

June 2, 1902

The Coming of a Distinguished Woman.

The ladies of Portage are to have as a guest next week Mrs. Charlotte Ouisconsin Van Cleve, who will come here under the auspices of the Board of Woman's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian church, and during her visit here she will address the people at the Presbyterian church on Wednesday evening, June 9th, on the subject of Foreign Missions.

A more particular announcement will be made hereafter.

This remarkable lady has a history of her own that makes her at once a most interesting personage apart from the distinction she has achieved in her own chosen field of foreign missionary work, and labor in other lines of Christian work, and as an authoress.

She was born July 2, 1819, in old Fort Crawford, where her father, Nathan Clark, had been ordered to report for duty, soon after the family reached there. And so she has the honor of having been the first woman of pure white blood born within the present limits of the state of Wisconsin, which was then a component part of the Territory of Michigan.

The young lady was christened by her parents Charlotte Clark, but the soldiers at the fort, in honor of the unusual event, and desiring to be recognized in the proceedings in some manner, decided that the new comer should bear "Ouisconsin" as a portion of her patronymic and it was readily adopted.

All of her early life was spent on the frontier and in the military posts of Forts Crawford, Snelling and Winnebago. In 1827 her father was on duty at Nashville, Tenn., and the family was on intimate terms with Andrew Jackson. Mrs. Van Cleve was then but eight years of age, but her impressions of Gen. Jackson were so distinct that they were at Mr. Parton's request reduced to writing and appear as a part of "Parton's Life of Jackson."

Mrs. Van Cleve's father, Major Nathan Clark, was in command of the post at Fort Winnebago and died there in the winter of 1836. The daughter was mar-

ried to Lt. H. P. Van Cleve, March 22d of the same year, at seventeen years of age, and they took their departure from the fort in the fall of the same year. And now, after an absence of sixty-one years, she returns to the scenes of her girlhood.

She will be driven of course, during her stay here, to the site of the "Dear Old Fort," as she affectionately refers to it, but, alas! there will be but little to remind her of it as she had known it. The fort buildings proper disappeared long ago, and only the old commissary building, greatly dilapidated, and a portion of the surgeon's headquarters now remain. The site of the old fort is now occupied by Merrell's farm house, and the parade ground is no longer surrounded by the beautiful palisade, but is a portion of the farm. The old well, indeed, is still there and she may partake of its cooling waters now as she had often done in the years long gone; and the stump of the old flag staff which had been planted by Jefferson Davis she still may see. A little in the distance she will readily recognize the "Agency" House occupied by her dear friends, the Kinzies, still in good form, having only undergone such changes as were needful for proper repairs, but "the memory of the weekly musicals at John Kinzie's pleasant "agency," as she has written in a charming little volume titled 'Three Score Years and Ten,' "and the delightful rides on horseback over the portage to where the city of Portage now stands quickens the heartbeats even now" will come back to her. In the same chapter she continued: "But where are all those who then called that quadrangle 'home?'" And she enumerated Col. Cutler, Maj. Green, Captain Low, Lieutenants Van Cleve, Johnston, Hooc, Collingsworth, Lacy, McClure, Ruggles, Reid, Whipple, Doctors Satterlee, McDougal and Foote and Sutlers Merrell and Clark and her father. Pathetically she adds: "Alas! of all these but one answers to the roll call, and he and I hold in sweet remembrance the dear

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MRS. CHARLOTTE OUISCONSIN VAN CLEVE.

friends of our youth, and the beloved old fort where He who hath let us graciously all our days, first brought together and blessed us with each other's love, and we thank him from our hearts that He has spared us to each other for so many years." Her husband, so lovingly referred to, has since passed over the river, but during his life time he achieved great distinction as a brigadier general in the war for the Union.

She will instinctively revert to those names and scenes "when fond recollection presents them to view," and her repose may be feverish that night. But the bridle-path, over the portage and through the oak-openings that covered the site of Portage, she will be unable to trace; shaded avenues and paved streets have replaced them. The old log church

have disappeared and instead many beautiful church edifices will appear. The Baraboo hill will appear now, as then, in the distance, beautifully clad in verdure; and she will be able to locate the spot where the soldiers were tented on the prairie in front of the fort, where Gens. Taylor and Gaines came from Fort Crawford, under orders, and she as a young bride entertained these illustrious soldiers at her own table, and the memory of her intimate friend, the charming Miss Knox Taylor, whom Jefferson Davis made his wife in a clandestine manner, greatly to the grief of her companions, will return to her. But of familiar faces she will see none after this lapse of more than sixty years. She may indeed meet and recall the name of Therese, the daughter of the famous Paquette, who was highly regard-

then a miss of twelve years, was living with her father at the trading post, and she still lives in an adjoining town; and again, she may see upon our streets the old Indian John Dixon, who was a favorite guide to the rice fields of the Fox and Neenah and plied his paddle* so deftly that he was in much demand by the officers for his services.

So, while this estimable lady returns to the scenes of her girlhood to view them in their changed condition, and to speak some words on those subjects which so engross her mind and enlists her labors, she will receive a cordial welcome from the generations who have come after her and who although strangers to her in person are cognizant of her history and know and appreciate her nobleness of character. A royal welcome to the venerated lady awaits her.