

### THE LAST OF AN INDIAN VILLAGE.

ON March 16th and 17th the *Indianapolis News* and other papers contained news of the discovery, on the east bank of the Wabash river three miles south of Lafayette, of an old Indian burial ground. The substance of the report was that "Michael O'Brien, who lives on Sand Ridge, had discovered half an acre of bones, human and animal, deer antlers, shells, etc., beside the Rising Clubhouse."

Before this publication Mr. Alva O. Reser, well known to many of the readers of this magazine, and an authority upon the early history of Indiana, visited the place. He has kindly sent a full account of the most important circumstances in a letter dated Lafayette, May 2d, 1908.

"I was on the ground before any of the bones were carried away, Mr. O'Brien having telephoned to me. I went down on a boat and landed about a quarter of a mile below the mouth of the Wea, on the east side. The overflow of the Wabash had washed away a seeming mound of sand, and there were human bones scattered over a surface about the size of a half-acre, and the bones were about as thick as corn stalks in a corn field. Most of the bones were broken. It seemed that the Wabash had just about washed down to the position of the dead and in one instance we found the legs, and with a stick scratched out all the bones of the upper extremities and head. The body seemed to be with head to the west. There were scattered around a large number of pieces of deer horns, and many burned rocks and shells. This was undoubtedly the site of an Indian village, and it was just across the river from where Ft. Ouiatenon had been. Just below Ouiatenon, on the west side of the Wabash, a ditch was lately dug through a sand ridge, and many bones and Indian relics found. A few years ago at this point a front bone of the arm was found with a silver bracelet on it. There is no doubt that the land just below the mouth of the Wea was a scene of great activity in the early days, because of the many relics, bones

and things used by the people found there. Part of an oven, the shape and all preserved, has been found."

This Indian village was in existence from early in the eighteenth century, probably before 1718. According to the best evidences (cf. Dillon, *Indiana*, pp. 262, 401-403, and Dunn, *Indiana*, pp. 49-50) the principal village was two or three miles lower down the river on the same side. As Indian villages were not very substantial, the relatively large population centering around the rapids which marked the head of navigation for the larger boats, may well have shifted from place to place. Certainly at many times there was a large number of Indians living on the site where these bones have been unearthed. Largely on this account the French fort of Ouiatenon was established (about 1720) at this part of the river on the opposite side. The French post probably drew an increased Indian population. We hear of Kickapoos and Musquattimes dwelling on the west side very near the fort. The Weas were chiefly on the east side and their warriors were at times estimated as high as a thousand or twelve hundred. Trade in furs and skins was carried on here on a large scale, being valued between 1764 and 1775 at something like £8,000 annually.

The small French post, as is well known, came into the possession of the English after the French and Indian War. During Pontiac's conspiracy the little garrison was taken captive and held as prisoners by the Indians of the neighborhood, who were inclined to be friendly themselves, but yielded to this extent to the plans of the other Indians. The post apparently was not re-established and the stockade with its dozen or so enclosed dwellings soon decayed. The site is now marked by a monument.

About ten or twelve years later most of the Indians were gathered in a village (Kath-tip-e-ca-nunk) some eighteen miles up the river on the west side. During the troubles with the Indians which arose after the American conquest of the Northwest, these towns were raided by the Americans. Full reports of the raids of Brigadier-Generals Scott and Williamson in 1791, in which comparatively few Indians were killed, but in which their towns, including the one in question, were destroyed, can be read in Dillon's *History of Indiana*, pp. 263-5, 271.