were brave, hardy, and resolute men, and they no sooner saw their danger distinctly than they took up arms with which to defend themselves. They resolved to assert their resolution by attacking not the Indian towns, but the roving parties of Indian outlaws who were bringing the war about. If they could crush these, punishing them effectually, they thought, the great body of the Creeks would think twice before deciding to make the contemplated war.

Accordingly a summons was sent out for volunteers. About two hundred men, or nearly that number, some of them white men, some half-breeds, and some friendly Indians, promptly answered the call. Among them was Captain Samuel Dale, better known in history as Sam Dale, the hero of the canoe fight, one of the strangest and most desperate affairs of the war, some account of which will be given in its proper place.

This little army was commanded by Colonel Caller, assisted by one lieutenant-colonel, four majors, and more captains and lieutenants than have been counted. Deducting these from the total force, we are led to the conviction that there must have been an average of about one officer to every two men; but even this

enormous proportion of officers did not prevent the men from behaving badly in the presence of the enemy and getting sharply beaten, as will be related presently.

When the several companies composing this expedition were brought together, the line of march was taken toward Pensacola, with the purpose of encountering Peter McQueen and his force on their return. On the morning of July 27th, 1813, the advance scouts came in and reported that McQueen's force was encamped upon Burnt Corn Creek, just in advance of Caller's column, and that officer promptly determined to attack them.

Forming his men in line he advanced cautiously through the reeds until the Indian camp lay just below. Then, with a yell, the men dashed forward to the charge, and after a few moments' resistance the surprised and beaten Indians abandoned their camp with its horses and its rich stores of ammunition and food, and fled precipitately to the creek, by which the camp was encircled except upon the side from which the white men came. Dale, who was a born Indian fighter, Captain Dixon Bailey, and Captain Smoot – who were also resolute men and good officers, Bailey being an educated half-breed – saw at a glance that to pursue the flying savages was to crush them utterly; and they therefore led their men, some seventy-five or eighty in number, forward, and crowded the Indians as closely as possible. Had they been promptly supported, McQueen's force would have been utterly destroyed, and there might have been no Creek war for us to write and read about. Unluckily the other officers were less

wise than Dale and Bailey and Smoot. When the Indians gave way and ran, leaving their camp with its pack-horses loaded with goods, the officers and men of the main body supposed that their work was done. Instead of joining in the pursuit, they broke their ranks, threw down their arms, and busied themselves securing the plunder.

Peter McQueen was a shrewd fellow in his way, and he was not long in discovering the weakness of the force which had followed him to the creek. Rallying his men he gave them battle, and began pressing them back. Colonel Caller, who was leading the advance, instead of ordering his main body to the front, as a more experienced officer would have done, determined to fall back upon them as a reserve. Dale, Smoot, and Bailey could have maintained their position while waiting for the reinforcements to come up, but when ordered to fall back upon the main body, their brave but untrained and inexperienced men retreated rather hastily. The men of the main body, having broken ranks to plunder, were in no condition to resist panic, and seeing the advance companies retreating, with the yelling Indians at their heels, they fled precipitately. Caller, Dale, Bailey, and Smoot tried to rally them, but succeeded only in getting eighty men into line. This small force, commanded by their brave officers, made a desperate stand, and brought the advancing savages to a halt. Dale was severely wounded, but he fought on in spite of his suffering and his weakness. Finally, seeing that they were overmatched and that their comrades had abandoned them to

their fate, the little band retreated, fighting as they went, until at last the Indians abandoned the pursuit. Some of the Americans went home, others became lost and were found, nearly dead with fatigue and starvation, about a fortnight later.

Thus ended the battle of Burnt Corn. It was lost to the white men solely by the misconduct of officers and men, but that misconduct was the result of inexperience and a want of discipline, not of cowardice or any lack of manhood.

The Indians were badly hurt. Their losses, though not known definitely, are known to have been greater than those of the whites, of whom only two were killed and fifteen wounded. They had lost their pack-horses, and nearly all the fruits of their journey to Pensacola, so that they were forced to return to that post to procure fresh supplies.

The affair was a much more serious disaster to the whites, however, than at first appeared. The expedition had been undertaken for the purpose of destroying McQueen's party, and thereby intimidating the war-inclined Creeks. In that it had utterly failed. The Creeks were victors, though they had suffered loss. Their victory encouraged them, and their losses still further incensed them. The war which before was threatened was now actually begun. The first battle had been fought, and others must follow of necessity. The Creeks believed themselves to be able to exterminate the whites, and they were now determined to do so.

In this determination they were strengthened not merely by the general countenance given to them at Pensacola, but by

very specific and urgent advice from the British and Spanish officers there, who, as we learn from official documents, urged the Creeks to make the war at once, saying:

"If they [the Americans] prove too hard for you, send your women and children to Pensacola and we will send them to Havana; and if you should be compelled to fly yourselves, and the Americans should prove too hard for both of us, there are vessels enough to take us all off together."

## CHAPTER VII.

# RED EAGLE'S ATTEMPT TO ABANDON HIS PARTY

Red Eagle, as we have already related, was the most active and efficient leader of the war party during all the time of preparation. At last the war which he had so earnestly sought to bring about had come, but it had not come in the way in which he had hoped, and Red Eagle hesitated.

In the first place the war had come too soon. Red Eagle was too shrewd and too well informed to believe the predictions of his prophets Siquista and Francis, who told the Creeks that if they would completely abandon those things which they had learned of the whites and become utter savages, not one of them should be killed in the war; that the Great Spirit would rain down fire upon the whites, create quagmires in their path, cause the earth to open and swallow them, and draw charmed circles around the camps of the Creeks, into which no white man could come without immediately falling down dead. Like many another shrewd leader, Red Eagle was willing to make use of this sort of appeals to superstition, while he was himself unaffected by them. He saw clearly enough that the white men were strong, because he knew that their numbers and resources were not limited by what he could see. He knew that armies would come from other

quarters of the country to aid the settlers on the Tombigbee River and in the Tensaw settlement. Therefore he did not wish to undertake what he knew would be a severe contest, single-handed. He wanted to wait until Tecumseh, who had promised to return, should come; he was disposed to wait also for the British to land a force somewhere on the coast before beginning the war.

Moreover, his schemes and his advocacy of war had been from the first founded upon his conviction that the friendship of the Creeks and half-breeds in the lower towns for the whites would give way when they should see that the war was inevitable. He had sought to bring about a war in which the whole Creek nation should be united against the whites; what he had brought about was a very different affair. He now saw that the friendliness of the people of the lower towns, who were his nearest friends and kinsmen, including his brother, Jack Weatherford, and his half-brother, David Tait, was much more firmly fixed than he had imagined. He had supposed that it was merely the indisposition of rich men to imperil their property by bringing on a state of war; he now knew that it was a fixed purpose to remain at peace with the white men, and even to join them in fighting the Creeks whenever the war should come. If he had cherished a doubt of this so long, he had proof of it in the presence of some of these friends of his in the American force at the battle of Burnt Corn, whither they had gone as volunteers.

All this put a totally different face upon matters. Red Eagle was eager for a war between the Creeks and whites, but a war

between a part of the Creeks on the one hand, and the rest of the Creeks with the whites on the other, a war in which he must fight his own brothers and his nearest friends, was a very different and much less attractive affair.

There was still another cause of Red Eagle's hesitation at this time – perhaps a stronger cause than either of the others. He was in love, and his sweetheart was among the people whom he must fight if he fought at all. He was a rich planter, and lived at this time on a fine place near the Holy Ground, and being a young widower he had conceived a passionate fancy for one Lucy Cornells, a young girl of mixed Indian and white blood, who has been described by persons who knew her as very attractive and beautiful. However that may be, it is certain that Red Eagle's devotion to her was profound.

This girl's father, when McNac's discovery of the Indian plans spread consternation through the settlements, fled with his daughter to the Tensaw country and took refuge in Fort Mims; and Red Eagle had thus a sweetheart added to the list of persons near and dear to him, whose lives he must put in danger if he went to war. Anticipating the events of this history somewhat, it may as well be added here that Red Eagle's love for this maiden prompted him, when he was about to attack Fort Mims, to give secret warning to her father, as is believed upon evidence accepted at the time as satisfactory. Cornells left the fort before the attack, and although he remained with the whites and fought with them in the war, Red Eagle was permitted to carry off his

daughter to the nation.

Let us return to the time of which we write in this chapter. All these things were strong inducements to Red Eagle to abandon his warlike purposes, but it was now too late for him to still the storm he had raised. Had he now preached peace among his warlike followers, his life would not have been worth a day's purchase.

He kept his own counsel, and in his perplexity determined, about the time of the battle of Burnt Corn, to seek the advice of his brother, Jack Weatherford, and his half-brother, David Tait. Making his way to their places on Little River, he laid the whole case before his relatives. They advised him secretly to remove his family, his negroes, and so much of his live-stock as might be, to their plantations, which lay within the friendly district, and, quitting the nation, to remain quietly with them until the troubles should come to an end, taking no part in the war on either side.

After reflecting upon the matter, Red Eagle determined to act upon this advice; and thus the Creeks were very near losing the services of that chieftain whose genius alone enabled them to maintain their war with any hope of success. When Red Eagle returned to his plantation to put this plan into operation, however, he found that it was now too late. Knowing at least some of the reasons their chief had for abandoning his support of their cause, some of the hostile Creeks had visited his house in his absence, and had seized upon his children and his negroes, holding them as hostages for his fidelity. They plainly told him of their doubts

of him, and threatened to kill his children if he should falter for a moment.

There was nothing left for him to do but yield to his fate, and boldly lead his men to battle against the foes whom he cordially hated. His Rubicon was crossed, his die was cast, and there was no possibility of retreat.

## CHAPTER VIII.

# CLAIBORNE AND RED EAGLE

If Weatherford was at last ready to enter upon the long-contemplated war, so too the white people at last began to understand that their hopes of a reconciliation of some kind with the Creeks were delusive, and they began to take measures for their defence. Even yet, however, they seem to have had no adequate conception of the real nature and extent of the storm that was brewing. Their measures of defence were not proportioned to the need, were not of the right kind, except in part, and were carried forward lazily, listlessly, and apparently with a deep-seated conviction that, after all, the making of preparation might be a useless waste of labor in anticipation of a danger which might never come.

There can be little doubt that if these people had fully understood their own situation they could and would have saved themselves by adopting a vigorous offensive policy from the outset. Colonel Caller's expedition to Burnt Corn was a type and example of what they ought to have attempted. They should have struck the first blows, and should have followed them up as rapidly as possible. If they had understood their own situation they would probably have done this. They would have organized the whole population into an army, and if they had

done this they might almost certainly have conquered a peace with comparatively small loss to themselves before Weatherford had time to bring his roving parties together for the contest.

Instead of this, however, the only attempt that was made to meet hostility half-way – the Burnt Corn expedition – ended in failure, and the men who had undertaken it dispersed to their homes. It was now too late for a policy of offensive defence. The battle of Burnt Corn was followed by an immediate concentration of the hostile Creeks, and the most that could be done by the whites to avert the threatened destruction was to fortify certain central posts and send messengers for assistance.

The method of fortifying was the same in all cases, with such variations of detail as the nature of the ground, the number of men engaged in the construction of the works, and the other circumstances of each case rendered necessary. In general plan the so-called forts were nearly square, the most elaborate of them being constructed upon the plan of Fort Mims, which is represented on another page. Whatever their form was, they were made of timbers set on end in the ground, as close together as possible, forming a close and high wall, pierced with port-holes for the use of riflemen. Heavy gates were provided, and within the inclosure strong block-houses were built, in which a stout resistance could be made even after the outer works should be carried.

There were more than a score of these forts in different parts of the settlements. In that part of the peninsula formed by the

Alabama and Tombigbee rivers which now constitutes Clarke County, Alabama, there were stockades built, which were known as Fort Glass, Fort Sinquefield, etc., each taking its name from the owner of the place fortified.

Into these forts the people now began to flock in anticipation of a general outbreak; and they were none too soon, as Weatherford had already collected his men in considerable numbers. The principal fort was on the plantation of one Samuel Mims, a rich Indian or man of mixed blood, who lived on the little lake called Tensaw, or Tensas, as it is now sometimes spelled on the maps, which lies within about a mile of the Alabama River, a few miles above the confluence of that river with the Tombigbee. Mims's place was near the high-road which led to Mims's ferry, and hence was a natural centre of the neighborhood.

Mims and his neighbors, with the help of a number of half-breed refugees from the Creek nation, constructed there a large stockade fortress, and the people of the surrounding country, white, black, red, and mixed, congregated there for safety.

Meantime the appearance of a British fleet off the coast had awakened the government to the danger in which Mobile lay, and on the 28th of June, 1813, Brigadier-General Ferdinand L. Claiborne, a distinguished soldier who had won a fine reputation in the Indian wars of the North-west, was ordered, with what force he had, to march from the post of Baton Rouge to Fort Stoddard, a military station on the Mobile River, not far below

the confluence of the Alabama and Tombigbee rivers.

Upon receiving this order General Claiborne made application for the necessary funds and supplies, but the quartermaster could put no more than two hundred dollars into his army chest – a sum wholly inadequate to the purpose. But Claiborne was not a man to permit small obstacles to interfere with affairs of importance. He borrowed the necessary funds upon his personal credit, giving a mortgage upon his property as security, and boldly set out with his little army. It is worth while to note in passing that, in consequence of the loss of vouchers for his expenditures upon the expedition, General Claiborne's patriotic act cost him the whole amount borrowed, his property being sold after his death, as we learn from a note in Pickett's History of Alabama, to satisfy the mortgage.

Arriving at Fort Stoddard with his army of seven hundred men on the thirtieth day of July, General Claiborne at once sought the fullest and most trustworthy information to be had with respect to the condition of the country, the forces and designs of the Indians, and the strength and situation of the various forts.

Having thus made himself master of the conditions of the problem which he was set to solve, he distributed his forces and the volunteers who were at command, among the various stockade posts in such a way as to give the best protection he could to every part of the country.

To Fort Mims he sent Major Beasley, with one hundred and seventy-five men, who, with seventy militiamen already there,

swelled the force at that post to two hundred and forty-five fighting men. Major Beasley, upon taking command, organized his raw troops into something resembling a battalion, and strengthened the fort by erecting a second line of picketing outside the original gates.

Believing the post to be strong enough to spare a part of the force under his command, Major Beasley sent detachments to various other and weaker posts, acting upon the principle of protecting all points, which had governed General Claiborne.

Besides the troops, who were simply all the men in the fort, every man capable of shooting a gun being enrolled as a soldier, there were women and children at Fort Mims, who had fled thither from the country for protection, so that the total number of persons there exceeded five hundred; the exact number is differently stated by different writers, but the most trustworthy account, drawn from several original sources, places the population of the place at five hundred and fifty-three souls. The lives of all these people were committed to the keeping of Major Beasley, who was clothed with ample authority, and free from embarrassing dictation or interference of any kind. His fort was a strong one, and in sending away some of his men to assist the garrisons of other posts he himself testified that the force which remained was sufficient for the need. His failure to use these means effectually for the protection of the lives over which he was set as guardian was clearly inexcusable, and although he bravely sacrificed his own life in an attempt to retrieve his fault,

he could do nothing to undo its terrible consequences. His fault was not cowardice, but a lack of caution, an utter and inexcusable lack of that prudence and foresight which are as indispensable in a commander as personal courage itself.

It appears that alarms were frequent in the fort, as was to be expected in a place full of women and children, credulous negroes, and excited militiamen. These alarms Beasley reported to General Claiborne, and in doing so he probably gave that capable and experienced officer some hint of his own lack of prudence. At any rate, General Claiborne thought it necessary to issue a general order to Major Beasley, directing him to strengthen his works, use caution in the conduct of affairs, and neglect no means of making the safety of the fort certain. The order ended with this significant sentence: "To respect an enemy and prepare in the best possible way to meet him, is the certain means to insure success." All the work done by Major Beasley to strengthen the works was done in obedience to special orders from Claiborne, and even what he specifically ordered done appears to have been done only in part. He directed Major Beasley, for one thing, to build two additional block-houses, but that officer contented himself with beginning to build one, which was never finished.

With matters in Fort Mims, and the results of Major Beasley's management there, we shall have to do in another chapter. We have first to look at the general situation of affairs as they stood during August, 1813, before Weatherford – for by that

name, rather than Red Eagle, he is known to the history of what followed – struck his first tremendous blow.

Weatherford had collected his men in the upper towns, and was now moving down the river, managing his advance very skilfully, after the manner of regularly educated military men. In small affairs the Indian general followed the tactics of his race, depending upon cunning and silent creeping for the concealment of his movements, but he was too able an officer to fall into the mistake of supposing that an army could be advanced in this way for a long distance in secret. He knew that his movements would be watched very closely and promptly reported. He therefore resorted to strategy – or rather to sound methods of grand tactics – as a means of concealing, not the fact that he was advancing, but the real direction and objective point of his advance. He moved southward, taking care to make demonstrations upon his flank which were calculated to deceive his enemy. He threatened the settlements in the peninsula, and constantly kept up a front of observation in a direction different from that in which his main body was actually moving. In this way he managed to advance to McGirth's plantation, on the Alabama River, in the neighborhood of the place where the town of Claiborne now stands, without revealing the purpose of his advance, and as this halting point was one at which his presence seemed to threaten an attack upon Fort Glass, Fort Siquefield, and the other posts in what is now Clarke County, his real purpose was still effectually concealed.

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