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in many ways supplements the accounts of Lewis and Clark. His ethnological distinctions are less minute; but his remarks upon the polity, slavery, marriage, warfare, and religion of the natives west of the Rocky Mountains are worthy of attention. His skill in Indian languages, as well as long residence in the country, gave him unusual opportunity for acquiring valuable information of every sort. At the present time, when we are celebrating the close of a century after the expedition of Lewis and Clark, the reprinting of this journal of one who followed closely on their footsteps, is of peculiar importance.

As in the previous volumes of the series, Louise Phelps Kellogg, Ph. D., has given valuable assistance in the preparation of notes; and some further aid has been received from Edith Kathryn Lyle, Ph. D., and Homer C. Hockett, B. A.

R. G. T.

MADISON, WIS., July, 1904.

BRACKENRIDGE'S JOURNAL OF A VOYAGE UP THE RIVER  
MISSOURI IN 1811

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Reprint of the second edition (Baltimore, 1816). Parts I, II, and IV  
of the Appendix are here omitted, as irrelevant.





**JOURNAL**  
**OF**  
**A VOYAGE**  
**UP THE RIVER MISSOURI;**

**PERFORMED**

**IN EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND ELEVEN,**

**BY H. M. BRACKENRIDGE, Esq.**

**SECOND EDITION,**  
*Revised and Enlarged by the Author.*



**BALTIMORE:**  
**PUBLISHED BY COALE AND MAXWELL,**  
*At the Reading Rooms, No. 204 Market street.*  
Pomeroy & Toy, printers.  
**1816.**

DISTRICT OF MARYLAND, To wit:

BE IT REMEMBERED, that on this eighth day of December, in the fortieth year of the Independence of the United States [Seal] of America, Coale & Maxwell, of the said District, have deposited in this Office, the Title of a Book, the right whereof they claim as Proprietors, in the words and figures following, to wit:

“Journal of a Voyage up the River Missouri; performed in eighteen hundred and eleven, by H. M. Brackenridge, Esq., second edition, revised and enlarged by the author.”

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled, “An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned;” and also to the Act entitled, “An act supplementary to an Act, entitled, ‘An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and Proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned,’ and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of Designing, Engraving, and Etching historical and other prints.”

PHILIP MOORE,

*Clerk of the District of Maryland.*

## PREFACE

THE following is the Journal of a voyage, of four or five months, on the Missouri river, beyond the settlements. The voyage was undertaken in the spirit of adventure, which characterises so many of our countrymen, and with little or no expectation of profit or advantage. The accounts received from different persons had greatly excited my curiosity. The conversation of Manuel Lisa, a man of an ardent and enterprising character, and one of the most celebrated of those who traverse the Indian country, had inflamed my mind with the desire of attempting something of a similar nature. I set off with the intention of making a summer excursion, as a simple hunter, unprovided with the means of making mathematical observations, but little [iv] acquainted with any of the branches of natural history, and without once imagining that I should ever publish the result of my observations. Afterwards, having published a volume, under the title of "Views of Louisiana," the present Journal was placed in the appendix. But having been at first written in a loose and careless manner, the style, I fear, notwithstanding the corrections it has undergone, still retains too much of its original defect. There are certainly many things which might be omitted; there are also topics, which the reader will be disappointed in finding untouched: to this, I must answer, that having already entered into a variety of details, in something like a regular and systematic work, it would be improper to repeat them here.

The author aims at no higher ambition, than to afford some amusement to his fellow-citizens, by a simple detail of the incidents of his tour. On one subject, however, he

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hopes this little volume will not be useless to the public; that is, in conveying something like an exact idea of the extent to which the immense regions west of the Mississippi are susceptible of population. This is a consideration [v] to the statesman of no small moment. In developing the resources of a great empire, destined in twenty-five years hence, to contain twenty millions of souls, a correct estimate of the amount of its habitable territory is surely not unimportant. It is with this view chiefly, that I have been induced to publish this Journal in a separate volume, as in this way it will have a tendency to produce a more general acquaintance with a portion of our country, so vast in extent and so interesting in its character.

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# BRACKENRIDGE'S JOURNAL

## CHAPTER I<sup>1</sup>

Motives of the Voyage — Set off from St. Charles — Navigation of the Missouri — A militia captain.

BEFORE the memorable expedition of Lewis and Clark, none was found adventurous enough to penetrate that extensive portion of our continent, more than a few hundred miles. It was almost as little known to us, as the interior of New Holland, or the deserts of Africa. After the return of those celebrated travellers, several Indian traders were induced to extend the sphere of their enterprise, and one of them, Manuel Lisa, ascended the Missouri almost to its source. These enterprising individuals meeting with considerable success, a trading company [2] or association followed, under the name of THE MISSOURI FUR COMPANY, formed in the hope of carrying on this business more extensively than it had hitherto been practised, and, in time, of rivalling even the British associations in Canada. The company was composed of twelve persons, with a capital of about forty thousand dollars. A small sum it is true, but as much as was necessary for a beginning. The company engaged about two hundred and fifty men, Canadians and Americans;

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<sup>1</sup> As Brackenridge followed closely upon the route taken by Bradbury, the author of the *Travels* published as vol. v of our series, references to notes in the latter will for the most part be made at the beginning of each chapter. For reference to Missouri Fur Company, see note 149 of vol. v; Blackfoot Indians, note 120; Andrew Henry, note 124; Manuel Lisa, note 64; St. Charles, note 9; Wilson P. Hunt, note 2; Tavern Rock, note 12; Point l'Abbadie, note 13; La Charette, note 15; Potawatomi Indians, note 21.— ED.

the first for the purpose of navigating the boats, but the latter as hunters: for it was their intention to hunt as well as trade. In the spring of 1808, they ascended the Missouri in barges, and left trading establishments in the Sioux country, also among the Arikaras and Mandans. After this they proceeded with the main body to the three forks of the Missouri; about three thousand miles from its source. The junction of the three rivers, Jefferson, Madison, and Galatin, are considered as forming the Missouri. The surrounding country, when compared with the bare plains of the Missouri, may be called woody, and from its situation is well supplied with mountain streams. That ingenious and [3] persecuted little animal, the beaver, is found here in great numbers, and this was the principal inducement for the company in establishing themselves here. But it is not in the power of those who adventure in untried paths, to foresee all the obstacles which lie in the way. It is seldom the first adventurer, who reaps the profits derived from opening a new road of enterprise; it is some one who follows him, and takes warning from his misfortunes. The country about the sources of the Missouri, forms a part of the tract wandered over by a nation of Indians, called the *Blackfoot*, a ferocious savage race, who have conceived the most deadly hatred to the Americans. This hatred is partly owing to an unfortunate rencontre between one of the natives and captain Lewis. On that gentleman's return from the Columbia, in pursuing some of these Indians who had stolen some articles from his camp he killed one of them by a shot from his rifle. Something may also be ascribed to the instigation of British traders, and perhaps to the jealousies of the Indians themselves, on seeing white hunters coming to establish themselves in their country and to destroy the beaver. However this may be, [4] it was not long after the establishment of the company and their building a fort,



before the Blackfeet commenced hostilities. A hunting party of the whites, consisting of ten or twelve, whilst encamped on a small stream, were suddenly attacked, four of them killed and the rest escaped with difficulty. It was now found necessary to go out on their hunting parties in considerable strength, which put them to great inconvenience, and rendered their success in hunting of little or no account; they were besides subject to frequent attacks, which harrassed them exceedingly. Instead of three hundred packs, upon which they might have calculated had they remained unmolested, they hardly procured thirty the first year: and the second none at all. The party was reduced to about sixty persons, by the detachments left at the different trading establishments below, and by persons sent off with such furs as had been collected: add to this, about twenty had fallen in the different skirmishes with the Indians. Mr. Henry, one of the members of the company, who had the command of the party, finding his situation extremely precarious, crossed the Rocky Mountains, and established [5] himself on one of the branches of the Columbia, where he remained until the spring of 1811, the period at which I ascended the Missouri.

In the mean time the establishments at the Mandan and Arikara nations brought no profit, and at the Sioux establishment, after collecting buffaloe robes and beaver fur to the amount of fifteen or twenty thousand dollars, the factory took fire and the whole was burnt. It was now a prevailing opinion that the affairs of the company were completely ruined. Beside their losses it was not known at this time what had become of Mr. Henry and his party, who had not been heard of for more than a year. In this state of things, it was resolved, in the spring of 1811, to make one more effort, and if possible retrieve their losses. It was moreover considered as a duty to carry relief to their distressed com-

panions, and bring them home. Manuel Lisa was chosen to undertake this arduous task. A man of a bold and daring character, with an energy and spirit of enterprise like that of Cortez or Pizarro. There is no one better acquainted with the Indian character and trade, and few are his equals in [6] persevering indefatigable industry. Possessed of an ardent mind and of a frame capable of sustaining every hardship. It would have been difficult for the company to have found a person better qualified for this enterprise. I believe there are few persons so completely master of the secret of doing much in a short space of time; which does not consist so much in any great exertion, as in the strict observance of that economy which requires every moment to be turned to advantage. I feel a pleasure in bestowing this just praise on Mr. Lisa, whose kindness and friendship I experienced in so great a degree in the course of the voyage, and for the entertainment I have received at his hospitable board at St. Louis. Unfortunately, however, from what cause I know not, the majority of the members of the company have not the confidence in Mr. Lisa which he so justly merits; but, on this occasion, he was entrusted with the sole direction of their affairs from necessity, as the most proper person to conduct an expedition which appeared so little short of desperate. The funds of the company were at so low an ebb, that it was with some difficulty a barge of [7] twenty tons could be fitted out with merchandise to the amount of a few thousand dollars, and a patron<sup>2</sup> procured. The members were unwilling to stake their private credit where prospects were so little flattering. This was also the last year appointed for the continuance of the association, and there was no certainty of its being renewed.

With respect to myself, I must own to the reader, that I had no other motive for undertaking a tour of several thou-

<sup>2</sup> *Patron*, a fresh water sailing-master.—BRACKENRIDGE.

sand miles, through regions but seldom marked even by the wandering footsteps of the savage, than what he will term an idle curiosity: and I must confess that I might have employed my time more beneficially to myself, and more usefully to the community. Would that I were able to make some amends, by describing the many interesting objects which I witnessed, in such a manner, as to enable the reader to participate in the agreeable parts of my peregrinations.

We sat off from the village of St. Charles, on Tuesday, the 2d of April, 1811, with delightful weather. The flood of March, which [8] immediately succeeds the breaking up of the ice, had begun to subside, yet the water was still high. Our barge was the best that ever ascended this river, and manned with twenty stout oars-men. Mr. Lisa, who had been a sea-captain, took much pains in rigging his boat with a good mast, and main and top-sail; these being great helps in the navigation of this river. Our equipage is chiefly composed of young men, though several have already made a voyage to the upper Missouri, of which they are exceedingly proud, and on that account claim a kind of precedence over the rest of the crew. We are in all, twenty-five men, and completely prepared for defence. There is, besides, a swivel on the bow of the boat, which, in case of attack, would make a formidable appearance; we have also two brass blunderbusses in the cabin, one over my birth, and the other over that of Mr. Lisa. These precautions were absolutely necessary from the hostility of the Sioux bands, who, of late had committed several murders and robberies on the whites, and manifested such a disposition that it was believed impossible for us to pass through their country. The greater part [9] of the merchandise, which consisted of strouding, blankets, lead, tobacco, knives, guns, beads, &c., was concealed in a false cabin, ingeniously contrived for the purpose; in this way presenting as little as possible to tempt

the savages. But we hoped, that as this was not the season for the wandering tribes to come on the river, the autumn being the usual time, we might pass by unnoticed. Mr. Wilson P. Hunt had set off with a large party about twenty-three days before us, on his way to the Columbia, we anxiously hoped to overtake him before he entered the Sioux nation; for this purpose it was resolved to strain every nerve, as upon it, in a great measure depended the safety of our voyage.

Having proceeded a few miles above St. Charles, we put to shore, some of our men still remaining at the village. It is exceedingly difficult to make a start on these voyages, from the reluctance of the men to terminate the frolic with their friends, which usually precedes their departure. They set in to drinking and carousing, and it is impossible to collect them on board. Sometimes they make their carousals at the expense of the Bourgeois: [10] they are credited by the tavern keeper, who knows that their employer will be compelled to pay, to prevent the delay of the voyage. Many vexatious abuses are practised in these cases. It was found impossible to proceed any farther this evening — the men in high glee from the liquor they had drank before starting: they were therefore permitted to take their swing.

We had on board a Frenchman named Charboneau, with his wife, an Indian woman of the Snake nation, both of whom had accompanied Lewis and Clark to the Pacific, and were of great service.<sup>3</sup> The woman, a good creature,

<sup>3</sup> Toussaint Charbonneau had been an employé (1793-94) of the North West Company, at Pine Fort on the Assiniboin. About 1796 he came among the Minitaree (Hidasta) on Knife River, living at their central village, Metaharta. Lewis and Clark found him among the Mandan, with whom they wintered (1804-05). They engaged him as an interpreter for their detachment. His chief qualification for that service was that he had for his squaw a young woman of the Shoshoni (or Snake) tribe, who some five years previous, when a child, had been captured by a war party of Minitaree. Her name is given by Lewis and Clark, in their journals, both as Sacajawea and Sahgahjawa, meaning "bird woman," but modern stu-

of a mild and gentle disposition, greatly attached to the whites, whose manners and dress she tries to imitate, but she had become sickly, and longed to revisit her native country; her husband, also, who had spent many years among the Indians, had become weary of a civilized life. So true it is, that the attachment to the savage state, or the state of nature, (with which appellation it has commonly been dignified,) is much stronger than to that of civilization, with all its comforts, its refinements, and its security.

[11] The next day, about two o'clock in the afternoon, having at length succeeded in getting all hands on board, we proceeded on our voyage. Found an excessive current, augmented by the state of the waters. Having come about six miles encamped. In the course of this evening had as much cause to admire the dexterity of our Canadians and Creoles, as I had before to condemn their frivolity. I believe an American could not be brought to support with patience the fatiguing labors and submission which these men endure. At this season, when the water is exceedingly cold, they leap in without a moment's hesitation. Their food consists of lied corn homony<sup>4</sup> for breakfast, a slice of fat pork and biscuit for dinner, and a pot of mush, with a

dents of Indian linguistics state that the proper phonetic spelling is Tsakákawea, Sakákawea, Sakágawea, or Sacágawea — preferably the last. The place of her capture was Fort Rock, at the Three Forks of the Missouri (Gallatin, Jefferson, and Madison rivers). Sacajawea — as she has come to be known in historical accounts — and her infant son accompanied Lewis and Clark to the Pacific, her services proving valuable both as interpreter and guide. Upon the return journey, the explorers offered to take Charbonneau and his squaw to the settlements, but they preferred remaining among the Mandan. Charbonneau was seen (1833) in the Minitaree villages by Prince Maximilien (see vols. xxii, xxiii, and xxiv of our series). Five years later Larpenteur encountered him in the same region, when he speaks of him as an old man. See Coues (ed.), *Forty Years a Fur Trader on the Upper Missouri* (New York, 1898). This is the last known of Charbonneau. An Indian visiting St. Louis in 1902, claimed to be a great-grandson of Charbonneau and Sacajawea.— ED.

<sup>4</sup>“Lied corn” is that from which the skin of the kernels has been stripped by the use of lye; sometimes called “hulled corn.”— ED.

pound of tallow in it, for supper. Yet this is better than the common fare; but we were about to make an extraordinary voyage, and the additional expense was not regarded.

During the night we were completely drenched with the rain; the bark itself in a bad condition in the morning. Weather somewhat cloudy — clearing up. A short distance from our encampment, the hills approach the river [12] N. E. side; they are not high, but rocky, and do not continue more than a mile, when the alluvion again commences. About eight a fine breeze S. E. sailed until twelve — passed several plantations S. W. side. The bottoms are very extensive on the lower part of this river, the banks high, far above the reach of inundation. Timber, principally cotton wood; a few of the trees intermixed with it are beginning to vegetate. The red-bud, the tree which blooms earliest in our woods, and so much admired by those who descend the Ohio, early in the spring, appear, in a few places. Passed an island, where the river widens considerably; the current rapid, obliged to abandon oars and poles, and take the towing line. Above the island the bluffs again approach the river; there is a brownish-colored rock, with a few dwarf cedars growing on the top and in the clefts. In going too near the shore, we had the misfortune to have our top-mast broken by the projecting limb of a tree. Encamped some distance above.

This evening one of the most serene and beautiful I ever beheld, and the calmness of the water in unison with the cloudless sky. Several [13] deer, which I descried at a great distance, stepping through the shoals which separated the smooth sand bars, seemed to move across this stilly scene, like the shadows of the phantasmagoria, or Ossian's deer made of mist. I now felt that we had entered on our voyage in earnest. He that has not experienced something of these solitary voyages, far removed from the haunts of civilization,

can scarcely imagine the heaviness which at the moment of departure weighs upon the heart. We all looked serious. I could see that some of our poor fellows heaved a sigh at the prospect before them, and at the recollection of the pleasant homes which they had left behind in the hopes of gaining a little money; perhaps to support a wife and children. A fire was kindled on the bank, the pot of mush and homony were prepared: and after their frugal repast, wrapping themselves up in their buffaloe robes and blankets, they soon forgot their woes in sleep.— I observed on the sand bars, a kind of scaffold, ten or fifteen feet in height, which I was informed was erected by the neighbouring settlers for the purpose of shooting the deer by moon-light; these usually come out of the [14] thickets at this time, to avoid the moschetoës and to sport on the smooth beach: the hunter ascends the scaffold, and remains until the deer approaches. Came this day about twenty miles; navigation comparatively easy.

*Friday 5th.* Wind S. E. this morning, enabling us to set off under sail — continued until ten, when it forsook us. Passed several plantations, and two islands. The bluffs disappear on the N. E. side, and are seen on the S. W. for the first time since our leaving St. Charles. They rise about two hundred feet, and are faced with rock, in masses separated by soil and vegetation. These are called the *Tavern rocks*, from the circumstance of a cave in one of them affording a stopping place for voyagers ascending, or on returning to their homes after a long absence. The Indians seem to have had some veneration for the spot, as it is tolerably well scratched over with their rude attempts at representing birds and beasts. From this place, through a *long reach*, or straight part of the river, we have a distant view of the terminating bluffs N. E. side. A violent storm of rain, wind, and thunder, compelled us to put to shore, having passed a very [15] dangerous and difficult place. The number of

trees which had lately fallen into the river, and the danger to be apprehended from others, which seemed to have but a slender hold, rendered our situation extremely disagreeable. Towards evening a canoe with six or seven men passed on the other side, but we were unable to distinguish them. At this place I measured a cotton-wood tree, which was thirty-six inches in circumference; they grow larger on the lower parts of this river than perhaps any where else in America. The bluffs, in the course of this day appeared higher, but not so abrupt or rocky.

*Saturday, 6th.* Having passed a small willow island, we found ourselves beyond the hills on the S. W. side. At 11 o'clock the wind became so high that we were compelled to stop, as it blew directly down the river. This is Boon's settlement — about sixty miles from St. Charles. A number of plantations at the edge of the bottom.<sup>5</sup> The wind abated in the evening, we proceeded a few miles further and encamped.

*Sunday 7th.* Water rising. Crossed to the S. W. side, and encountered a very swift current, [16] at the head of a willow island. The difficulty of this navigation is not easily described. Made Point Labadie, so called from a French trader, who formerly wintered here. Forty years ago this was thought a distant point on the Missouri, at present there are tolerable plantations every where through the bottom. The carcasses of several drowned buffaloes passed by us; it is said that an unusual number of them have been drowned this year — some have been seen floating on the river at St. Louis. Upwards of forty were counted on the head of an island, by a gentleman who lately descended the river

<sup>5</sup> This was the settlement known as the Femme Osage, made by the sons and several friends of Daniel Boone, upon land granted to the latter (1795) by the Spanish governor, Don Trudeau. The plantations extended for several miles along the Femme Osage Creek. Bradbury (see vol. v of our series) met Boone some distance farther up the river.— Ed.



from fort Osage. In the spring of the year great numbers of these animals perish in attempting to pass the river on the ice, which at this season is easily broken. Immediately below the Point Labadie the river contracts its breadth, and is confined to a channel of three or four hundred yards wide. Passed between an island and the main shore; a very narrow channel, but the current and distance less. A channel of this sort is often taken in preference, and it is one of the means facilitating the ascending of this uncommonly rapid river: but there is sometimes danger of [17] the upper end being closed with logs and billets of wood matted together, as it turned out in the present instance; fortunately for us after the labor of an hour we were able to remove the obstacles, else we should have been compelled to return. Opposite the head of the island there is a tolerable log-house, and some land cleared; the tenant, a new-comer, with a wife and six children, had nothing to give or sell. Here the banks fall in very much: the river more than a mile wide. A great impediment in opening lands on this river is the dilapidation of the banks, which immediately ensue when the trees are cut away, from the current acting upon a soil of a texture so extremely loose. It will be found absolutely necessary to leave the trees standing on the borders of the river. The river exceedingly crooked in the course of this day. A number of plantations on both sides. These usually consist of a few acres cleared, on the borders of the river, with a small log hut or cabin, and stables for horses, &c. They raise a little Indian corn, pumpions, potatoes, and a few vegetables. But they have abundance of hogs and horned cattle. Having made about fourteen [18] miles, we put to shore, after passing a very difficult *embar-ras*. This word requires some explanation. Independently of the current of that vast volume of water rolling with great impetuosity, the navigation is obstructed by various

other impediments. At the distance of every mile or two, and frequently at smaller intervals, there are *embarras*, or rafts, formed by the collection of trees closely matted, and extending from twenty to thirty yards. The current vexed by these interruptions, rushes round them with great violence and force. We may now judge what a boat encounters in grappling round these rafts. When the oars and grappling hooks were found insufficient, the towing line was usually resorted to with success. There is not only difficulty here, but considerable danger, in case the boat should swing round. In bends where the banks fall in, as in the Mississippi, trees lie for some distance out in the river. In doubling points, in passing sawyers, difficulties are encountered. The water is generally too deep to admit of poling; it would be absolutely impossible to stem the current further out than a few yards; the boat usually passes about this distance from [19] the bank. Where the bank has not been washed steep, which is most usually the case, and the ground newly formed, the young tree, of the willow, cotton-wood, &c., which overhang the stream, afford much assistance in pulling the boat along with the hands.

*Monday 8th.* The water fell last night as much as it had risen. About ten, came in sight of a little village N. E. side called Charette. There are about thirty families here, who hunt, and raise a little corn. A very long island lies in the bend in which this village is situated. About this island, passed under a gentle breeze, some very handsome bluffs, S. W. side to the *isle aux Boeufs*; they are about one hundred feet high, and excepting a few places where rocks appear, covered with oak and other timber. At this place the river makes a considerable bend. Instead of taking the main channel, we entered a small one between the island and the shore, which will shorten the distance; the current not so strong. The channel is about fifty yards wide, and

very handsome, having clean even banks, and resembling a small river. It is about four miles in length.

[20] Through all these islands, and on the Missouri bottoms, there are great quantities of rushes, commonly called scrub grass.<sup>6</sup> They grow four or five feet high, and so close, as to render it very disagreeable, as well as difficult, to pass through the woods. The cattle feed upon them in the winter, answering the same purpose as the cane on the Mississippi.

At the upper end of the *isle aux Boeufs*, we were compelled about five o'clock in the evening to put to shore, on account of a violent storm, which continued until after dark. In the badly constructed cabin of our boat, we were wet to the skin: the men were better off in their tents, made by a blanket stretched over twigs.

We have been accompanied for these two days past, by a man and two lads; ascending in a canoe. This evening they encamped close by us, placing the canoe under cover of our boat. Unsheltered, except by the trees on the bank, and a ragged quilt drawn over a couple of forks, they abode the "pelting of the pitiless storm," with apparent indifference. These [21] people are well dressed in handsome home-made cotton cloth. The man seemed to possess no small share of pride and self importance, which, as I afterwards discovered, arose from his being a captain of militia. He borrowed a kettle from us, and gave it to one of his boys. When we were about to sit down to supper he retired, but returned when it was over; when asked, why he had not staid to do us the honor of supping with us; "I thank you gentlemen," said he, licking his lips with satisfaction, "I have just been eating an excellent supper." He had scarcely spoken, when the patron came to inform Mr. Lisa, the boys were begging him for a biscuit, as they had eaten

<sup>6</sup> This is the case for several hundred miles up the Missouri.—BRACKENRIDGE.

nothing for two days! our visitant was somewhat disconcerted, but passed it off with "poh! I'm sure they can't be suffering!"

He resides on the Gasconade; his was the second family which settled in that quarter about three years ago. He has at present about two hundred and fifty men on his muster roll. We were entertained by him with a long story of his having pursued some Pottawatomies, who had committed robberies on the settlements some time last summer; he made a narrow [22] escape, the Indians having attacked his party in the night time, and killed four of his men after a desperate resistance. The captain had on board a barrel of whiskey to set up tavern with, a bag of cotton for his wife to spin, and a couple of kittens, for the purpose of augmenting his family: these kept up such *doleful serenades* during the night that I was scarcely able to close my eyes.

## CHAPTER II'

Try our sails with success — Account of an extraordinary female maniac — Adventure of the she-bear — Arrival at Fort Osage — Gain considerably on Hunt.

EARLY the next morning we got under way with a light breeze, enabling us to carry sail tolerably well. About ten o'clock, from a change in the course of the river, it was found necessary to haul down the sail. On turning a point we found the wind once more [23] favorable, and blowing quite fresh; we now ascended at the rate of four miles an hour. The captain of the Gasconade, who had thus far kept up with us, was now left far behind. We passed in the course of the day, a number of plantations on both sides

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<sup>7</sup> Notes upon the following subjects mentioned in this chapter are found in Bradbury's *Travels*, vol. v of our series: Isle a la Latre (Loutre Island), note 19; Côte sans Dessein, note 20; Manitou rocks and Bonne Femme Creek, note 23; Osage Indians, note 22; Fort Osage, note 31; George Sibley, note 36; General Clark, note 143; Chief White Hair, note 108.— ED.

of the river. We also passed an island about twelve miles in length, called *isle a la Latre*, which is separated from the northern bank by a very narrow channel. There is a compact settlement on this island.

In the evening we passed the Gasconade river, which enters the Missouri from the S. W. side, and about ninety miles from the mouth of the latter river. The Gasconade is a considerable stream, takes its rise with the Maramek of the Mississippi, and has been navigated upwards of one hundred miles in canoes, but its channel is said to be rocky. The lands on its borders are broken, and hilly, and badly wooded. Salt petre caves have been discovered in its vicinity, and there is no doubt that lead ore may be found in abundance. Before reaching this river, we passed a long range of bluffs, or low hills, well covered with wood, and terminating at the entrance of the river, in rocky precipices: the range appears again on the [24] other side of the Gasconade. The Missouri has a course nearly straight, of fifteen miles, washing the hills before mentioned the whole of this distance. The experience of this day satisfied me of the efficacy of sails in this navigation, and served to lessen in my estimation the difficulties attending it. Our men were enabled to repose themselves while we were carried through places more difficult than any we had seen since our leaving St. Charles. Six miles above the Gasconade we put to shore and encamped.

The vicinity of this place recalled to my recollection a curious story of a female maniac, who is said to be wandering in its neighbourhood. I had made some inquiries of the militia captain, who told me she had once come to his canoe whilst he was encamped near the mouth of the river, and carried away some provision which he gave her. She had been frequently seen at some of the plantations, but could not be prevailed upon to stay. This it was supposed was

generally during more lucid intervals. When any thing was given to her, such as food or clothing, she immediately fled to the wilderness. Her attention to the [25] latter article I considered as somewhat extraordinary, as unhappy creatures of this description, usually manifest a total disregard to their apparel. None could tell who she was, or whence she came, by what means she is able to subsist, or how withstand the winter's cold; for she was first seen more than two years ago, shortly after the settlements commenced. I had heard the story at St. Louis, but regarded it as fabulous. I have seen an account of a female who was found in the Pyrennees under circumstances still more extraordinary.<sup>8</sup>

[26] *Wednesday 10th.* We experienced heavy rains last

<sup>8</sup> The circumstance gave rise to the following:—

*Lines on an unfortunate female maniac, seen on the Missouri, beyond the white settlements.*

What strange — what spectre shape art thou,  
 The terror of this savage scene,  
 That glid'st beneath the poplar bough,  
 With looks so wild, and haggard mien?  
 Far, far, the haunts of men are past,  
 Mid silent hills, and lonely woods,  
 Where Nature rules the dreary waste,  
 Missouri, pours his turbid floods.

Speak — whate'er thou art declare —  
 The spirit of the gloomy groves,  
 Unreal vision of the air,  
 Or daughter of the oozy waves?  
 And yet, that loose dishevell'd hair,  
 Those rent and tatter'd weeds, betray  
 A human form, in deep despair,  
 Some wretched child of misery.

Ha! the sad, the silent tear —  
 Mayhap, some lost distracted maid,  
 By anguish torn, pursued by fear,  
 From friends and dearest home hast stray'd;  
 Forlorn, amid these dreary shades,  
 The haunt of ev'ry savage thing,  
 Where death on ev'ry side invades,  
 And hope no more may comfort bring?

night. This morning cloudy. Crossed to the bluffs, N. E. side, which are high and rocky. Early this morning passed another resting place for voyagers, called Montbrunt's tavern.<sup>9</sup> Shortly after we encountered the most difficult *embarras*, (N. E. side,) that we have seen since the commencement of our voyage. After passing the bluffs, we found extensive low lands on each side of the river. The verdure [27] is observed to be rapidly increasing; the smaller trees and the shrubs, are dressed out in the livery of spring. The yellowish colour of the water, towards the S. W. bank, shews that the Osage is paying the annual tribute. It is in this month that its floods usually happen. Throughout the whole of this day the wind was against us, which retarded our progress considerably. Great exertions are made by Mr. Lisa, he is at one moment at the helm, at another with the grappling iron at the bow, and often with a pole, assisting the hands in impelling the barge through the rapid current. The superiority of minds is seen in the smallest incidents; on these occasions where the difficulties appeared to

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Lo! see, with hollow shriek she flies —  
 'Tis the poor maniac of the wild:  
 Soon, soon, she vanish'd from our eyes,  
 The lost — the heav'n protected child.—  
 In wonder, long the shore we gaze,  
 And still we hear the piercing cry —  
 Our blood still curdles with amaze,  
 As when red lightning flashes nigh.

Alas! poor hopeless, phrenzied maid,  
 Who has thus sadly injur'd thee?  
 Perhaps, by falsehood's tongue betray'd,  
 Or stung by vip'rous cruelty.  
 Sad maniac of the wilderness,  
 May heav'n still in safety keep,  
 And when thy darken'd ray shall pass,  
 The silent grove o'er thee will weep.

— BRACKENRIDGE.

<sup>9</sup> Montbrun's Tavern was a large cave upon the north bank of the river, just above a creek of the same name — that of an early French trader. It is now known as Big Tavern Creek, in Callaway County.— ED.

the rest insurmountable, the presence of this man, his voice, his orders, and cheering exclamations, infused new energy, and another effort was crowned with success.

*Thursday, 11th.* A fine morning. It had not been long after setting off, before we found the current so strong from the waters of the Osage, that we were compelled to cross to an island. The upland on the N. E. side. We continued to be harrassed on this side of the river through the day, on account of the different [28] *embarras* and falling in of the banks. We ascended principally with the cordelle, usually the last resort: for the close woods and brush which cover the margin of the river, as well as the trees and logs, along the edge of the water, render it troublesome for the men to pass along with the towing line. This is a fine country; the lands are extremely rich, and covered with a great variety of fine trees, chiefly the sycamore, cotton wood, (*populus deltoides*,) ash, oak, &c. We stopped a few moments at the cabin of an old Frenchman, who is beginning to open a plantation, according to the phraseology of the western country. In company with Charboneau, the interpreter, I proceeded across a point about two miles to the village of *Cote sans Dessein*, where we arrived nearly three hours before the barge. In coming to this place, we passed through some open woods, and some good lands. To our eager inquiries after Mr. Hunt, we were told, that he passed here about three weeks before. Thus far we have gained about two days upon him.

*Friday, 12th.* Weather fine — a gentle breeze from the S. E. We found it necessary to remain [29] here until eleven o'clock, while our cabin, which leaked very much, was undergoing a repair. It was constructed of light boards elevated on the sides of the boat, and covered with shingles badly put on. Mr. Lisa here employed a famous hunter, named Castor, a Kansas Indian, who had been



much amongst the whites, and spoke French well. I here learned the cause of Lisa's anxiety to overtake the party of Hunt. Lisa was apprehensive that Hunt would do him some ill office with the Sioux bands; that in order to secure his own passage through these, he would represent the circumstance of their own trader being on his way with goods for them. Should this happen, we might expect to be detained in the country, or perhaps robbed. Besides, we supposed that by this augmentation of Hunt's party, which consisted of about eighty men, we should be so formidable as to impose respect upon the savages, and compel them to relinquish their designs.

The *Cote sans Dessein* is a beautiful place, situated on the N. E. side of the river, and in sight of the Osage. It will in time become a considerable village. The beauty and fertility [30] of the surrounding country cannot be surpassed. It is here that we met with the first appearance of the prairie, on the Missouri, but it is handsomely mixed with wood land. The wooded country on the N. E. extends at least thirty miles, as far up as this place, and not less than fifteen on the other side. The name is given to this place, from the circumstance of a single detached hill, filled with limestone standing on the bank of the river, about six hundred yards long, and very narrow. The village has been established about three years; there are thirteen French families, and two or three of Indians. They have handsome fields in the prairie, but the greater part of their time is spent in hunting. From their eager inquiries after merchandise, I perceived we were already remote from the settlements.

We continued under way, with a light breeze, but scarcely sufficient to waft the barge of itself, without the aid of oars. — Handsome wooded upland, S. W. side, gently sloping to the river, and not rocky. For many reasons, I would prefer these situations to the bottom, where the soil is richer.

Passed the Great Osage river, one hundred and thirty-three miles [31] from the mouth of the Missouri, and navigable about six hundred miles. There is much fine land immediately on its borders, but the prairies stretch out on either side, and to the westward are almost boundless. The Osage villages are situated about two hundred miles up.

Passed a long island, called *L' isle a' Cedre*, Cedar island. A number of islands on the Missouri bear this name, from the growth of cedar upon them, in this particular, differing from the islands of the Mississippi. In this island all the largest trees had been cut down, and rafted to St. Louis, to supply the settlements with this wood, of which there is a great consumption.

Throughout the course of this day, we found the navigation less arduous and painful; owing principally to the falling of the waters, and to our having passed one of those rivers which add to the current of the Missouri. The sand bars, begin to present a pleasing appearance; several miles in length, clean and smooth. Instead of ascending along either side, we pursued the middle of the river, along the sand bars. Encamped N. E. side, just above the Cedar island. The bars and the sides of [32] the river are everywhere marked with deer tracks.

*Saturday, 13th.* A fine morning — somewhat cool — set off with a favourable breeze. Passed hills on the S. W. side — saw five or six deer sporting on a sand bar. Passed the Manitoo rocks, S. W. side, and la *Bonne Femme* creek. The country here-about, is delightful; the upland sloping gently to the river, timbered with oak, hickory, ash, &c. The lands on this stream are said not to be surpassed by any in the territory.

After having had a favourable wind the greater part of the day, encamped at the *Roche percee*, perforated rock; a

high craggy cliff on the N. E. side.<sup>10</sup> This is the narrowest part of the river I have yet seen; it is scarcely two hundred yards wide.— Made in the course of this day about twenty-eight miles, for which we were indebted to the favourable wind. Some of us considered this good fortune a reward for the charity which was manifested by us yesterday, in spending an hour in relieving a poor ox, who was swamped near the bank. The poor creature had remained here ten or twelve days, and the sand into which he had [33] sunk was become hard and solid. The wolves had paid him friendly visits from time to time, to inquire after his health, while buzzards, crows, and eagles tendered their salutations from the neighbouring trees.

*Sunday 14th.* Violent wind all night — hoisted sail before day light, in order to take advantage of the wind. Passed the Manitoo N. E. side, and high rocks. A delightful country. Wind slackened about ten. At twelve, came in sight of the hills of Mine river, S. W. side. This river is not navigable more than ten or twelve miles. Valuable salt works are established here. The whole of this day we found rich and extensive bottoms, N. E. side, and beautiful sloping uplands, S. W. On this side of the river, some beautiful situations for farms and plantations. The hills rise with a most delightful ascent from the water's edge to the height of forty or fifty feet; the woods open and handsome. The lands on the Mine river, reputed excellent. Bottoms on the N. E. side the Missouri, uncommonly fine. There is a flourishing settlement here. Being Sunday, the good people were dressed out in their best clothes, and [34] came in groups to the bank to gaze upon us, as we passed by under sail. The sight was no doubt agreeable to them,

<sup>10</sup> A considerable stream in Boone County takes its name from this rock — Rocher Percé River, sometimes called Split Rock.— ED.

and we were no less pleased at catching another glimpse of civilization, after having for a time lost sight of it. We put to shore at the farm of Braxton Cooper, a worthy man, who has the management of the salt works.<sup>11</sup> The settlement is but one year old, but is already considerable, and increasing rapidly; it consists of seventy-five families, the greater part living on the bank of the river, in the space of four or five miles. They are generally persons in good circumstances, most of them have slaves. Mr. Cooper informed me that the upland, back, is the most beautiful he ever beheld. He thinks that from the mouth of the Missouri to this place, the country for at least forty miles from the river, may bear the character of rich woodland: the prairies forming but trifling proportions. This place is two hundred miles up. We inquired for the party of which we were in chase — they had passed *nineteen* days before us.

*Monday 15th.* Rain last night, but without lightning — from this it is prognosticated that [35] the wind will continue favourable to day. Set off with a fair wind, but the course of the river became unfavourable. At half past seven, again fair — continued under sail until twelve. Passed handsome upland S. W. side, and the two Chareton rivers N. E. Had to oppose in the course of the day some very difficult places — the river extremely crooked. While the men were towing, they chased a she-bear into a hollow tree; we set about

<sup>11</sup> The Coopers were a Virginia family from Culpeper County, who had first migrated to Kentucky. They arrived in Missouri in the autumn of 1807, when Braxton, with his cousin Sarshall, settled at Hancock bottom, upon the north bank of the Missouri, in St. Charles County. There they bought salt of Nathan Boone, who described to them the Boone's Lick country. In the spring of 1810 they removed their families thither, and built Cooper's fort, nearly opposite Arrow Rock Creek. During the War of 1812-15, Boone's Lick settlement suffered greatly. The Coopers were leaders of the bands that pursued the Indians. Braxton was shot by them (September, 1814) while cutting logs for a new house. Sarshall was shot in his fort, the following spring. These facts are found in the archives of the Wisconsin Historical Library, *Draper MSS.*, 22 S, 118, 142; 23 S, 119, 125.— Ed.

chopping the tree, while several stood with guns presented to the hole at which she had entered, about twenty feet up. In a short time she put out her head and shoulders, but on receiving a volley, instantly withdrew. The chopping was renewed; madam Cuff again appeared, and was saluted as before, but without producing the same effect, as she leisurely crawled down the tree, and attempted to make off, amidst the shouts of fifteen or twenty barbarians, who were bent on the destruction of a mother and her little family. She was killed with the stroke of an axe, having been previously severely wounded. In the hollow sycamore, there were found three cubs. At five, hoisted sail, and continued until seven, having this day made twenty-eight [36] miles. Towards evening, passed beautiful undulating hills, gently sloping to the river. What charming situations for seats and farms!

*Tuesday 16th.* Set off without wind — the river rising. At eleven, the wind so much against us that we were obliged to lie by. At three we continued our voyage, and as it was resolved to tow, I set out with my rifle, expecting to meet the boat at the head of a long bend. This is the first excursion I have made into the country. I passed through the bottom with great difficulty, on account of the rushes, which grow as high as a man's head, and are matted with vines and briars. The beauty of the upland in some degree compensated. Clean and open woods, growth, oak, hickory, &c; the grass beginning to appear green. Saw several deer, and abundance of turkeys. We are now in a country which abounds with game. I came late in the evening to the boat, having been supposed lost in the woods. Our hunter had been more successful than I, having killed a she-bear with four cubs. The river very crooked in the course of this day.— Passed some places of thin woods — not quite prairie, on the bank of the river.

[37] *Wednesday 17th.* Breakfasted under sail. Passed the Brand river, N. E. side. It is two hundred yards wide at its mouth; very long, and navigable six or eight hundred miles; takes its waters with the river *Des Moines*. The traders who were in the habit of visiting the Mahas, six hundred miles above this on the Missouri, were formerly compelled to ascend this river in order to avoid the Kansas Indians, who were then the robbers of the Missouri. There is a portage of not more than a couple of days, from the Grand river to the Mahas.

At the confluence on the lower side, there is a beautiful situation. The bottom is a handsome prairie, which is seen extending, for the first time on the Missouri, to the water's edge, and about a mile in width: the upland then rises with a gentle ascent, with here and there a few clumps of trees. Immediately at the point of junction, there are about fifty acres of well timbered land. Here is a delightful situation for a village:<sup>12</sup> the distance about two hundred and fifty miles from the mouth of the Missouri. There is some beautiful country lying on the Grand river, but deficient in wood. In fact, this river may almost be considered [38] the boundary of the wooded upland on that side of the river.

Here the wind failed us. The Missouri very wide — a large bar in the middle. The beautiful green hills of the Little Osage in sight. But for the single defect of the dilapidating banks of the Missouri, the country bordering on it, thus far, would not be surpassed by any in the world. Spring has already cast her green mantle over the land; and the scenery every where assumes a more enlivened appearance. After an arduous navigation, came this day about twenty miles.

*Thursday 18th.* Heavy rain last night, accompanied by

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<sup>12</sup> The town of Brunswick occupies this site, with a population of about one thousand four hundred.— ED.

unusual thunder and lightning. Set off at six, weather apparently clearing up. About ten, compelled by heavy rain to put to shore until three, when we again shoved off, came a few miles and encamped, N. E. side.

*Friday 19th.* Continued our voyage at daylight, and came through a long channel, between an island and the shore. The wind S. E. but the course of the river such as to disable us from profiting by it. A drizzling rain, and the weather disagreeable. Wind favourable for an hour. Passed handsome upland and [39] prairie S. W. side. There was formerly a village of the Little Osage here, but from the frequent attacks of the Ayuwas, they were compelled to go higher up the river.<sup>13</sup> The situation is fine. At a distance, the deep green herbage on this open ground had much the appearance of a wheat field. What a strange, restless, discontented creature is man! When the arts of civilization bloom around him, nothing is so pleasing as the glimpse of the wild irregularities of nature; and yet place him in the midst of the desert, and every object which reminds him of human ingenuity and industry, appears supremely beautiful, and at once awakens all the affections of his heart.

Encamped late, after having got through a channel with considerable difficulty. The slowness with which we have advanced for several days past, forms a contrast with those which preceded. Water rising.

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<sup>13</sup> The Iowa (Ayuwas, Aiouetz) were a Siouan tribe first encountered by French explorers in the state to which they have given name. This word lacked consonant sounds, hence its great variations in spelling. The Iowa early became allied with the Sauk and Foxes, and were thus hostile to the French power. They were a fierce tribe, and raided widely from their villages on the Des Moines River. Later, they traded with the English on the Mississippi. In 1808 a treaty was made with them by which the first American post west of the Mississippi River was erected — Fort Madison, which served in a measure to restrain their ravages. There are now about three hundred Iowa Indians, upon reservations with the Sauk and Foxes, in Kansas and Oklahoma.— Ed.

On *Saturday the 20th*, we had a cold disagreeable morning; the men completely drenched by the heavy rain which fell last night. About six o'clock we hoisted sail, but the wind served us only a short distance. The weather beginning to clear up, we thought it [40] adviseable to put to shore in order to dry our effects, which had suffered considerably. On the S. W. there are some handsome rising hills. We remained here until three o'clock, and then continued our voyage on the N. E. side, along a beautiful tract of land, covered with a great proportion of walnut, poplar, and cotton-wood of enormous size. On entering a narrow channel, we espied at the upper end a large flock of pelicans standing on a shoal; we fired on them at the distance of two hundred yards, and killed one. These birds are seen in great numbers on the Missouri, but are shy. We daily kill wild fowl, ducks, geese, brandt, &c. which, at this season of the year ascend the river to breed. Their eggs are found every moment on the sand bars.

*Sunday 20th [i. e., 21st.]*. A delightful morning, though somewhat cool. Got under way early—passed through the channel which we entered yesterday, and at the head of the island, crossed to the S. W. side. Here we encountered several difficult *embarras*, but not much current, in the river. After breakfast I took my gun and ascended the hill. On the opposite side, there is an extensive prairie bottom, apparently four or five miles wide; and a level plain of [41] vast extent stretching out on either hand, of fertile alluvial soil, as I supposed, from the rich and luxuriant appearance of the herbage. I remarked a curious contrast of the yellow sward, which has remained unburnt, and the extensive tracts of deep green, where the young grass of this spring has sprung up unencumbered by the old. Beyond the plain, the upland rises into irregular and abrupt elevations, and appears in a thousand fantastic forms, but without



even a shrub, and covered with a thin coat of vegetation. The winding river, with its islands, willow bordery, and groves of cotton-wood trees, the whole scene in fact, had something magnificent, though melancholy. I was reminded how much I must yet traverse before I can reach the end of the voyage. On this side (S. W.) I found the soil of the upland of an excellent quality, and, notwithstanding the ravages of the fire, the marks of which are every where to be seen, the woods, principally hickory, ash, oak, and walnut, formed a forest tolerably close.

I did not return until about four in the evening; much gratified with my excursion. We spent an hour and an half this evening in passing [42] round a small point, the distance of a few hundred yards. The current was so swift that oars and poles could be of no service; we were therefore compelled to grapple round the rocks, by carrying a cable ahead and fastening it to some object, and then advancing a few yards at a time. It is about half a mile across the river, its usual width, and there is a strong current in the bend. Such is the swiftness of the current that it is found necessary to cross over at every point. The current being generally very strong in the centre of the bends. This operation of crossing and recrossing consumes much time. We encamped this evening above an encampment of Mr. Hunt, which, according to some of the sagacious is but ten days old. It is said, these woodsmen shew extraordinary skill in determining the length of time that a camp has been abandoned. I have heard of some, who possessed this sagacity, in a surprising degree; but on this occasion, I was induced to believe that our augurs were deceived by their hopes and wishes.

*Monday 22d.* We proceeded this morning until eleven o'clock with the towing line or *cordelle* — the banks being favourable. The hills [43] or bluffs are here about one

hundred feet high, and rise abruptly from the river. The wind from the S. S. W. becoming very strong, we were compelled to lie by until three o'clock. These were usually irksome moments to Lisa. The men composed themselves to sleep, or strolled along the beach, or engaged in "whetting the brand," or smoking a pipe. I usually preferred a ramble with my gun when I could escape from the boat. I had also had the precaution to provide myself with some well selected books; among the rest, Don Quixotte in Spanish; and as Lisa who was a Spaniard by birth, and passionately fond of this work, took pleasure in reading, and hearing it read, I availed myself of the opportunity of improving my knowledge of a language, which will one day be important to a citizen of the United States. Towards evening we crossed to the N. E. side, and endeavoured to ascend between the shore and an island, but found a sand bar running entirely across, at the upper end, so that we were obliged to go back, and encamp nearly opposite the place of starting.

*Tuesday 23d.* Very high wind this morning. Doubled the island which had been the scene [44] of so much vexation. Endeavoured to proceed on the outside, but met with so many difficulties, that we were compelled to cross to the S. W. side. Towed to Ibar's channel and island — then re-crossed to the N. E. side, and found ourselves about two miles above our last night's encampment. Remained here until three, when the wind somewhat abated its violence. Having arrived opposite the Wizzard's island,<sup>14</sup> (L'isle du Sorcier) crossed over and encamped. The super-

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<sup>14</sup> Lewis and Clark, in their original manuscripts, designate the channel which Brackenridge calls "Ibar's," as Eue-bert, probably a form of the French name Hubert. Biddle, in his edition of Lewis and Clark, makes this Eau-beau or Clearwater. James (edition of Long's expedition) has Chney au Barre. This is now curiously contracted into Sniabar, which is applied to two creeks in Lafayette County. Wizzard's Island is mentioned only by Brackenridge, and has been swept away in the changes of the river bed.—ED.

stitious boatmen believe that a wizzard inhabits this island; they declare that a man has been frequently seen on the sand beach, at the point, but that he suddenly disappears, on the approach of any one. These few days have been in a manner lost, from contrary winds, and bad weather. Heavy rain this evening — Moschetoes begin to be troublesome, for the first time during our voyage.

*Wednesday 24th.* Attempted a ripple this morning, and were driven back five times — we had once got within half the boat's length of being through; the oars and poles were insufficient; ten of our men leaped into the water with the *cordelle*, while the rest of us exerted ourselves with the pole: and thus by perseverance became [45] conquerors. This ripple, like all others of the Missouri, is formed by high sand bars, over which the water is precipitated, with considerable noise. This bar has been formed within two or three years. The bend formerly almost impassible from the swiftness of the current, is now tolerable. There is seldom any great current on both sides; the falling in of the banks indicate the current to be there.— Wherever the river has a wider channel than ordinary, there is usually a sand bar in the middle. This extraordinary river sometimes pursues a straight course for ten or fifteen miles, then suddenly turns to every point of the compass: In other places, the whole volume of its waters is compressed into a channel of two or three hundred yards: again suddenly opening to the width of one, or even two miles, with islands and sand bars scattered through the space.

Passed a canoe with four men, who had wintered up the Kansas, about five hundred miles: they had beaver, and other furs. They could give no information respecting Hunt's party: — we conclude he must have passed that river before they came out of it.

[46] From the violence of the wind, which blew from the

N. W. our progress was so much impeded, that we were compelled to lie by the greater part of the day. While in the woods to-day, I saw a she-bear coming towards me followed by two cubs, and, after waiting until she approached within a sufficient distance, fired at her head; but, from too much eagerness, the fault of young hunters, and which prevents them from taking a deliberate aim, I missed her. She soon disappeared with her family. I am well aware that I might on this occasion have availed myself of the privilege of the traveller; but by this proof of self-denial the reader will be disposed to give some credit for veracity, a point in which travellers too often fail. While our old hunter Castor was out, he saw, as he declared to us, a *white turkey*, but was not able to kill it. But I am rather inclined to think it is, (for hunters have nearly the same privileges as travellers,)

Rara avis in terris, nigroque simmillima cygno.

The wild turkey is invariably black: although, it is possible, that by some *lusus naturæ*, [47] there may be white. A single deer, or buffaloe, I am well assured has been met with of this colour.

*Thursday 25th.* The contrary winds still continue to-day, but its violence somewhat abated, so as to enable us to proceed on our voyage tolerably well. The unwearied exertions of Lisa suffered no moment to remain unemployed, and his ingenuity was continually exerted in contriving means of overcoming the difficulties which were constantly presenting themselves. About eleven o'clock we came in sight of Fort Osage, at the distance of three miles on the bluff, and a long stretch of the river before us. We had now come three hundred miles upon our voyage. And for the last hundred, had seen no settlement or met with any one, except a few traders or hunters who passed us in canoes. With the exception of a few spots where the ravages of fire

had destroyed the woods, we passed through a continued forest presenting the most dreary aspect. The undergrowth generally so thick that I had little inclination to penetrate far beyond the margin of the river. And moreover, to one not well acquainted with the nature of the [48] ground, it is no difficult matter to become entangled and lost. Our approach once more to the haunts of civilization, to a fort where we should meet with friends, and perhaps find a temporary resting place, inspired us with cheerfulness. The song was raised with more than usual glee; the can of whiskey was sent round, and the air was rent with shouts of encouragement. The boatmen, from the severe duty which they had already performed, were much rejoiced at the circumstance of their having reached *a point* in the voyage. We stopped a short time about a mile below the fort, where Mr. Audrain a settler, had begun to clear a piece of ground for a farm. I was acquainted with this gentleman in boyhood, but this was the first place in which I had met him for many years.<sup>15</sup> On approaching the fort we were met by a number of the Osage Indians of both sexes, and of all ages. They kept pace with us, strung along the bank, apparently attracted by curiosity. They were objects rather disgusting; generally of a filthy greasy appearance, the greater part with old dirty buffaloe robes thrown over their shoulders; some with their brawny limbs exposed, [49] and no covering but a piece of cloth girded round their loins. The women appeared, if possible, still more filthy than the men. A few were daubed with red, and adorned with broaches and beads. The men carried their bows, guns, or war clubs, in their hands. In point of size, they are larger than the whites. The curiosity which these people manifested in running after us in a crowd, to gape and

<sup>15</sup> For notice of Audrain, an early French republican of Pittsburg, see André Michaux's *Travels*, vol. iii of our series, note 9.—ED.

stare, struck me as a characteristic very different from the Indians east of the Mississippi, who observe studied indifference as to every thing strange which transpires around them.

On landing at the fort, on a very rocky shore, a soldier under arms, who waited for us at the water side, escorted Mr. Lisa and myself to the fort, where we were politely received by the commanding officer. While Mr. Lisa was transacting some business, accompanied by Mr. Sibly, the factor, and an interpreter, I went to deliver a pipe to *sans Oreille*,<sup>16</sup> (a warrior and a principal man of this tribe,) sent him by general Clark. He received us [50] sitting on a mat, surrounded by a number of young men, who appeared to treat him with great respect, and to receive with approbation every thing he said. He ordered his cook, or herald, (for every great man among these Indians has a domestic of this description,) a bushy headed, ill-looking fellow, to bring us a dish of homony. After having eaten of this, the pipe was sent round. I then presented him the pipe, which was handsomely decorated with ribbands and beads of various colours, and told him that it was given at the request of general Clark, and that it was intended as proof of the esteem and consideration in which he was held not only by the general himself, but by all the Americans. He replied "that he was pleased with this proof of general Clark's good will towards him, that he was the friend of the Americans. He declared that he had done much to preserve a proper respect towards us, but that there were many foolish people amongst the Osages who thwarted his measures, but that every man of sense approved of his conduct." This man though not a chief, is evidently intriguing to be the head of his tribe, and at this time possesses much influ-

<sup>16</sup> Literally, "without ears;" a name given to him in consequence of his being unwilling to listen to the advice of the sober part of the people.—BRACKENRIDGE.

ence with [51] them: the hereditary chief, young White Hairs, has but little to entitle him to respect from his own character, being extremely young, and of a gentle disposition; he is however supported by the reputation of his father who was a great warrior and a good man. *Sans Oreille*, as is usual with the ambitious amongst these people is the poorest man in the nation; to set the heart upon goods and chattels being thought to indicate a mean and narrow soul: he gives away every thing he can get, even should he rob or beg, to procure it — and this, to purchase popularity. Such is ambition! Little know they of this state of society, who believe that it is free from jealousies, from envy, detraction, or guilty ambition. No demagogue — no Cataline ever used more art and finesse, or displayed more policy than this cunning savage. The arts of flattery, and bribery, by which the unthinking multitude is seduced, are nearly the same every where, and the passion for power, and distinction, seems inherent in human nature. It is not in the savage state that we can expect to meet with true liberty, any more than in settled hereditary aristocracy or monarchy: it is only in a republican government like ours of [52] a civilized people where information is generally diffused.

The fort is handsomely situated, about one hundred feet above the level of the river, which makes an elbow at this place, giving an extensive view up and down the river. Its form is triangular, its size but small, not calculated for more than a company of men. A group of buildings is formed by the factory, suttler's house, &c. The place is called "Fire prairie." It is something better than three hundred miles from the mouth of the river in lat. 38°. 40'. The lodges of the Little Osage, sixty in number, are within gun shot of the fort; but they are about to remove their village to a prairie, three miles off. Their lodges are of a circular form, not more than ten or fifteen feet in diameter, con-

structed by placing mats, made of coarse rushes, over forks and poles.

All three of the Osage bands, together with some Kansas, were lately encamped here for the purpose of trading; to the number of fifteen hundred warriors. The officer informed me, that about ten days ago, serious apprehensions had been entertained from them. A war party, of about two hundred, having scalped a few [53] women and children, of the Ayuwas, their enemies, had returned so elated with this exploit, that they insulted the people of the fort. One of these warriors defied a centinel on his post; the centinel was commanded to fire over his head, this producing no effect, he was seized by a file of men, which he at first treated with indifference, declaring, that if he were confined, he would get some of the white men's *bread*; his tune was changed, however, by a liberal application of the cat-o'-nine-tails to his back. Great commotions amongst the Indians were excited; they rushed forward with their arms; but the soldiers no sooner paraded and made ready a few pieces of cannon, than they thought proper to retreat. They maintained a threatening attitude for some days, and to give vent to their spite, killed a pair of fine oxen, belonging to Mr. Audrain. The officer sent for the chiefs, and told them, that unless two horses were given for the oxen, he would instantly fire upon their village. This spirited deportment had the desired effect, the chief complied, and after some counciling, the pipe was smoked, and all matters adjusted.

[54] These Indians are not to be compared to the nations east of the Mississippi; although at war with most of their neighbours, they are a cowardly race. One good trait, however, deserves to be mentioned; they have rarely, if ever, been known to spill the blood of a white man: — When a white hunter is found on their lands, they take away his



furs and his arms, he is then beaten with ramrods, and driven off.

Mr. Sibly informed me, that he was just setting out on a tour towards the Arkansas, to visit the salines on that river, and also to the Kansas, and Platte, to see the Pani nation.<sup>17</sup>

Thus far we have gained about one hundred miles upon the party of Hunt — we are in good spirits, and will renew the pursuit with augmented vigor.

### [55] CHAPTER III<sup>18</sup>

Orison of the Osages — Discontents in our party — News of Hunt — An excursion — Arrival at the river Platte.

FRIDAY, 27th [*i. e.*, 26th] of April. Our situation was rendered very uncomfortable last night by heavy rains; our cabin, in spite of all our contrivances, was still in a bad condition. In the morning, before daylight, we were awakened by the most hideous howlings I ever heard. They proceeded from the Osages, among whom this is a prevailing custom. On inquiry, I found that they were unable to give any satisfactory reason for it; I could only learn, that it was partly devotional, and if it be true, as is supposed by some, that they offer worship only to the evil spirit, the orison was certainly not unworthy of him. I much doubt whether any more lugubrious and infernal

<sup>17</sup> The Pawnee (Pani) Indians were of Caddoan stock, being early encountered by the French in the Missouri Valley. Lewis and Clark found them in four separate bands upon Platte River, which continued to be their habitat until removed to reservations in Indian Territory and Oklahoma. The Pawnee were a large tribe, numbering ten to twelve thousand in 1832. In warlike qualities they were somewhat deficient, and being frequently enslaved by their enemies, the term "Pani" became equivalent to Indian slave. See J. Long's *Voyages*, vol. ii of our series, note 53. The Pawnee are steadily declining in population, there now being but about six hundred.— ED.

<sup>18</sup> Notes upon the following subjects mentioned in this chapter are found in Bradbury's *Travels*, vol. v of our series: Thomas Nuttall, note 8; Ramsay Crooks, note 3; Robert McClellan, note 72; Kansas Indians, note 37; Oto Indians, note 42.— ED.

wailings ever issued from Pandamonium itself. I was also informed that it proceeded from another cause; when any one, on awaking in the morning, happens [56] to think of a departed friend, or even of some lost dog or horse, which has been prized by the owner, he instantly begins this doleful howl; no sooner is this heard than the whole village, hark in, man, woman, and child, and at least a thousand dogs, with a howling still more horrible. I never had before, so good a conception of Virgil's fine description of that place of the infernal regions, set apart for the punishment of the wicked.

It was eleven o'clock before we could leave this place. The time was spent in procuring some oil-cloth to put over our cabin, and in purchasing several articles of Indian trade which the factor was disposed to sell. Having got every thing ready, and feeling anxious to loose no time, we set off, although the wind was blowing down the river with great violence. After exerting ourselves to the utmost, for an hour or two, we found it necessary to stop, after having done little more than loose sight of the fort. After remaining here a few hours, the wind abated sufficiently to enable us to proceed on our voyage. Passed a small encampment of American hunters. Three men were sitting before a fire, on the edge of the bank, [57] in the midst of the rushes, having trodden them down for a few yards around. Upon three slender forks, a few pieces of bark were placed, which together with the boughs of the poplar afforded some little shelter from the rain. The remains of a deer were suspended to a tree, and several skins were stretched out with the fleshy sides to the fire, for the purpose of being dried. The Missouri is now, what the Ohio was once, the PARADISE OF HUNTERS. The upper part of the river is still more pleasant, on account of the openness of the plains, and the greater facility of pursuing the wild

animals, which exist in numbers almost incredible. We found the navigation more easy this evening, from the state of the river, than it has been for several days past. We were enabled to make nine miles, chiefly under oars — weather disagreeably cool.

We have now passed the last settlement of whites, and probably will not revisit them for several months. This reflection seemed to have taken possession of the minds of all. I almost repented of having undertaken this voyage, without an object of suitable importance. Our men were kept from thinking too [58] deeply by their songs and the splashing of the oars, which kept time with them. Lisa himself seized the helm, and gave the song,<sup>19</sup> and at the close of every stanza, made the woods ring with his shouts of

<sup>19</sup> The patron usually sings the first couplet, the chorus is then sung by the whole; the songs are very trifling, but the tunes not disagreeable. The following are some verses of a favorite song: —

Derrière chez nous, il y a un etang,  
Ye, ye ment:  
Trois canards s'en vont baignans,  
Tous du long de la rivière,  
Légerement ma bergère,  
Légerement, ye ment.

Trois canards s'en vont baignans,  
Ye, ye ment:  
Le fis du roi s'en va chassant,  
Tous du long de la rivière.  
Légerement ma bergère,  
Légerement, ye ment.

Le fis du roi s'en va chassant,  
Ye, ye ment:  
Avec son grand fusil d'argent,  
Tous du long de la rivière,  
Légerement ma bergère  
Légerement, ye ment.

&c. &c.

— BRACKENRIDGE.

*Comment by Ed.* A translation of this boating song is given in Bradbury's *Travels*, vol. v of our series, p. 40.

encouragement. The whole was intermixed, with short and pithy addresses to their fears, their hopes, or their ambition. Hunt and his party, were at least eighteen days before us. In the distance of three hundred [59] miles we had gained five days on him. By great exertions, we might overtake him at the little Cedar island which was six hundred miles further. We should then be safe. For my part I felt great solicitude to overtake him, for the sake of the society of Mr. Bradbury, a distinguished naturalist with whom I had formed an acquaintance at St. Louis, and who had accompanied Mr. Hunt for the purpose of pursuing his researches in natural history on the Missouri. In the society of this gentleman, I had promised myself much pleasure, as well as instruction; and indeed, this constituted one of the principal motives of my voyage — there was also in the same company, a young gentleman of the name of Nuttal, engaged in similar pursuits — my apprehensions with respect to Mr. Hunt, were not such as Lisa entertained; but, I was well aware that there existed a reciprocal jealousy and distrust. Hunt might suppose, that if Lisa overtook him, he would use his superior skill in the navigation of the river to pass by him, and (from the supposition that Hunt was about to compete with him in the Indian trade) induce the Sioux tribes, through whose territory we had to pass for the [60] distance of six hundred miles, to stop him, and perhaps pillage him. Lisa had strong reasons, on the other hand, to suspect that it was Hunt's intention to prevent us from ascending the river; as well from what has already been mentioned, as from the circumstance of his being accompanied by two traders, Crooks and M'Clelland, who had charged Lisa with being the cause of their detention by the Sioux, two years before; in consequence of which they had experienced considerable losses. The quarrel which took place between these two

traders and the Sioux was the principal cause of their present inimical temper to the whites. I fully believed, however, that if we could unite our parties, we should present so formidable an appearance, that the Indians would not think of incommoding us. The conduct of the Sioux is governed by the same motives as those of the barbarous tribes of the Nile. They are unwilling to let the traders pass up the river, and carry supplies to the Arikaras, Mandans, and other tribes at war with them; and their country affording few objects for the trader beside the buffaloe robe, they are tempted to pillage, or impose terms upon the trader, which [61] are almost as injurious. Thus much, that the reader may enter into our feelings; at least form an idea of the anxiety we experienced in the pursuit of the party before us.

Now removed beyond the verge of the frontier, not merely out of my country, but almost in another world; for, considered in reality, and not according to that imaginary ownership, which civilization has invented, I was in a foreign land. Thus abstracted, thus removed from my country, I seemed to look back as from an eminence, and fancied that, I contemplated it, with more accuracy than I could, while cherished, and protected in its bosom. I heaved a sigh, when I reflected that I might possibly never see it again. I felt a thousand affections, linked to the cords of the heart, of which I had not been aware. These things are salutary thought I, as they teach a man to know himself. Should I return in safety, the recollection of these little incidents, will afford pleasure to myself and to others: and, should my bones be deposited on some dreary spot, far from my home and the haunts of civilized man, it is yet certain, that there is no place however distant in this quarter, where I may [62] be buried, but will in time, be surrounded by the habitations of Americans; the spot will be

marked, it will be approached with respect, as containing the remains of one of the first to venture into these distant and unfrequented regions.

*Saturday 27th.* After a long continuance of bad weather, we are again somewhat favoured: this is a delightful morning though cool. At daylight we proceeded on our voyage, and about six o'clock had a light breeze from the east. Passed Vincent's island, above which the river is extremely narrow; the highlands on the S. W. side. About eleven o'clock the sun shone out warm and pleasant, the wind died away. Shortly after this we met a large party of traders, in two canoes lashed together, and a platform raised upon them, constituting what is called a raft. This was heavily laden with buffaloe robes. They had come from the river *a Jaque*, on the country of the Yanktons, the nearest tribe of the Sioux, where they had remained all winter; they found the Indians peaceably disposed.<sup>20</sup> The party of Hunt had been passed by them five days before, at the little Nimaha, and proceeds slowly. The traders [63] being informed of the rate at which we came, were of opinion that we should overtake them before they would be able to reach the river Platte, three hundred miles above us. Our party were much animated by this news.

We passed, towards evening Benito's island, and sand bar, so called from a trader of that name having been robbed of his peltry, by a party of the Ayuwa tribe; and not content with this, the trader with four men in his employment, were forced to carry enormous burdens of it on their backs to the river des Moines. Instances of such insults were formerly not uncommon; several spots have been shewn me where the like acts have been committed, accompanied

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<sup>20</sup> River à Jaque (Jacque) is the present James or Dakota River, a large affluent of the Missouri, in South Dakota. For the Yankton Sioux, who lived on this river, see Bradbury's *Travels*, vol. v of our series, note 55.—ED.

even with murder. Having approached within two leagues of the Kansas river, we encamped. Large sand bars now make their appearance at every point of the river; some of them a mile or two in length, and a quarter of a mile in width in the widest place; but they are uniformly in the shape of a crescent. It is very pleasant to walk on them; towards the bank there is a border of willows and young cotton-wood trees; the rest is a smooth sand beach.

[64] *Sunday 28th.* A cool morning — somewhat foggy on the river. A light breeze from the east, but not sufficient to enable us to carry sail. Passed Highland, N. E. side, with some rocks on the shore; we are constantly delighted with the gentle hills, or rather elevated upland, of the Missouri. In this part of the river deer are very numerous; while out this morning I counted thirty sporting on a sand bar.

This morning we passed the Kansas, a large river, which enters from the S. W. side. The ground is low and flat at its mouth, and covered with a profusion of willows; this tree is observed to become more abundant than below, but the size is very small. The Kansas takes its rise in the open plains between the Platte and the Arkansas; and passes through a country almost devoid of wood. The patron of our boat informs me, that he has ascended it upwards of nine hundred miles, with a tolerable navigation. The Kansas tribe live in the country through which it passes. It has a number of considerable tributary streams.

In the evening we passed the little river Platte, navigable with canoes fifty or sixty miles, and said to abound with beaver. We [65] encamped near a mile above it, having made about fifteen miles.

In the course of this day, we find the river, in most places, extremely narrow, and the sand bars very extensive.

*Monday 29th.* Somewhat cloudy this morning — A

light breeze from the S. E. At seven, breakfasted under sail. At nine, reached a beautiful island, called Diamond island, fifteen miles above the Kansas. From this, there is a long reach of six or eight miles. The weather is fine — the breeze still continuing.

At three o'clock we had made twenty-four miles. The wind, from the change of the course of the river, could not serve us. We lost two hours in passing one of the most difficult places I have seen on the river: after which, we had a fair wind again, until night.

Passed in the course of this day, some beautiful country on both sides, the upland chiefly S. W. and a greater proportion of prairie than we have yet seen. The river generally narrow, and the sand bars of great extent.

Having made about thirty miles, we encamped a short distance below Buffaloe island, opposite a range of hills, and at the upper end of a [66] long view. During the whole of the day, we saw astonishing quantities of game on the shore; particularly deer and turkies. The buffaloe and elk are not yet seen.

*Tuesday 30th.* Last night there was much thunder and lightning, but little rain. At day light embarked with a favourable wind, which continued until seven, when, from the course of the river, the wind failed us for an hour. The river extremely crooked. Mr. Lisa and myself went on shore, and each killed a deer. There were great numbers of them sporting on the sand bars. There are great quantities of snipes, of a beautiful plumage, being a curious mixture of dove color, and white. I saw one of a different kind, which was scarlet underneath the wings.<sup>21</sup>

At two o'clock we hoisted sail at the beginning of a long reach, to the great joy of the whole company. High prai-

<sup>21</sup> Apparently these were the grey and red-bellied snipe (*macrorhampus griseus* and *scolopaceus*).— ED.



ries S. W. side — continued under sail through another long reach, and had a view of the old Kansas village, at the upper end of it. It is a high prairie; smooth waving hills, perfectly green, with a few clumps of trees in the hollows. It was formerly a village of the Kansas nation. There [67] are many of these *deserted villages*, on the Missouri, with hardly any traces but the different path-ways along the side of the hills, and down to the river. There is a melancholy feeling in viewing these seats, once the abode of intelligent beings, now lonely and silent. But for the scarcity of wood this would be a delightful situation for a town.<sup>22</sup> At this place, the bend of the river rendered the wind unfavourable. Continued under oars about three miles further, having in the course of this day made thirty-three miles.

*Wednesday, 1st May.* Very high wind all last night. Embarked this morning about daylight, and continued under sail until six o'clock. Upland N. E. side, thinly timbered. It may be remarked, that the hills of the Missouri are not so high as those of the Ohio, seldom rocky, and rise more pleasantly from the water's edge. Continued under sail until eleven, when we were brought up by a considerable bend in the river. Passed St. Michael prairie, a handsome plain in front, with variegated hills in the back ground, and but little wood. At two o'clock we came to a very great bend in the river, but did not get through until evening. The river [68] from being narrow, changes to an unusual width, and very shallow. We were detained about an hour, having been so unlucky as to run aground.

Saw but one or two deer to day, as we approached the open country their numbers will be found to diminish, there being no thickets to shelter them. They are said to lessen perceptibly from Nodawa river upwards.

<sup>22</sup> About the site of the present city of Leavenworth, Kansas.— ED.

In the evening, the weather, which has been for some days cloudy, cleared up, and the wind abated entirely: the Missouri and its scenery appeared in their natural state. A calm sky and a placid stream, which harmonize with every other object of nature. The river is falling fast, approaching to a low stage of water — came to-day twenty-seven miles.

*Thursday 2d.* Embarked at daylight, the river unruffled by a breeze; the birds, as if rejoicing that the strife of the elements had ceased, tuned their sweetest notes.

At seven o'clock, breakfasted opposite some bluffs, N. E. side. A very large mass appeared at no distant period, to have slipped into the river, leaving a clay precipice fifty or sixty feet high. A little above, there are rocks of free-stone [69] at the edge of the water. Below this place, there is an extensive prairie, partly river bottom, and partly upland, with a considerable rivulet passing through it. What a delightful situation for a farm, or even a town! Description of such a country as this, can give no idea of its peculiar character. The hills, or bluffs, begin to appear, thinly wooded with dwarf trees, principally oak or ash.

In the evening we reached Nodowa channel, on the N. E. side, which is about sixty yards in width, the island bordered with willow, but on the main land there is an open wood, chiefly the cotton tree. The rushes are now seldom seen, and the variety of trees evidently diminish. This part of the country is very abundant in deer.

*Friday 3d.* A delightful sunny morning. As usual we set off to-day at day-break. Not a moment of our time is lost: we stop half an hour at breakfast; about the same length of time for dinner, and continue late at night. It is by thus taking less time for repose, the skill of Lisa in encountering the currents and difficulties of the navigation, and the continuing our voyage during the contrary winds,

[70] that we gain on the party of Hunt. But our Canadians are beginning to feel the effects of this effort: they not only make greater exertions, but continue employed longer than usual by several hours in the day. It sometimes happens that during the prevalence of a favourable wind, the veering course of the river suddenly renders it directly contrary; it therefore becomes necessary to make every possible exertion for a few miles in doubling the point, before we can again catch the favoring breeze. By this exertion we are all sometimes nearly exhausted. The strength of our men begins to fail, and sometimes murmurs escape their lips, in spite of every reason that can be urged.

About noon passed the wintering ground of Crooks and M'Clelland, where there are some log huts. Here they joined the party of Hunt to proceed up the river. This is four hundred and fifty miles from the mouth of the Missouri. Here these men must have led the most solitary lives, with no companions but a few hunters and an occasional Indian visitor. Their chief amusement consisted in hunting the deer, or traversing the plains. M'Clelland was one of Wayne's runners, and is celebrated for his [71] courage and uncommon activity. The stories related of his personal prowess, border on the marvellous. Crooks is a young Scotchman, of an enterprising character, who came to this country from the trading associations in Canada.

After passing this place we came in sight of the S. W. side, more elevated than any we have yet seen: in some places covered with wood, chiefly dwarf oak; but in others entirely bare, or overgrown with shrubs. The lands on the opposite side are fine. Towards evening a breeze springing up, we hoisted sail, and continued four or five miles. Passing along a large prairie, in the hollow of the land in the S. W. and after doubling the woody point with our oars and poles, encamped at the commencement of another prairie. Here

there is not a shrub to the abrupt edge of the bank, and the bottom stretches from the river at least a mile wide, covered with dried grass of a very luxuriant growth. From the first glance its yellowish appearance, is not unlike that of ripe oats. This is another object to remind us of the industry of man.

[72] *Saturday 4th.* Heavy rain last night, and this morning drizzling. Passed the extensive lowland prairie, along which the men were able to walk with facility, and drag the boat along with the cordelle. At ten o'clock passed an encampment of Hunt, where our augurs once more set to work to find out the length of time which has elapsed since he was here. After making about twenty miles, with rather disagreeable navigation, we encamped some distance above the Nimaha and Tarkio creeks.<sup>23</sup>

This evening, which was damp and chilly, while warming myself at the fire, I overheard, with much chagrin, some bitter complaints on the part of the men. These discontents were not a little fomented by some Thersites of the party, who took advantage of the state of mind arising from their sufferings. "It is impossible for us," said they, "to persevere any longer in this unceasing toil, this over-strained exertion, which wears us down. We are not permitted a moment's repose; scarcely is time allowed us to eat, or to smoke our pipes. We can stand it no longer, human nature cannot bear it; our bourgeois has no pity on us." I endeavoured to quiet their minds, by representing [73] to them the importance of the object for which we were exerting ourselves, the safety of their lives probably depended on it: that great exertions, it is true, had been made, but that we had already overcome the most difficult part of the navi-

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<sup>23</sup> Great Nemaha River, in southeastern Nebraska, and Big Tarkio River in northwestern Missouri, empty into the Missouri River nearly opposite to each other.—ED.

gation; that on approaching the open country, we might expect to be carried by the wind: that the weather was now becoming warmer and more pleasant, and the navigation less arduous, as they could diversify their labours, when there would be no wind, with the pole, the oars, or by the cordelle, at this time, little more than a promenade along the edge of the prairie, or the smooth sand bars. I exhorted them to cease these complaints, and go to work cheerfully, and with confidence in Lisa, who would carry us through every difficulty. These admonitions had some effect, but were not sufficient to quell entirely the prevailing discontent.

*Sunday 5th.* Passed an encampment of Hunt this morning. The sun shone out, but the air was cold — wind from N. E. but not so hard as to form any great obstacle. In the evening hailed two men descending in a bark canoe; they had been of Hunt's party, and had left him on [74] the 2d of May, two days above the Platte, at Boyer's river. He had had a fair wind for several days, and ascended with great rapidity. This information came very unseasonably, and will tend to dishearten our men.— It thus appears, that we have not gained upon them as much as was expected.

The weather very fine throughout the day, encamped in the evening at the upper end of a handsome prairie; opposite a large sand bar.

*Monday 6th.* About ten this morning, passed a river called Nis-na-botona, after which there are some long reaches very favorable for sailing. At four o'clock arrived at the little Nimeha, the course of the river here is for a considerable distance nearly N. E.<sup>24</sup>— Wind being N. W. were

<sup>24</sup> The present Nishnabotna River, flowing nearly parallel to the Missouri River in Iowa and northwestern Missouri. The word is said to signify, "canoe-making river." Little Nemaha River is a western affluent in a Nebraska county of the same name.— ED.

enabled to hoist sail, but having proceeded about a mile, a squall suddenly springing up from the N. we were compelled with all despatch, to take in sail, and gain the shore S. W. side. Here a dreadful storm raged during the remainder of the evening, and the greater part of the night, our boat lay between the shore and a number of trees which had fallen into the river, and thus sheltered us from the waves.

[75] Our encampment is at the edge of a large prairie, but with a fringe of wood along the bank of the river. The greater part of the country, particularly on the S. W. side, is now entirely open. The new grass is at this time about four inches high.

*Tuesday 7th.* Continued our voyage at daylight, the weather fine, though somewhat cool. Wind still continues N. W. Passed an island and sand bar, and towed along a prairie S. side for nearly a mile. This prairie is narrow, bounded by hills which are somewhat broken and stony.

At ten o'clock arrived at *L' isle a beau soleil*; the wind here became so high that we proceeded with great difficulty.<sup>25</sup> In the evening, arriving at the head of the island, were compelled to put to shore. Mr. Lisa seized this opportunity to replace his mast, by a young oak which he found in the wood along the shore. All hands were set to work on it, in order that it might be ready the next day. This was rendered necessary on account of the old one having given way.

I took this opportunity of making an excursion into the country — ascended the hills or [76] bluffs, which, though steep, are not much more than two hundred feet above the level of the river, and command prospects of great extent. I could see the meandering course of the stream, between

<sup>25</sup> Lewis and Clark translated this term, and called the island "Fair-sun." It is now known simply as Sun Island.— ED.

the two ranges of hills, or more properly of high land, for thirty or forty miles. Some of these hills are cut into precipices forty or fifty feet high, without any appearance of stone. It is a light yellow colored earth, with a considerable mixture of sand. There is an immense extent of prairie on both sides of the river. The hills are not always abrupt, but in many places rise gently, and are extremely beautiful. The river hereabout is very crooked: in following the hills, along which there is an Indian path, I could go to a point within view, which will most probably be our place of encampment to-morrow night.

On my return to the boat, killed some pigeons and wild ducks, and saw a flock of turkies. Lisa and his men continued at work by torch light until late at night, every man who could assist was busily employed.

*Wednesday 8th.* Last night having finished our mast, we had it put up this morning before day, and at day break set off on our voyage. Weather [77] cool, but no wind, and the sun apparently regaining his empire.

Passed through a country in the course of this day, chiefly open, with very little wood. The river very wide: in one place it appeared to me two miles. Encamped at the falling in banks, or *grand eboulment*. Wind has entirely abated. In nearly all the bends there are a great many fallen trees, the bank being acted upon by the current, appears to have fallen in with every thing growing upon it. We often pass between these trees and the shore.

*Thursday 9th.* Set off at day light — continued a short distance under sail with a light breeze.

Several of the men are sick; one has a pleurisy, and others slight fevers and coughs, from frequent exposure in the water.

There appear to be no hills or bluffs on the N. E. side, the whole distance to the Platte.

Encamped some distance above a hill, called *L'oeil aufer*, from an Indian chief who was scaffolded here some years ago.<sup>26</sup>

*Friday 10th.* A dreadful storm raged during the whole of last night. Set off this morning under sail, in expectation of reaching the Platte [78] before twelve, but in the course of an hour it failed us, and changed to N. W. At ten, it became so violent that we were compelled to put to shore, where we remained until towards evening, and then attempted to proceed, but finding the wind too strong, again landed and encamped, having passed the mouth of the Platte. At the mouth of this river there is so great a number of bars and small islands, that its entrance is scarcely perceptible. It enters by a number of channels or mouths: the color of its waters is the same with that of the Missouri. The country hereabouts, is entirely open, excepting in some spots along the river, where there are groves of cotton-wood, and on the hills a few scattered dwarf oaks.

*Saturday 11th.* The wind continues too high to proceed. This morning we advance about three miles, and encamp until near noon — very cold.

Set off with my gun to take a walk into the country. Traversed the prairie which had been burnt, and reached the high land about three miles distant; the ground rises gradually to the height of about two hundred feet, and then assumes an irregular surface. The other side of [79] the Missouri appears extremely bare. I wandered towards the Platte, or rather to the point of the upland between this river and the Missouri, which commands a very extensive prospect. I discovered a great extent of open country, grounds gently rising, with a soil every where extremely rich.

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<sup>26</sup> Lewis and Clark met hereabouts an Oto chief whom they called Iron Eyes. There is a bluff on the river still called Iron Eye Hill. On the Siouan custom of scaffolding the dead, see Bradbury's description of a Mandan cemetery.— ED.



The Platte is full of islands and sand bars, and appears as wide as the Missouri. On my return, I saw several Indian mounds.

On reaching camp I found that the wind had abated, and that the river was rising fast.

The river Platte is regarded by the navigators of the Missouri as a point of as much importance, as the equinoctial line amongst mariners. All those who had not passed it before, were required to be shaved, unless they could compromise the matter by a treat. Much merriment was indulged on the occasion. From this we enter what is called the Upper Missouri. Indeed the change is perceptible and great, for the open bare plains, now prevail. A close wood is not to be seen, but the face of the land so varied as to be pleasing and picturesque. The river Platte rises in the same mountains, with the Missouri and is little short of two [80] thousand miles in length, but affords little navigation, owing to the great number of shoals and quicksands which its channel contains. Various Indian nations reside upon it, the Missouris, Ottos, Panis, and others. This river takes its rise with the Rio del Norte, and with the Colorado of California, and flows through an open country like the Missouri.

#### CHAPTER IV<sup>27</sup>

Council Bluffs — Blackbird Hills — Maha villages — Disappointment in not overtaking Hunt — Floyd's Bluff.

SUNDAY 13<sup>th</sup> [*i. e.*, 12<sup>th</sup>]. Weather pleasant — the river rising rapidly; the drift wood descends in great quantities, and the current seems to augment every moment. We were

<sup>27</sup> Notes upon the following subjects mentioned in this chapter are found in Bradbury's *Travels*, vol. v of our series: McClellan's (Crooks's) post, note 41; Registre Loisel (L'Oiselle), note 105; Blackbird, notes 47 and 48; Omaha (Maha) Indians, note 49; Big Elk, note 52; Ponca Indians, note 63; Sergeant Floyd, note 56.— Ed.

enabled to ascend the greater part of this morning with the towing line.

[81] In the afternoon, some distance above the old Otto village, S. W. side, I went on shore, and wandered several miles through shrubby hills, and saw several elk and deer, without being able to approach them. Towards evening I entered a charming prairie, and of the richest soil. Followed a rivulet until it formed a lake in the river bottom, its banks for six or eight feet a rich black earth. In pursuing the upland I might have fallen upon the Missouri six miles above, in the distance of a mile, the river forming here a considerable bend. The prairies or meadows to the water's edge, enabled us to continue the greater part of this day with the line.

*Monday 13th.* Water falling — continued with the towing line. At ten, a fine breeze springing up, hoisted sail. Passed the river *a Boyer*, and the houses of M'Clelland, who formerly wintered here. Some woody country hereabouts; but that on the upland is very inferior, chiefly shrubby oak. A short distance above this place we encountered a very difficult and rapid current, but being luckily a little aided by the sail, we passed tolerably well. We have now reached the highest point to which settlements [82] will probably extend on the western side for many years. In the evening passed high clean meadows, called the Council bluffs, from the circumstance of Lewis and Clark having held a council with the Otto and Missouri Indians, when ascending this river.<sup>28</sup> It is a beautiful scene. Encamped four miles above this place on a large sand bar. The Council bluffs are not abrupt elevations, but a rising ground, covered with grass as perfectly smooth as if the work of art. They

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<sup>28</sup> The original Council Bluffs were on the left bank of the river, above Omaha, very near the later site of Fort Calhoun, in Washington County, Nebraska. The name was afterwards transferred to the Iowa city.— ED.

do not exceed in height thirty or forty feet above the plain below. On ascending, the land stretches out as far as the eye can reach, a perfect level. The short grass, with which the soil is covered, gives it the appearance of a sodded bank, which has a fine effect, the scene being shaded by a few slender trees or shrubs in the hollows. In the course of this day found the river crooked and narrow: it appeared in one place almost closed up by drift-wood and sawyers.

*Tuesday 14th.* Set off with a slight breeze — compelled by heavy rain to put to shore for some hours; after which continued under a fine breeze that lasted throughout the day; but from [83] the winding course of the river we were not much benefited by it.

At most of the points on the river, the timber, principally cotton-wood, is large, and tolerably close, but the prairies and upland are entirely bare of trees. The prairies compose more than two-thirds of the margin of the stream — the soil extremely rich: for the three first feet, generally a light mould, another stratum is a deep black, almost approaching the colour of coal, but not hard or stiff; the lower stratum is marle. I have no doubt but that these natural meadows would yield surprisingly. Encamped at the beginning of a great bend of the river, twelve miles round, and not more than three hundred paces across.

*Wednesday 15th.* Although the wind is favourable, it was of no use to us, from the sudden turns of the river. At twelve hoisted sail, and passed the Soldier's river, a small stream.<sup>29</sup> After doubling some points we came into a reach of some extent; wind here became very violent, and blew almost a tempest; with our sail reduced to half its size we easily encountered the strongest current. The storm at length became so serious that it was deemed imprudent

<sup>29</sup> An Iowa affluent of the Missouri, the origin of whose name is apparently not now known.— ED.

[84] to continue under way. The air was darkened by clouds of sand, and we found ourselves at the upper end of the reach, in the midst of sawyers and planters, our situation dangerous in the extreme. Nothing but our great anxiety to force our voyage would have justified the running such a risk. It was almost a miracle that we escaped. Had our boat struck a sawyer she would have been thrown into the trough of the sea, and we should inevitably have perished. We fortunately, but not without great exertions, escaped safely to the shore, where we remained until evening; the wind abating, proceeded a few miles further.

*Thursday 16th.* A tremendous storm of thunder and lightning last night — being fortunately in a good harbor we suffered but little. Were not able to get under way this morning until late. A fine serene morning, strangely contrasted with the turbulence of last night. Came in sight of the hills, S. W. every one bitterly regretting that the wind of yesterday could not serve us here, where there is a view of twelve miles up the river. There appears to reign an unusual calm, the sky cloudless, [85] and the river as smooth as a mirror. Words cannot convey what I feel, and it is only the lover of nature that could understand me.

The points are tolerably wooded. At the upper end of the long reach we saw an encampment of Hunt, where the party seemed to have remained for several days, judging from the quantity of wood burned, the grass trodden down by frequent going and coming, and the bones of buffaloe they had killed, which were strewed about. It also appeared that oars had been made here. It is conjectured that this was his encampment during the unfavorable weather we experienced for several days, near the river Platte, and against which we had to struggle so severely. If this be the case, it is not more than six or seven days since Hunt has left this place. Our men feel new animation on this

unexpected turn of fortune. The rushes before described are now rarely seen — the woods more free from undergrowth. Encamped before sunset on a sand bar below *la coupe a L' Oiselle*.

*Friday 17th.* A charming morning — slight indication of wind from the S. E. Passed *la coupe a L' Oiselle*. This name originated, in [86] the circumstance of a trader having made a narrow escape, being in the river at the very moment that this cut-off was forming. It had been a bend of fifteen miles round, and perhaps not more than a few hundred yards across; the gorge, which was suddenly cut through by the river, became the main channel. This was effected in a few hours.

While remaining a short time at a sand bar in the river, a curious phenomenon occurred; the sand began to dissolve, and every instant to diminish like the melting of snow, it was thought prudent to embark immediately. This I am informed is not unfrequent. Bars are sometimes formed during the continuance of a single flood, but being principally of loose sand, without anything to unite, as soon as the waters begin to rise again, are entirely carried off.

At ten passed a similar cut-off called *la coupe a Jacqué*. At twelve continued under sail, made several long reaches — passed the Yellow banks, and encamped within a few miles of the Black-bird hill. Throughout this day the river border is chiefly wood.

*Saturday 18th.* A fine breeze S. W. At seven arrived at the Black-bird hill. As this is [87] one of the curiosities of the Missouri, a description may be amusing. It rises on the common range to the height of four or five hundred feet. The Missouri at its base, begins a strange winding course, several times returning upon its steps, and at length coming within nine hundred yards of where the hills first approach; so that in a course of thirty miles the Black-bird hill is still

near us. It takes its name from a celebrated chief of the Mahas, who caused himself to be interred on the top: a mound has been erected on the pinnacle, with a branch stuck in it, a flag was formerly attached to it. He was buried, sitting erect on horse back; the reason which he gave for choosing this spot, was that he might see the traders as they ascended. This chief was as famous in his lifetime amongst all the nations in this part of the world, as Tamerlane or Bajazet were in the plains of Asia; a superstitious awe is still paid to his grave. Yet, the secret of his greatness was nothing more than a quantity of arsenic, which he had procured from some trader. He denounced death against any one who displeased him, or opposed his wishes: it is therefore not surprising, that he, who held [88] at his disposal the lives of others, should possess unlimited power, and excite universal terror. The proud savage, whenever this terrible being appeared, rendered the homage of a slave. The gods and heroes of antiquity, were, perhaps, little better. We may learn this lesson, that ignorant and savage man, is most effectually ruled by fear, or superstitious awe; and in comparison with these, other motives have but little force.

At four o'clock, got through the last bend, and hoisted sail, with a fine wind — sailed along some hills, S. W. side, and encamped amongst some cotton wood, in a low bottom.

*Sunday 19th.* We continued our voyage this morning at daylight where we remained with the hope of reaching the Maha village in the course of the day. Here we entertained sanguine hopes of overtaking the party of Hunt, and with these hopes the spirits of our men, almost sinking under extreme labor, were kept up; their rising discontents, the consequences of which I feared almost as much as the enmity of the Indians, were by the same means kept down. Shortly after starting we passed along some precipitous bluffs, rising [89] from the edge of the water, and extending

for a quarter of a mile. Some of them were faced with a curious sand rock of variegated fantastic hues; at the first glance resembling the decorations of a theatre. There were mimic groves, the representation of castles, of towns, and landscapes; on more attentive examination it was found that this deception, was produced by the different colors and shades of the rock.

We continued, with little interruption from the course of the river, under sail until twelve o'clock, when we came in sight of the trading houses near the village. We anxiously looked towards the place, and endeavoured to descry the party of Hunt; but as we drew near we found, alas! they were not there. On landing we saw several traders, of whom eager inquiries were made, who informed us that Hunt had set off under sail *four days* before our arrival, and that he must have ascended rapidly. This was calculated to depress our spirits not a little, being now on the borders of the Sioux territory. To this disappointment was added the unfriendly temper of those tribes; it seems they have learned that a number of traders [90] are ascending the river, in consequence of which, instead of going into the plains as is usual at this season of the year, they are resolved to remain on the river, with a determination to let no boats pass: that they had lately murdered several white traders, and were exceedingly exasperated at the conduct of Crooks and M'Clelland. These gentlemen, who had set off for the Upper Missouri, having been compelled by a party of the Sioux to stop against their will, affected to be contented, and requested that the warriors, excepting five or six, would go and bring their tribes, in order to trade; they had no sooner departed than the traders embarked all their effects, and pushed into the stream; the Indians who had been left with them were found by their companions tied. This conduct, which was unavoidable, exasperated the nation very much,

and had produced a serious enmity, the consequences of which we had great reasons to fear. From the intimation of the traders, we were induced to believe that Hunt would be glad that we should join his party, and that a sense of the common danger would induce him to wait for us. It was therefore deemed adviseable to despatch a messenger [91] by land, who might overtake him at the Poncas village, about two hundred miles further by water, and about three day's journey by land. For this purpose a half Indian was hired, and set off immediately in company with Charboneau. As the wind was still favorable, and blowing fresh, we resolved not to lose a moment, and therefore set off without seeing the Big Elk, the chief of the Maha village; a piece of etiquette, which is never omitted without giving offence: a present was left for him, with a talk, explaining the reasons for our conduct. The village is situated about three miles from the river, and contains about three thousand souls.

After having remained here but a few hours we again embarked, the day obscured with clouds, and the wind blowing with great violence. The clouds of sand which are swept from the sand bars, incommoded us considerably. Towards evening, the wind having spent its fury, gradually died away, and we continued under oars — the current gentle. The scenery now undergoes an entire change; forests are seen no more; the wooded portions of the river are composed of small cotton-wood trees, whose slender [92] and delicate growth have a much more beautiful appearance than the huge giants on the lower part of the river. The uplands look like old fields, and the bottoms are rich meadows.

Shortly before sun-down the air became calm, and our disturbed minds, (such is the effect upon our feelings of the objects which surround us) appeared to grow composed as the strife of the elements gave way to calmness and serenity.



We had been suspended between hope and fear, but were now disposed to think all would be well, and that Hunt would gladly wait for us.

About a mile below our encampment we passed Floyd's bluff and river, fourteen miles from the Maha village. Sergeant Floyd was of the party of Lewis and Clark, and was highly esteemed by them and his loss much regretted. The place of his interment is marked by a wooden cross, which may be seen by navigators at a considerable distance. The grave occupies a beautiful rising ground, now covered with grass and wild flowers. The pretty little river, which bears his name, is neatly fringed with willow and shrubbery. Involuntary tribute was paid to the spot, by the feelings even of the most [93] thoughtless, as we passed by. It is several years since he was buried here; no one has disturbed the cross which marks the grave; even the Indians who pass, venerate the place, and often leave a present or offering near it. Brave, adventurous youth! thou art not forgotten — for although thy bones are deposited far from thy native home, in the desert-waste; yet the eternal silence of the plain shall mourn thee, and memory will dwell upon thy grave!

The appearance of the river is much changed — it continues a handsome width, with a diminished current. The banks low, and the trees much smaller in size; we now rarely see a large tree. The bluffs and upland on the N. E. side, are not high, and without any appearance of trees and shrubs.

*Monday 20th.* Passed at day light the great Sioux river, which takes its rise in the plains, between the Missouri, and the waters of the lake Winipeg; it is five or six hundred miles in length.<sup>30</sup> I ascended the bluffs, high clay banks of sixty or an hundred feet. The current is here very strong.

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<sup>30</sup> Big Sioux River, which forms the boundary between the present states of Iowa and South Dakota, heads near the source of the Red River of the North, which drains into Lake Winipeg.— Ed.

We ascended along the sand bars with difficulty on account of the wind, which blew the sand in our [94] faces, and our men suffered much from fatigue. Hailed a trader descending in a large canoe, made of skins of the buffaloe, upwards of twenty feet in length, who wintered at the river a Jaque. He met Hunt eight leagues above that river, proceeding with a fair wind, and is by this time at the Poncas village. These skin canoes are formed by stretching the skins of the buffaloe over the red willow, of which a kind of frame is in the first instance prepared. They require to be frequently exposed to the sun, and dried, as they would otherwise become too heavy from the quantity of water absorbed.

The water has been rapidly rising for twenty-four hours. The sand bars are all covered and the banks in many places inundated.

*Tuesday 21st.* This morning fine, though somewhat cool. Wind increasing from the N. E. Current rapid, but for the eddies in the bends, it would be almost impossible to ascend. There are but few embarras, or collection of trees, &c. The sand bars are fringed with a thick growth of willows, immediately behind which there are young cottonwood trees, forming a handsome natural avenue, twenty or thirty feet wide. The banks are [95] very low, and must be inundated every season. Passed in the evening, a rapid of frightful appearance, the water, in the middle of the river, foaming and rolling in waves, as if agitated by violent wind, while on either side it was calm. We were compelled to pass along the sand bar, and through the willows. It was with difficulty that we could obtain dry land this evening, the water, in most places, flows into the woods. In the night, the water had risen so much that the men were compelled to abandon their encampment, and sleep on board. Very little prairie in the course of the day, but the timber of a small size.

## [96] CHAPTER V

Frightful rapids — News of Mr. Henry — A buffaloe — The Poncas — Meet the Sioux — Overtake Mr. Hunt.

WEDNESDAY, 23<sup>d</sup> [*i. e.*, 22<sup>d</sup>]. A delightful day — the water has risen to its utmost height, and presents a vast expanse — the current uniformly rapid, in some places rolling with the most furious and terrific violence. One of these places, below Vermillion creek,<sup>31</sup> was sufficient to appal the stoutest heart: the river forms an elbow at the termination of some bluffs, the water, compressed between them and the sand bar, dashes against the opposite rocks. The middle of the river appeared several feet higher than the sides. The distance to cross, before we could reach the opposite eddy, was not more than twice the length of the boat, but we were not able completely to effect it, being swept down with the rapidity of flight, but fell into the current of the opposite side, before it had [97] gained its full force, and were not able, without great difficulty, to gain the eddy.

The high waters enable us to cut off points, which is no small saving of the distance. The waters begin to fall, though great quantities of drift wood descend, and thirty or forty drowned buffaloes pass by us every day.

I observe a much greater variety of trees and shrubs, than below, and some altogether new to me. There is a shrub which the French call *graisse de boeuf*, bearing a red berry, of a pungent taste; its leaves, though smaller and more delicate, bear a resemblance to those of the pear tree.<sup>32</sup> In the hollows, clumps of trees are usually found, but what

<sup>31</sup> Lewis and Clark called this the Whitestone River — a translation of its Indian name, Wassisha. It is now Vermilion River, in South Dakota, with a town of the same name at its mouth.— ED.

<sup>32</sup> This is the plant called buffalo-berry, also (by Lewis and Clark) rabbit-berry; scientifically it is *shepherdia argentea*.— ED.

surprises me, they are very low, some of the oaks and ash are eighteen or twenty inches in diameter, but look like orchard trees, and have much greater resemblance to regular plantations than wild woods.

*Thursday 23d.* Water falling rapidly — a fine breeze S. E. sailed until eleven — passed the Hot, or Burning bluffs, on the S. W. side. Here I observed enormous masses of pumice, and other matter, which appeared to have undergone the action of heat, of a very high degree. [98] I saw what was the fragment of a hill, the greater part at present composed of pumice. From not being able to discover other volcanic substances, I concluded these effects to have been produced by simple ignition, whether of coal banks or not, I was unable to ascertain. I took several large lumps of the pumice lying along the shore, and threw them into the river, and found that they floated. In one place the soil seemed to have all burnt away, and the remains looked like some old ruined building. The action of fire was every where perceptible, and no vegetation could be discovered for a considerable distance. I observed no volcanic appearances.

About noon, we espied at some distance before us, on a sand bar, a number of persons, whom we at first took to be Indians, but on a nearer approach recognised to be whites. On coming to the spot, we found a Mr. Benit, the Missouri Company's factor at the Mandan village.<sup>33</sup> He was descending in a small batteaux, loaded with peltry, with five men. From him we learn, that with the exception of the Mandans, Arikaras, and one or two small tribes, all the nations of the Missouri are inimical to [99] the whites,

<sup>33</sup> Probably this was Francis M. Benoit (Benoist), a prominent fur-trader of St. Louis, who had formerly maintained a post among the Oto and Pawnee. He was born in Canada in 1768, came to St. Louis in 1790, and was occupied with Indian trade until his death in 1819. His son, Louis C. Benoit, was a leading St. Louis banker.— Ed.

and that the Sioux have broken out into open hostilities. Mr. Benit, about eleven o'clock last night, in passing by some fires below the Poncas village, was fired on as he supposed by a party of the Yankton band of Sioux, which was returned by him. Benit saw nothing of the party of Hunt, having probably passed it in the night time. He also informed us that Mr. Henry is at this time over the mountains, in a distressed situation, that he had sent word of his intention to return to the Mandan village in the spring, with his whole party.

Proceeded on our voyage at three o'clock, not a little disheartened at this intelligence. A gloom overspread every countenance except that of Lisa, who seized the helm, made an encouraging speech, sent round the grog, and then raised the song. My thoughts, to say the truth, were rather unpleasant, but I was inclined to believe that if the danger was such as we were led to believe, the party of Hunt would wait for us; or if an attack should be made upon him, or he compelled to descend the river, we should hear of it in time to save ourselves. Mr. Benit and an American hunter [100] were persuaded to return with us. Passed some beautiful upland N. E. side, but without wood; after a beautiful regular rise of twenty or thirty feet, resembling a sodded bank, an immense level plain stretches out, bounded only by the horizon. The hunter informs me that it extends nearly an hundred miles with little variation. Here we remarked a Sioux lodge, or tent, made of the dressed skins of the elk, of a conical shape. It appears to be the custom of these people to leave their dead in tents like these, in the course of their migrations, until it is convenient for them to gather up their remains.

*Friday 24th.* Set off early — weather warm. The water is falling very fast — there is still a very strong current. Passed bluffs of a chalky appearance, perhaps limestone.

A piece of ice floated by us this morning, probably from the breaking up of some of the northern rivers, which have contributed to the present rise. In putting off from a bluff on the S. W. side, to cross over, my attention was called to an object which attracted the notice of the company. A huge buffaloe bull made his appearance on the top of the bluff standing almost at the edge [101] of the precipice, and looking down upon us. It was the first we had seen. Long and matted wool hung over his head, and covered his huge shoulders, while his body was smooth, as also the tail, except a turf at the end. It was a striking and terrific object: he eyed us with the ferocity of the lion, seemed at length to "snuff the tainted breeze:" threw his head into the air, wheeled round and trotted off. It was fifteen minutes before he disappeared entirely, and I continued to follow him with my eyes, with a kind of delight. I was told he had gone to join his comrade; the males at this season of the year always go in pairs, a singular fact in the natural history of the animal.

Had a fine breeze towards evening — which enabled us to make five or six miles more than we expected.

*Saturday 25th.* This morning ran aground, and were detained several hours. Passed the river *a Jaque*; the principal rendezvous of the traders with the Yankton Sioux. It is a large handsome stream, navigable several hundred miles, with more wood on its borders than is generally found in this part of the country. [102] Immediately at the mouth there is an open wood, of ash and cotton trees.

*Sunday 26th.* At daylight, discovered a canoe descending with two men, who prove to be those sent by us, to Hunt. They bring us the pleasing information, that Hunt, in consequence of our request, has agreed to wait for us, at the Poncas village.

Saw some buffaloe to day, and with Mr. Lisa, went several miles in pursuit of them, but without success.

Passed a beautiful island *L' isle a bon homme*, upon which there are the remains of an ancient fortification.<sup>34</sup> In the evening our hunter killed a buffaloe, upon which we all feasted.

It is becoming very warm in the middle of the day, and our men suffer considerably from the heat of the sun. As we had no wind this morning, and ascended with the cordelle, I made my escape from the boat with my rifle. Passed through a most delightful prairie, the grass short and close, of a deep blue, and intermixed with a great variety of beautiful flowers. With what delight could I roam over these lovely meads, if not under restraint from the fear of meeting some party of Indians, who [103] may be lurking about. The plain was strewed with the ordure of the buffaloe, which gave it the appearance of an immense pasture field. We discovered this morning, a great deal of smoke up the river, which we suppose to have been made by the Indians, in order to give notice of our approach; some of their scouts having probably discovered us. This is the usual mode of giving warning; the ordure of the buffaloe is gathered up in heaps, and fire set to it; and such is the clearness of the atmosphere, that this smoke can be easily discerned at the distance of ten or twenty miles.

The scenery this evening is beautiful beyond any thing I ever beheld. In spite of every injunction to the contrary, I could not help wandering a few miles from the boat. The sky as clear as that represented in Chinese painting. The face of the country enchanting. The flowery mead, the swelling ground, the romantic hill, the bold river, the

<sup>34</sup> Bon Homme Island retains its name, and this has been extended to a South Dakota county and town. The fortification which Brackenridge mentions Lewis and Clark described in much detail. For drawings thereof, see *Original Journals of Lewis and Clark Expedition* (New York, 1904).—ED.

winding rivulet, the groves, the shrubberies, all disposed and arranged in the most exquisite manner. No idea can be conveyed to the mind, but by recurring to one which would be as sad as this is pleasing. Suppose for a moment, the most [104] beautiful parts of France or Italy should at once be divested of their population, and with it their dwellings and every vestige of human existence — that nothing but the silent plains and a few solitary groves and thickets should remain, there would then be some resemblance to the scenery of the Missouri; though the contemplation would produce grief instead of pleasure. Yet even here, I could not but feel as if there existed a painful void — something wanting — “a melancholy stillness reigns over the interminable waste” — no animated beings —

— scarce an insect moves

Its filmy wing — and o'er the plain, naught breathes

But scouling blasts, or th' eternal silence

Breaks — save when the pealing thunder roars.

In fact, I saw no living thing in the course of my evening ramble, except a few buzzing insects. But there is a pleasure in giving wing to fancy, which anticipates the cheerful day when this virgin soil will give birth to millions of my countrymen. Too happy, if my after fame might but survive on the plains of the Missouri. If the vast expanse of ocean is considered as a sublime spectacle, this is even [105] more so; for the eye has still greater scope, and, instead of its monotony, now reposes upon the velvet green, or feeds on the endless variety of hill and dale. Instead of being closed up in a moving prison, deprived of the use of our limbs, here we may wander at our will. The mind naturally expands, or contracts, to suit the sphere in which it exists — in the immeasurable immensity of the scene, the intellectual faculties are endued with an energy, a vigor, a spring, not to be described.



The water has fallen considerably, and the current is much lessened.

*Monday 27th.* Had to oppose a contrary wind until eleven. While exerting ourselves to pass a difficult and dangerous rapid, Lisa who was at the head of the boat, with the grappling hook, fell overboard, and narrowly escaped being drowned. Our boat floated down the stream. When we renewed the attempt, strange to tell, it was my turn to fall over, while exerting myself with a pole, in the afterpart: I was near being swept away by the swiftness of the current, but by good luck seized the steering oar, and drew myself into the [106] boat, before the accident was perceived by more than two or three.

At one, arrived at the Poncas village. On our approach we found all the inhabitants crowded to the bank, and several had waded into the water up to the waist. The greater part of the men were naked; the women and children filthy and disgusting. Two of the chiefs came on board, and immediately began to beg; — “Take pity on us, strangers — we are very poor — we have no knives to cut our meat, but are obliged to tear it with our nails — we have no guns — we have no powder — or lead — take pity on us, we are very poor.” This is the contemptible whine of nearly all the nations of the Missouri. We made a few presents; the principal chief then begged for some whiskey, a small dram was given him, which we afterwards regretted, for in a few moments he became troublesome — looked like a mad monkey, his teeth chattered, his tongue moved incessantly, and his countenance underwent a thousand ridiculous contortions and grimaces. It was with much difficulty we could get him out of the boat; when he was led to the edge, he appeared to be afraid to step off, though the [107] boat was almost touching the shore; his limbs quaked, he burst into tears, and bellowed like an ox; it

was found absolutely necessary to lift him out and set him on the ground. He had no sooner touched it, than this babe, was converted into a ferocious demon: he seized a huge limb of a tree, and fell on the crowd of warriors, women, and children, and laid about him with the utmost fury; these stumbled over each other, and ran off helter skelter, exhibiting a scene truly ludicrous.

We could obtain no information here, further than, that Hunt had gone off three days before, but we suppose in order to wait for us a short distance above. Proceeded on our voyage and encamped at the mouth of the Qui Courre, four miles above the village.<sup>35</sup> In the evening, two men who proved to be deserters from the party of Hunt, came to us with very unwelcome intelligence. It seems that Hunt, was much astonished to find from our messengers that we were so near; but fearing to be passed, had sent us a feigned answer in order to conceal his real design, which was to make all possible haste to keep out of our reach. In order to affect this, he was now making every possible [108] exertion. Our suspicions are now fully confirmed — Hunt is apprehensive that Lisa will endeavour to pass, and then induce the Sioux to stop him, or he is himself resolved upon securing his passage by the same means. Such is the effect of this unhappy distrust; this want of mutual confidence, I fear, may in the end, prove equally injurious to us all. Nothing is now left for us, but to push our voyage with greater vigor than ever.

*Tuesday 28th.* Weather smoky, and extremely warm. High land on both sides of the river, with some dwarf trees in the hollows, principally cedar. At ten, a fine breeze springing up, we continued under sail the rest of the day, and determining to strain every nerve, in order to overtake

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<sup>35</sup> The French name of the present Niobrara River was L'eau qui court (rapid-running water).— ED.

Hunt, we resolved to run the risk of sailing after night, and fortunately it happened to be moonlight. We continued under way until eleven o'clock. As the water was in a middling stage, there was danger of running aground, and being detained several days. But little confidence can be placed in the soundings, on account of the bends of the river, and the sudden changes from deep to shoal water. [109] There is scarcely any lowland from the Qui Courre — the country hilly.

*Wednesday 29th.* After lying by a few hours, at one o'clock, again continued under sail — but the moon disappearing, and it becoming dark, it was thought advisable to lie by until day-light. The hills hereabout, high and broken, and little or no river bottom on either side. At two o'clock, arrived at a beautiful island, called Little Cedar island, on which grows fine cedar, the trees uncommonly large.<sup>96</sup> This is a delightful spot, the soil of the island is rich, and it may contain about three thousand acres — the middle of the island is a beautiful prairie, but the adjacent country is bleak and barren. At the point of the island, discovered an encampment of Hunt, and on examination, we discovered, to the great joy of the company that the fire was not yet extinguished; it is therefore but a few days since he was here. Continued under sail until eleven at night, having in little better than twenty-four hours, made seventy-five miles.

*Thursday 30th.* This morning, favoured with a continuance of fair wind. The country is exceedingly rough and broken — the greater [110] part without the least vegetation. The hills have a very singular appearance. Near the top they look black, and seem to have been burnt.

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<sup>96</sup> This was the first of the islands bearing this name, which is still retained. It is in Gregory County, South Dakota. The second is near Chamberlain. See Bradbury's *Travels*, vol. v of our series, note 67.— ED.

About noon, saw some tracks, which we supposed to be of yesterday.

In the evening, passed a very fine stream, called White river, about three hundred yards wide at the mouth.<sup>37</sup> Here there is some bottom land, and wood points; the hills covered with grass. Heard several gun shots, which we supposed to have been from the party of Hunt. This evening the wind abated.

*Friday 31st.* This morning, a contrary wind, and some rain. Proceeded with the cordelle. In the course of the day, saw a large flock of antelopes — they appear to be numerous in this part of the country. Observed in the sand, a number of Indian tracks, and a place, where it appeared that the boats of Mr. Hunt had stopped with the Indians some time. One of our men discovered a curious place, contrived by the Indians, for taking fish; it was something like a fish basket — we found two fine catfish in it.

When about to put into the river, to cross to a point, we discovered three buffaloes, swimming [III] towards us, and contrary to the precautions we had agreed to observe, in making no noise, (lest we should be discovered by the Indians, who were probably in the neighborhood) a firing was commenced upon the poor animals, which continued half an hour. The report of the guns, as might have been foreseen, brought an Indian to the top of the hill, but we were too far in the river, to return to him, or to be heard.

Towards evening, the boat having received some injury, were compelled to stop — I went in pursuit of a buffaloe calf — on my return, found the party somewhat uneasy on account of the length of my stay, having been drawn by the eagerness of pursuit to a considerable distance. Set

<sup>37</sup> White River rises in northeastern Nebraska and flows through South Dakota, emptying into the Missouri in Lyman County.— ED.

off again, and continued to drag the boat along until late at night. The men much fatigued.

*Saturday, June 1st.* At daylight we heard the firing of guns on the hills below us, on the other side of the river; and concluded that all our precautions and extraordinary exertion had been vain; that we should be robbed and killed, or at least compelled to return; for it was in vain to think of ascending the river if these [112] people were determined to oppose us. In a short time they made their appearance on the opposite sand beach, hoisted an American flag, and fired a few shots. There was but one thing to be done, which was to cross over to them at once, and meet the worst, every man preparing himself for defence. Each rower had his gun by his side, and Lisa and myself beside our knives and rifles had each a pair of pistols in our belts. On reaching the shore, we discovered twelve or thirteen Indians seated on a log of wood, but we supposed the principal body of them were concealed in the woods, so as to be at hand if required. Lisa and I leaped ashore, and shook hands with them. Having no interpreter at this critical juncture, we were fearful of not being understood: however, with the aid of certain signs which form a kind of universal language amongst the Indians, and with which Lisa was acquainted, he was enabled to hold a conversation. He told them that he was their trader, but that he had been very unfortunate, for all the peltries which he had collected among them, as they well knew, had been burnt the year before; while his young men, who had passed up to [113] the head of the river, had been greatly distressed by the natives of those parts, who were bad people. That he was now poor and much to be pitied, and was on his way to bring back his young men, having resolved to leave the upper country. He concluded, by requesting the chief to give notice to all the Sioux bands that in three months he

would return and establish a trading factory for them at the Cedar island. This speech, together with a handsome present, had the desired effect; though not without apparent reluctance. Remaining as short a time as possible, we recrossed the river. The chief is a fine looking Indian, the others were very young men, nearly naked, with long braids of hair hanging over their foreheads, and confined in small tubes. They have all fine features, and are well formed. I observed a singular appendage to their moccasins; a fox's tail was fastened to the heel, and which trailed along the ground as they walked. It is two days since Hunt passed here.

We experienced a momentary relief, but did not by any means, consider ourselves yet safe. It is possible we may have passed the principal body of the Sioux in the night, while under [114] sail, in which case, they will be able to overtake us by this evening, or to-morrow morning. We therefore resolved not to remit our exertions.

About twelve o'clock we reached the great bend, twenty miles round, and but one mile and an half across the gorge. A remarkable part of the river. In the evening there was every appearance of an approaching change in the state of the atmosphere; and the wind, as usual, veered gradually round to the different points of the compass, from south to east, from east to north, and from north to west; and what appeared almost miraculous, shifted with the course of the river so as to enable us to sail with a favourable wind, nearly the whole way round the bend. In this, however, we were exposed to considerable danger, and suffered much from a very heavy rain. Thus favoured, we have gained a day upon Hunt.

*Sunday 2d.* Set out with my gun early this morning on the S. W. side of the river — walked about four miles along the hills, and at length approaching in sight of the

point where the great bend terminates, I descried on the opposite side, with much satisfaction, the boats [115] of Mr. Hunt. I immediately returned to give the joyful intelligence to our people. On coming opposite the place where I had seen the boats, we discovered a great number of Indians, who beckoned to us to cross; but supposing them to be Sioux, we determined to continue on until we should overtake the party before us. We suffered them to shout, to gallop their horses, and to wave their robes unnoticed. Some distance above, two men came to us, who had been with Hunt; the Indians we had just passed, were a party of three hundred Arikaras, who, on hearing of our approach, had come for the purpose of enabling us to ascend. It appears also, that we have passed all the Sioux bands, who had been seen by Hunt, but probably finding his party too strong, they had resolved to stop and plunder ours; that we must have passed them in the night, or under sail, as they did not expect to hear of us so soon.

At eleven o'clock we overtook Hunt's party, to the satisfaction of our little company. It was with real pleasure I took my friend Bradbury by the hand; I had reason to believe our meeting was much more cordial than that of [116] the two commanders. Continued under sail in company the rest of the day, forming a handsome little fleet of five sail. Encamped in the evening opposite the larger Cedar island, twelve hundred miles from the mouth of the Missouri.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> This was the Cedar Island upon which Loisel's fort stood; see Bradbury's *Travels*, vol. v of our series, note 105.—ED.

CHAPTER VI<sup>39</sup>

Messrs. Bradbury and Nuttal — An excursion — Rupture between the leaders of our parties — Arrival at the Arikara villages.

HITHERTO the rapidity of our movements, and the continual anxiety which prevailed amongst us, precluded the possibility of making any distant excursions, or of observing the different objects which came under our notice, with the attention I could have wished. These inconveniences were now all passed, and I now promised myself much pleasure in the examination [117] of the country, and of its productions; as well as much information from the society of two scientific men. I had little or no practical knowledge of natural history myself, and thus far we had passed through a district affording little else to excite attention. The surface of the land — its shape — its appearances — was all that I could pretend to note with accuracy, and this only on the immediate borders of the river. We are now twelve hundred miles from the mouth; the last six hundred, with little variation composed of grassy steppes, with open groves at intervals along the margin of the river, and on the uplands and hollows at a distance from it, a few copses of wood and shrubberies. The hills of no great elevation, scarcely exceeding those on the Ohio, and like that through which this beautiful river holds its course, a region entirely calcareous. The shores of the river are seldom bound by rocks; and where the bluffs or higher banks are precipitous, we seldom see any thing but enormous masses of bare clay, often sixty or an hundred feet in height, which is constantly crumbling into the river. The limestone, freestone, or sandstone, but rarely shews itself on the river. [118]

<sup>39</sup> Notes upon the following subjects mentioned in this chapter are found in Bradbury's *Travels*, vol. v of our series: Arikara Indians, notes 76 and 83; Cheyenne River, note 81; Surwarcarna River, note 82.— ED.



From this it will be seen, that to the mineralogist, few objects of interest are found. The masses of pumice, and the burnt bluffs in the country of the Poncas, are to be attributed most probably to the burning of coal banks; for it is a well known fact, that such have been known to burn for several years without being extinguished; and why may not the same thing have occurred here. In one place above the Poncas village, the river is bounded on both sides by hills of no great elevation, bare of vegetation, and the earth from the effects of burning, in nearly the whole of this distance, of a dark color, quite hard and heavy, as if containing a portion of iron. Emetites are observed in considerable quantities, from which it is probable that iron ore exists.

Mr. Bradbury has met with but little on the subject of mineralogy; but has been very successful in his botanical researches. He has encountered nearly an hundred undescribed plants, many very beautiful and curious. Within a few days he finds a great number which he calls Mexican. We have now in fact reached that inclined plain over which the rivers of the Provincias Internas, run into the [119] Gulf of Mexico. There are also many alpine plants, by which he conjectures, that we have already attained a much greater height, than any part, of the Eastern section of the valley of the Mississippi. Mr. Bradbury, in company with some Indians and hunters has made an excursion from the river Platte, to the Otto villages on that river, to the mouth of Elkhorn, which he describes as a deep navigable stream, containing nearly as much water as the Thames at London bridge, but this water is swallowed up in the shoals and quicksands of the river, into which it is discharged. He passed for one hundred and fifty miles, through a delightful champaign country, of rich, open, smooth meadows, the borders of the streams fringed with wood: within eight or

ten miles of the Missouri, the country is more broken and hilly, and with a still smaller proportion of wood.

There is in company a gentleman of whom I have already spoken, Mr. Nuttal, engaged in similar pursuits, to which he appears singularly devoted, and which seems to engross every thought, to the total disregard of his own personal safety, and sometimes to the [120] inconvenience of the party he accompanies. To the ignorant Canadian boatmen, who are unable to appreciate the science, he affords a subject of merriment; *le fou* is the name by which he is commonly known. When the boat touches the shore, he leaps out, and no sooner is his attention arrested by a plant or flower, than every thing else is forgotten. The inquiry is made *ou est le fou ?* where is the fool? *il est apres ramassee des racines*, he is gathering roots. He is a young man of genius, and very considerable acquirements, but is too much devoted to his favorite pursuit, and seems to think that no other study deserves the attention of a man of sense. I hope, should this meet his eye, it will give no offence; for these things, often constituted a subject of merriment to us both.

The day after this fortunate junction, we continued our voyage, but were opposed by a strong wind from the N. E. which, compelled us, after we had proceeded a few miles, to encamp for the remainder of the day.

Took my gun, and set off to make an excursion. The country is altogether open, excepting some groves of cottonwood in the bottom. [121] The upland rises into considerable hills, about one third covered with a very short grass, intermixed with a great variety of plants and flowers, the rest consists of hills of clay, almost bare of every kind of vegetation. On the tops of the higher hills, at some distance from the river, there are masses of granite, of several tons weight, and great quantities of pebbles. In the course of my ramble, I happened on a village of barking squirrels,

or prairie dogs, as they have been called. My approach was announced by an incessant barking, or rather chirping, similar to that of a common squirrel, though much louder. The village was situated on the slope of a hill, and appeared to be at least a mile in length; the holes were seldom at a greater distance from each other than twenty or thirty paces. Near each hole, there was a small elevation of earth, of six or eight inches, behind which, the little animal posted himself, and never abandoned it, or ceased the demonstrations of alarm, 'insignificantly fierce,' until I approached within a few paces. As I proceeded through the village, they disappeared, one after another, before me. There was never more than one at each hole. I had [122] heard that the magpie, the Missouri rattle snake, and the horn frog, were observed to frequent these places; but I did not see any of them, except the magpie. The rattle snake of the prairies, is about the same length with the common rattle snake, but more slender, and the color white and black.

In the course of the evening, I had an opportunity of seeing the manner in which the antelope is taken in these open plains, where there is no possibility of approaching by insidious means. A handkerchief is placed on the end of a ramrod, and waved in the air, the hunter lying flat on the ground. If any of the animals be in sight, they run instantly to the place, and perform a circuit around, approaching often within twenty or thirty yards, which gives an opportunity of firing on them. This is the most swift and beautiful little animal on our continent.<sup>40</sup> The description of the gazel of Africa, the favorite theme of Arabian poetry, might be applied to the antelope of the Missouri.

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<sup>40</sup> The American antelope (*Antilocapra americana*) was first made known to the scientific world by the description of Lewis and Clark. It is frequently called "cabra," from the Spanish word for goat.— ED.

It is perhaps, the most swift of all animals; and the most timid. Its course over the country is more like flight, than the movement of a quadruped. Its color is that of the deer, but [123] in shape it bears a greater resemblance to the goat, though larger, and of a form much more delicate; I often amuse myself with watching the motions of this little animal.

The party of Mr. Hunt consists of about eighty men, chiefly Canadians, the rest are American-hunters.

*Tuesday 4th.* Set off at seven — wind contrary, though not so strong as yesterday. After doubling a point, we found that from the course of the river, the wind would be favorable, and accordingly sailed for eight or ten miles. We saw at the mouth of a small creek, a herd of buffaloe of all sizes, crowded together, to the number of several hundred. We immediately debarked, but they disappeared before we succeeded in killing any of them. The appearance of the country has varied but little for several days past. Bleak and dreary — the bottoms narrow; in some places none at all, and clay bluffs.

*Wednesday 5th.* This morning after proceeding a short distance we were compelled, by rain, to put to shore, where we continued until towards evening, and seeing no probability that the weather would clear up, crossed [124] over to the S. W. side, where Hunt and his party were encamped. On the side we had left, the hills approach close to the river, and bare of vegetation; the earth a stiff clay, which being now moistened by the rain is exceedingly slippery. On the other side there is a handsome plain, with a row of trees along the margin of the river, and a handsome wood along the borders of a little rivulet which flows across the plain. The upland rises at the distance of a quarter of a mile, to the height of sixty or seventy feet, in a number of projecting points, or hills. On ascending this ground we found ourselves on an extended plain, upon which at the distance

of a few miles the hills rose in strange, irregular broken masses. Mr. Bradbury and I took a stroll from the camp, in quest of specimens and adventures. Before reaching the upland we observed on the river bottom a large encampment of Sioux, where they had probably remained during winter, from the traces of tents, the quantity of bones, and the appearance of the ground. Their position was well chosen; the wood of the Missouri, and that of the streamlet I have just mentioned, at [125] right angles with it, formed two sides of the camp, on the other sides there is an open plain. In this place it would have been difficult to have attacked them by surprise. On coming to the upland we found the points of the hills stony, and large masses of detached rock here and there on the more elevated places. The grass short, intermixed with many beautiful small flowers, but no weeds. A few prickly pears (cactus) were seen, but of a small size, not exceeding a few inches in length, and the thorns not strong. The upland was at every little distance, indented with ravines, or hollows, some of them bare of soil and still subject to the washing of the rains, others well covered with grass. Upon one of these projecting points, we observed at some distance a small group of buffaloes lying down. Stealing along the brow of the hill, we ascended from a ravine, approached within thirty or forty yards, and taking aim together, fired at a cow that happened to be nearest to us; she started up and bellowed, the others seemed to be but little alarmed, until we rose up and advanced towards them, when they trotted off slowly to the hills, leaving the cow who went [126] off in a different direction. The wounded buffalo, or deer, always leave the herd. I pursued her for some distance, but found that she was not mortally wounded. The flight of these alarmed other herds which were feeding at a distance; there was something picturesque in the appearance of

these herds of buffaloe, slowly winding round the sides of the distant hills, disappearing in some hollow and again emerging to view. Wide and beaten roads formed by the passing of the buffaloe, may every where be seen. While Mr. Bradbury was engaged in collecting specimens, I ran to a point at the distance of a mile, where I saw some antelopes, and had the good fortune, by ascending a ravine to approach within sixty yards. They proved to be six females and one male; the latter at every instant performed a circuit in a small trot, and then suddenly stopped short, as if to see that nothing came near. The tail like that of the goat, and perfectly white, the limbs small and delicate, the horns like those of the deer, with several prongs, but they are never shed, and the female has them as well as the male, though of a smaller size. On shewing myself they flew off, and I [127] had scarce time to reach the spot they left, until they reappeared upon another point, as far off as when I first saw them. We saw in the course of the evening, several wolves, villages of prairie dogs, a herd of elk, and a hare of the species called *lepus variabilis*, its color was at this time grey, but becomes white in winter.

On our return, I found that a disagreeable misunderstanding had taken place between the two chiefs of the parties: The interpreter of Mr. Hunt, had improperly relinquished the service of the company, to which he was still indebted. Mr. Lisa had several times mentioned to him the impropriety of his conduct, and perhaps had made him some offers, in order to draw him from his present service. This was certainly imprudent, and placed him in the power of a worthless fellow, who, without doubt, retailed the conversation to his master, with some additions. This evening, while in Hunt's camp, to which he had gone on some business, he was grossly insulted by the interpreter, who struck him several times, and seized a pair of pistols belonging

to Hunt; — that gentleman did not [128] seem to interest himself much in the affair, being actuated by feelings of resentment, at the attempt to inveigle his man. On my return to our camp, I found Mr. Lisa furious with rage, buckling on his knife, and preparing to return: finding that I could not dissuade, I resolved to accompany him. It was with the greatest difficulty I succeeded in preventing the most serious consequences. I had several times to stand between him and the interpreter, who had a pistol in each hand. I am sorry to say, that there was but little disposition on the part of Mr. Hunt to prevent the mischief that might have arisen. I must, in justice to him declare, however, that it was through him that Mr. M'Clelland was induced not to put his threat<sup>4</sup> in execution, having pledged his honour to that effect. I finally succeeded in bringing Lisa off to his boat. When it is recollected that this was at a distance of a thousand miles from all civil authority, or power, it will be seen that there was but little to restrain the effects of animosity. Having obtained, in some measure, the confidence of [129] Mr. Hunt, and the gentlemen who were with him, and Mr. Bradbury that of Mr. Lisa, we mutually agreed to use all the arts of mediation in our power, and if possible, prevent any thing serious.

*Thursday 6th.* Weather clearing up. The water rising very fast — supposed the annual flood. This morning passed the ruins of an Indian village, there were great piles of buffaloe bones, and quantities of earthen ware. The village appears to have been scattered round a kind of citadel, or fortification, enclosing four or five acres, and of an oval form. The earth is thrown up about four feet, there are a few cedar palisadoes remaining. Probably, in cases of siege, the whole village was crowded into this space.

<sup>4</sup> That if ever he fell in with Lisa, in the Indian country, he would shoot him.—  
BRACKENRIDGE.

*Friday 28th [i. e., 7th.].* Continued under way as usual. All kind of intercourse between the leaders has ceased. In the evening, passed several old villages, said to be of the Arikara nation. The bottoms, or points, become wider, and the bluffs of a less disgusting appearance; there are but few clay hills, the country being generally covered with grass.

[130] *Saturday 8th.* Contrary wind to-day, though delightful weather. This morning, passed a large and handsome river, called the Chienne, S. W. side. It appears as large as the Cumberland or Tennessee. Saw at this place, the ruins of an old village and fortification. The country hereabouts is fine, and better wooded than any I have seen for the last three hundred miles. A tolerable settlement might be supported here. Game is very abundant — elk, deer, and buffaloe without number. We observed this evening, forty or fifty skin canoes, which had been left by some war party which had crossed here. Such is the wanton destruction of the buffaloe, that, I am informed, the Indians will kill them merely for the purpose of procuring their skins for these canoes.

Encamped a few miles above the Chienne river, in a beautiful bottom. No art can surpass the beauty of this spot; trees of different kinds, shrubs, plants, flowers, meadow, and upland, charmingly dispersed. What coolness and freshness breathes around! The river is bordered with cotton-wood, and a few elms, there is then an open space of thirty or forty paces, after which begins a delightful shrubbery [131] of small ash trees, the *graisse de beouf*, the gooseberry, currant, &c. forming a most delightful avenue. We all remark, that the singing of the birds is much sweeter than in the forests of the states. This is fancifully accounted for by Mr. Bradbury, from the effects of society; from the scantiness of woods, they are compelled to crowd on the same tree, and in this way impart improve-



ment to each other. Assuming it as a fact, that the birds of Europe sing better than those of America, he asks, can it be owing to any other reason than this? There are great numbers of the common field lark; the black bird, thrush, martin, and wren, are also numerous. Turkeys, patridges, or pheasants, are not to be seen beyond the Maha village.

The moschetoes have been exceedingly troublesome for several days past. They disappear in the evenings, which are cool, or with the slightest wind.

*Sunday 9th.* Got under way this morning, with fine weather. Discovered great numbers of buffaloe; on the N. W. side, an extensive level meadow. Numbers began to swim across the river, as Hunt whose party was before us, [132] was passing along; they waited and killed as many as they wanted; a number which were started from an island, swam towards us, and we killed several also.

Mr. Bradbury and I went out on the N. W. side, where the buffaloe had been first seen, and walked several miles. A very beautiful and extensive meadow, at least a mile wide, but without a tree or shrub—the upland bare. Passed a Sioux encampment of last fall — from appearance there must have been three or four hundred here. Amongst other things, our curiosity was attracted, by a space, about twenty feet in diameter, enclosed with poles, with a post in the middle, painted red, and at some distance, a buffaloe head raised upon a little mound of earth. We are told, this is a place where an incantation for rendering the buffaloe plenty, had been performed. Amongst other ceremonies, the pipe is presented to the head. I started several elk and departed from Mr. Bradbury to go in pursuit of them — I ran several miles along the hills, but without success. I had wandered about a mile from the river, but could distinctly see it. The country rises in steps, each step an extensive plain. Herds [133] of buffaloe could be seen at

such a distance as to appear like black spots or dots. How different are the feelings in the midst of this romantic scenery, from those experienced in the close forests of the Ohio?

At four o'clock hoisted sail with a fair wind. From the moment of our departure, we were hardly ever out of sight of herds of buffaloes, feeding on the hills and in the plains, and in the course of the day saw elk and antelopes in abundance. These objects enliven the scenery, but there is something strange in thus passing day after day without meeting any human beings. A vast country inhabited only by buffaloes, deer, and wolves, has more resemblance to the fictions of the 'Arabian Nights Entertainments' than to reality. Towards evening, seeing a number of buffaloes crowded on a small beach at the foot of an island, orders were given to observe silence, while seven or eight of us posted ourselves to the best advantage. They suffered us to approach within thirty or forty yards, while they stood gazing at the sail with blank indifference. We selected the fattest and fired on him together. Notwithstanding his wounds, which must have been mortal, he endeavoured to make off with [134] the rest. We pursued him into the island — the animal had now become ferocious from his wounds, and it was found dangerous to approach him. He received twenty balls in his body before he was brought to the ground.

The island is beautiful. It is completely surrounded by cotton wood and cedar trees, but the space within is a handsome clear meadow. Along the edges of the woods in the inside, there are great quantities of gooseberry bushes; all these islands are much alike in this respect, and surpass any I have seen on the lower part of the river.

*Monday 10th.* During the whole of this day had a fine wind which enabled us to make thirty-five miles. En-

camped opposite a fine stream, called Ser-war-cerna, N. W. side.

The country wears a handsome aspect; the hills gently swelling, and some delightful prairie on the river. There is but little wood. In the course of the day we saw great numbers of buffaloe, in herds of several hundreds each.

*Tuesday 11th.* Continued our voyage with a slight wind. The country much the same as that of yesterday. Encamped some distance below the island on which the Arikara village [135] was situated some years ago — they have removed a few miles further up. This evening I went to the camp of Mr. Hunt to make arrangements as to the manner of arriving at the village, and of receiving the chiefs. This is the first time our leaders have had any intercourse directly or indirectly since the quarrel. Mr. Lisa appeared to be suspected; they supposed it to be his intention to take advantage of his influence with the Arikara nation, and do their party some injury in revenge. I pledged myself that this should not be the case.

*Wednesday 12th.* Heavy rains accompanied by thunder and lightning last night.

At nine o'clock two of the chiefs with the interpreter employed by the company, came on board our boat. They are both fine looking men, much above the common size, and with much fairer complexions than any Indians I have seen. One is the hereditary village chief; named the *Left handed*; the other a ferocious, and gigantic looking fellow, is the principal war chief, named the *Big man*. At ten we put to shore opposite the village, in order to dry our baggage, which was completely wet. The leaders of the party of Hunt were still suspicious [136] that Lisa intended to betray them.— M'Clelland declared that he would shoot him the moment he discovered any thing like it. In the mean time, the chief spoke across the river, which is here about

a half mile wide; we understood that he was giving orders to prepare the council lodge. The village appeared to occupy about three quarters of a mile along the river bank, on a level plain, the country behind it rising into hills of considerable height. There are little or no woods any where to be seen. The lodges are of a conical shape, and look like heaps of earth. A great number of horses are seen feeding in the plains around, and on the sides of the hills. I espied a number of squaws, in canoes, descending the river and landing at the village. The interpreter informed me, that they were returning home with wood. These canoes are made of a single buffaloe hide, stretched over osiers, and of a circular form. There was but one woman in each canoe, who kneeled down and paddled in front. The load was fastened to the canoe and dragged along. The water being a little rough, these canoes sometimes almost disappeared between the waves, which produced a [137] curious effect; the squaws with the help of a little fancy, might be taken for mermaids, sporting on the billows; the canoe rising and sinking with them, while the women were visible from the waist upwards.

About two o'clock, all matters being arranged, fourteen of us crossed over and accompanied the village chief to his lodge. Mats were laid around for us to sit upon, while he placed himself on a kind of stool or bench. The pipe was then handed round and smoked; after which the herald (every chief or great man has one of them) ascended to the top of the lodge, and seating himself near an open place, began to bawl out like a town crier; the chief every now and then addressing him something through the before mentioned aperture or skylight. We soon discovered the object of this, by the arrival of the other chiefs, about twenty in number, who came dropping in as their respective names were called over, and squatted down upon the bear, or buffaloe skins.

When all were seated, the crier prepared the pipe, then handed it to the chief, who, as is usual on solemn occasions, began by blowing [138] a whiff upwards, as it were to the heavens, then to the earth, and afterwards to the east.

“—O Jove! O earth!  
And thou fair sun,—”

After which the pipe was sent round. A mark of respect in handing the pipe to another, is to hold it until he has taken several whiffs. After this ceremony, the chief began the usual complaint of poverty, &c. not in the spirit of the good Evander, who only alludes to his poverty, to show how much he is above the love of wealth, and tells his guests that his humble roof was not scorned even by a deity. He then declared that he was happy to see us in his village and to take us by the hand as friends. Lisa in reply to this, after the usual common-place, observed that he was come to trade amongst them and the Mandans, but that these persons, (pointing to Hunt and his comrades,) were going a long journey to the great Salt lake, to the west, and he hoped would meet with favourable treatment; and that any injury offered them, he would consider as done to himself; that although distinct parties, yet as to the safety of either, they were but one. This candid and [139] frank declaration, at once removed all suspicion from the minds of the others, who had become seriously apprehensive that Lisa, finding himself amongst a people who were perfectly at his disposal, might betray them. A number of short speeches were made by the other chiefs and warriors. On the proposal of trading, the *Left handed* required a day or two, until he could consult with his people, and fix the terms upon which the trade would be conducted: with this the council ended, the boats were ordered over and encamped a little distance below the village. A guard of Indian warriors was placed to keep off the populace and prevent pilfering.

[140] CHAPTER VII<sup>42</sup>

Arikara villages — An alarm in the village — Manners and customs.

THE morning after the council, we were completely drenched by heavy rains, which had fallen during the night. The chief has not given his answer as to the conditions of the trade. It is for him usually to fix the price, on a consultation with his subordinate chiefs; to this the whole village must conform. The Indian women and girls were occupied all this morning in carrying earth in baskets, to replace that which the rain had washed off their lodges. Rambled through the village, which I found excessively filthy, the 'villainous smells,' which every where assailed me, compelled me at length, to seek refuge in the open plain. The lovers of Indian manners, and mode of living, should contemplate them at a distance. The rains had rendered their village little better than a hog pen; the police appeared to me, in general, extremely negligent. Some of [141] the ancient cities of the old world, were probably like this village, inattentive to that cleanliness so necessary to health, where a great mass of beings are collected in one place; and we need not be surprised at the frequency of desolating plagues and pestilence. The village is swarming with dogs and children. I rank these together, for they are inseparable companions. Wherever I went, the children ran away, screaming and frightened at my outre and savage appearance. Let us not flatter ourselves with the belief, that the effect of civilization and refinement, is to render us agreeable and lovely to the eyes of those whom we exclusively denominate savages! The dogs, of which

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<sup>42</sup> Notes upon the following subjects mentioned in this chapter are found in Bradbury's *Travels*, vol. v of our series: Snake Indians, note 123; Cheyenne Indians, note 88; Mandan Indians, note 76.— ED.

each family has thirty or forty, pretended to make a show of fierceness, but on the least threat, ran off. They are of different sizes and colors. A number are fattened on purpose to eat, others are used for drawing their baggage. It is nothing more than the domesticated wolf. In wandering through the prairies, I have often mistaken wolves for Indian dogs. The larger kind has long curly hair, and resembles the shepherd dog. There is the same diversity amongst the wolves of this country. [142] They may be more properly said to howl, than bark.

The lodges are constructed in the following manner: Four large forks of about fifteen feet in height, are placed in the ground, usually about twenty feet from each other, with hewn logs or beams across; from these beams other pieces are placed above, leaving an aperture at the top to admit the light, and to give vent to the smoke. These upright pieces are interwoven with osiers, after which the whole is covered with earth, though not sodded. An opening is left at one side for a door, which is secured by a kind of projection of ten or twelve feet, enclosed on all sides, and forming a narrow entrance, which might be easily defended. A buffaloe robe suspended at the entrance, answers as a door. The fire is made in a hole in the ground, directly under the aperture at the top. Their beds elevated a few feet, are placed around the lodge, and enclosed with curtains of dressed elk skins. At the upper end of the lodge, there is a kind of trophy erected; two buffaloe heads, fantastically painted, are placed on a little elevation; over them, are fixed a variety of consecrated things, such as shields, [143] skins of a rare or valuable kind, and quivers of arrows. The lodges are placed at random, without any regularity or design, and are so much alike, that it was for some time before I could learn to return to the same one. The village is surrounded by a palisade of cedar poles, but

in a very bad state. Around the village there are little plats enclosed by stakes, entwined with osiers, in which they cultivate maize, tobacco, and beans; but their principal field is at the distance of a mile from the village, to which, such of the females, whose duty it is to attend to their culture, go and return morning and evening. Around the village they have buffaloe robes stuck on high poles. I saw one so arranged as to bear a resemblance to the human figure, the hip bone of the buffaloe represented the head, the sockets of the thigh bones looked like eyes.

*Friday 14th.* It rained again last night, which prevented the trade from commencing until some time in the day. Mr. Lisa sent a quantity of goods to the lodge of the principal chief before mentioned, and Hunt to the one who accompanied him to meet us, the principal war chief. The price of a horse was commonly [144] ten dollars worth of goods at first cost. Hunt had resolved to purchase horses at this place, and proceed by land to the Columbia, being assured by some hunters, who met him before his arrival here, that this would be his best route.

Mr. Bradbury and I, took a walk into the upper village, which is separated from the lower by a stream about twenty yards wide — Entered several lodges, the people of which received us with kindness, placed mats and skins for us to sit on, and after smoking the pipe, offered us something to eat; this consisted of fresh buffaloe meat served in a wooden dish. They had a variety of earthen vessels, in which they prepared their food, or kept water. After the meat, they offered us homony made of corn dried in the milk, mixed with beans, which was prepared with buffaloe marrow, and tasted extremely well. Also the prairie turnip, pounded and made into gruel. This is a root that abounds in the prairies — has something of the taste of the turnip, but more dry. Their most common food is homony and



dried buffaloe meat. In one of the lodges which we visited, we found the doctor, who was preparing some [145] medicine for a sick lad. He was cooling with a spoon a decoction of some roots, which had a strong taste and smell, resembling jalap. He showed us a variety of simples which he used. The most of them were common plants with some medical properties, but rather harmless than otherwise. The boy had a slight pleurisy. The chief remedy for their diseases, which they conceive to be owing to a disorder of the bowels, is rubbing the abdomen and sides of the patient, sometimes with such violence, as to cause fainting. When they become dangerous, they resort to charms and incantations, such as singing, dancing, blowing on the sick, &c. They are very successful in the treatment of wounds. When the wound becomes very obstinate, they resort to the actual cautery, after which it heals more easily.

*Saturday 15th.* Fine weather — Took a walk with Mr. Bradbury through the country, which is entirely open, and somewhat hilly. Large masses of granite were usually found on the highest knobs. We saw a great variety of plants, and some new ones — One or two of the vallies are beautiful, with scarcely any shrubs [146] but dwarf plum trees, scattered along a rivulet.

On our return in the evening, an alarm prevailed in the village, which appeared to be all in commotion. We were informed that the Sioux, their enemies, were near. This was probably all preconcerted. I was shewn, at the distance of about two miles, four horsemen on the top of a hill, at full gallop, passing and re-passing each other, which I understand is the usual signal given by the scouts, (some of whom are constantly on the alert,) of the approach of an enemy. To give intelligence of the appearance of a herd of buffaloe, instead of crossing each other, they gallop backward and forward abreast. Presently the warriors issued

from the village with great noise and tumult, pursuing the direction in which the signal was made, down the river, and past our encampment; observing no regular march, but running helter skelter, like persons in one of our towns to extinguish a fire — and keeping up a continual hallooing to encourage each other. A number were on horseback, but the greater part on foot. Some were dressed in their most gaudy [147] stile, with the cincture of feathers, and their ornaments of the head made of plumes, fitted round a kind of crown. The tops of the lodges were crowded with women and children, and with old men, who could give no assistance, but by their lungs, which they kept well employed: yet there were several who sallied forth, bending under the weight of years. I counted upwards of five hundred in all. They soon after returned; whether they had chased away the enemy, or the alarm had turned out false, I never learned.

In the course of the next day, several parties arrived from different directions. According to custom they were met by warriors and conducted to the council lodge, where they gave an account of what had occurred, which was afterwards announced to the village by heralds, who went round bawling out the news at the door of each lodge. These occurrences contribute to enliven the village; yet independently of these, it continually presents a busy and animated scene. Great numbers of men are engaged in the different games of address and agility, others judging, or looking on, and many employed in a variety of other ways. There are [148] a great number of women constantly at work in dressing buffaloe robes, which are placed on frames before the lodges. One of the parties which arrived to day, came from the snake nation, where they had stolen horses. This arrested their employments for a moment, the immediate friends and relatives of such as returned,

spent the evening in rejoicing; while several females who had lost a relation, retired to the hills behind the village, where they continued to cry the whole afternoon.

In the evening they usually collect on the tops of the lodges, where they sit and converse: every now and then the attention of all is attracted by some old man who rises up and declaims aloud, so as to be heard all over the village. There is something in this like a quaker meeting. Adair labors to prove the Indian tribes to be descended from the Jews,<sup>43</sup> I might here adduce this as an argument in favor of these people being a colony of quakers. The object of this harangue was to urge the people to treat the strangers well. To have such amongst them, is regarded as a matter of pride and exultation amongst the Indian nations, and often gives rise to jealousies. [149] There is hardly such invidious distinction as that of natives and foreigners. If a man brings any thing useful to the society in which he happens to be, he is thought to confer a favour on it — he is thought to increase the wealth or safety of the tribe.

*Monday 17th.* This day arrived a deputation from the Chienne nation, to announce that those people were on their march to Arikara, and would be here in fifteen days. I sometimes amused myself with the idea of forming a gazette of the daily occurrences. We here see an independent nation, with all the interests and anxieties of the largest; how little would its history differ from that of one of the Grecian states! A war, a treaty, deputations sent and received, warlike excursions, national mourning or rejoicing, and a thousand other particulars, which constitute the chronicle of the most celebrated people.

In the evening, about sundown, the women cease from

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<sup>43</sup> For the work of James Adair to which Brackenridge here refers, see J. Long's *Voyages*, vol. ii of our series, note 31.— ED.

their labors, and collect in little knots, and amuse themselves with a game something like jack-stones: five pebbles are tossed up in a small basket, with which they endeavor to catch them again as they fall.

[150] *Tuesday 18th.* Confidence had been somewhat restored between the leaders of the two parties, since the council in the village. Mr. Hunt having resolved to start from this village, a bargain was made with Mr. Lisa, for the sale of Hunt's boats and some merchandise; in consequence of which, we recrossed the river in order to make the exchange, after which we returned and encamped. We are to set off to-morrow morning to the Mandan villages.

Before I bid adieu to Arikara, I must note some general matters relating to their character and manners.

The men are large and well proportioned, complexion somewhat fairer than that of Indians generally — usually go naked: — the dress they put on seems intended more for ornament than as essential; this consists of a sort of cassoc or shirt, made of the dressed skin of the antelope, and ornamented with porcupine quills, died a variety of colors; a pair of leggings, which are ornamented in the same way. A buffaloe hide dressed with the hair on, is then thrown over the right shoulder, the quiver being [151] hung on the other, if armed with a bow.<sup>44</sup> They generally permit their hair to grow long; I have, in one or two instances, seen it reach to their heels, when increased by artificial locks of horse hair; and is then usually divided into several braids, matted at intervals, with a white tenacious clay; sometimes it is rolled up in a ball, and fixed on the top of the head. They always have a quantity of feathers about them; those

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<sup>44</sup> A warrior is seldom seen without his arms, even in the village. — His bow, spear, or gun, is considered part of his dress, and to appear in public without them is in some measure disgraceful. — BRACKENRIDGE.

of the black eagle are most esteemed. They have a kind of crown made of feathers, such as we see represented in the usual paintings of Indians, which is very beautiful. The swan is in most estimation for this purpose. Some ornament the neck with necklaces made of the claws of the white bear. To their heels they sometimes fasten foxes' tails, and on their leggings suspend deers' hoofs, so as to make a rattling noise as they move along. On seeing a warrior dressed in all this finery, walking with his wife, who was comparatively plain in her dress or ornaments, I could not but think this was [152] following the order of nature, as in the peacock, the stag, and almost all animals, the male is lavishly decorated, while the female is plain and unadorned. I intend this as a hint to some of our *petit maitres*. The dress of the female consists of a long robe made of the dressed skins of the elk, the antelope, or the agalia, and ornamented with blue beads, and stripes of ermine, or in its place, of some white skin. The robe is girded round the waist with a broad zone, highly ornamented with porcupine quills, and beads. They are no better off than were the Greeks and Romans, in what we deem at present so essential, but like them they bathe themselves regularly, twice a day. The women are much fairer than the men; some might be considered handsome any where; and exceed the other sex in point of numbers; the dreadful consequence of the wars in which the nation is constantly engaged. Polygamy is general, they have often four or five wives. Their courtship and marriage resemble that of most of the Indian nations; if the parties are mutually agreeable to each other, there is a consultation of the family; if this be also favourable, the father of the girl, or whoever [153] gives her in marriage, makes a return for the present he had received from the lover — the match is then concluded.

They display considerable ingenuity and taste in their works of art: this observation applies to all the American nations, from the Mexicans to the most savage. Their arms, household utensils, and their dresses, are admirably made. I saw a gun which had been completely stocked by an Indian. A curious instance of native ingenuity which came under my notice, ought not to be omitted. I was told one day, of an old Indian who was making a blanket; I immediately went to see him. To my surprise, I found an old man, perfectly blind, seated on a stool before a kind of frame, over which were drawn coarse threads, or rather twists of buffaloe wool, mixed with wolf's hair; he had already made about a quarter of a yard of a very coarse rough cloth. He told me that it was the first he had attempted, and that it was in consequence of a dream, in which he thought he had made a blanket like those of the white people. Here are the rudiments of weaving. They make beautiful [154] jugs, or baskets, with osier, so close as to hold water.

I observed some very old men amongst them — from the purity of the air, and the healthiness of the climate it is not surprising that human life should be drawn out to a great length. The ravages of the small pox, that dreadful scourge to the Indians, has been felt by these people in all its severity. These villages are the remains of seventeen distinct tribes. One day, in passing through the village, I saw something brought out of a lodge in a buffaloe robe, and exposed to the sun; on approaching, I discovered it to be a human being, but so shrivelled up, that it had nearly lost the human physiognomy: almost the only sign of life discernible, was a continual sucking its hands, and feeble moan like that of a young infant. On inquiring of the chief, he told me that he had seen it so ever since he was a boy. He appeared to be at least forty-five. It is

almost impossible to ascertain the age of an Indian when he is above sixty; I made inquiries of several, who appeared to me little short of an hundred, but could form no satisfactory conjecture. Blindness is very common, arising [155] probably from the glare of the snow, during a greater part of the year. I observed the goitre, or swelled neck, in a few instances.

Their government is oligarchical, but great respect is paid to popular opinion. It is utterly impossible to be a great man amongst them, without being a distinguished warrior; and though respect is paid to birth, it must be accompanied by other merit, to procure much influence. They are divided into different bands or classes; that of the pheasant, which is composed of the oldest men; that of the bear, the buffaloe, the elk, the dog, &c. Each of these has its leader, who generally takes the name of the class, exclusively.<sup>45</sup> Initiation into these classes, on arriving at the proper age, and after having given proofs of being worthy of it; is attended with great ceremony. The band of dogs, is considered the most brave and effective in war, being composed of young men under thirty. War parties are usually proposed by some individual warrior, and according to the confidence placed in him, his followers are numerous or otherwise. In these excursions they wander to a great distance, seldom venturing to return home without [156] a scalp, or stolen horses. Frequently when unsuccessful they "cast their robes," as they express it, and vow to kill the first person they meet, provided he be not of their own nation. In crossing the river, they use canoes made of the buffaloe hide, or a few pieces of wood fastened together. They usually leave some token, as a stake, which is marked so as to convey some idea of their numbers, the direction

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<sup>45</sup> This is doubtless some form of totemism: see J. Long's *Voyages*, vol. ii of our series, note 56.—ED.

which they have taken, &c. To avoid surprise, they always encamp at the edge of a wood; and when the party is small, they construct a kind of fortress, with wonderful expedition, of billets of wood, apparently piled up in a careless manner, but so arranged as to be very strong, and by this means to withstand an assault from a much superior force. They are excellent horsemen — they will shoot an arrow at full speed, and again pick it up from the ground without stopping: sometimes they will lean entirely upon one leg, throwing their bodies to that side, so as to present nothing but the leg and thigh, on the other. In pursuit of the buffaloe, they will gallop down steep hills, broken almost into precipices. Some of their horses are very fine, run swiftly, and are [157] soon worn out, from the difficulty of procuring food for them in winter, the smaller branches of the cotton-wood tree being almost the only fodder which they give them. Their hunting is regulated by the warriors chosen for the occasion, who urge on such as are tardy, and repress often with blows, those who would rush on too soon. When a herd of buffaloe is discovered, they approach in proper order, within half a mile, they then separate and dispose themselves, so as in some measure, to surround them, when at the word, they rush forward at full speed, and continue the chase as long as their horses can stand it: a hunter usually shoots two arrows into a buffaloe, and then goes in pursuit of another; if he kills more than three in the hunt, he is considered as having acquitted himself well. The tongue is the prize of the person who has slain the animal; and he that has the greater number, is considered the best hunter of the day. Their weapons consist of guns, war clubs, spears, bows, and lances. They have two kinds of arrows, one for the purpose of the chase, and the other for war; the latter differs in this particular, that the barb or point is fastened so slightly, that when it enters



the [158] body, it remains in, and cannot be drawn out with the wood; therefore, when it is not in a vital part, the arrow is pushed entirely through. They do not poison them. Their bows are generally very small; an elk's horn, or two ribs of a buffaloe, often constitute the materials of which they are made. Those of wood are of willow, the back covered with sinews. Their daily sports, in which, when the weather is favorable, they are engaged from morning till night, are principally of two kinds. A level piece of ground appropriated for the purpose, (and beaten by frequent use,) is the place where they are carried on. The first is played by two persons, each provided with a long pole; one of them rolls a hoop, which, after having reached about two-thirds of the distance, is followed at half speed, and as they perceive it about to fall, they cast their poles under it; the pole on which the hoop falls, so as to be nearest to certain corresponding marks on the hoop and pole, gains for that time. This game excites great interest, and produces a gentle, but animated exercise. The other differs from it in this, that instead of poles, they have short pieces of wood, with barbs at one end, and a [159] cross piece at the other, held in the middle with one hand; but instead of the hoop before mentioned, they throw a small ring, and endeavor to put the point of the barb through it. This is a much more violent exercise than the other.<sup>46</sup>

With respect to their religion, it is extremely difficult, particularly from the slight acquaintance I had with them, to form any just idea. They have some notion of a supreme being, whom they call the "Master of Life," but they offer him no rational worship, and have but indistinct ideas of a future state. Their devotion manifests itself in a thousand curious tricks of slight of hand, which they call

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<sup>46</sup> For a description of a similar game among the Mandan, see *Smithsonian Report*, 1885, part ii, p. 304.—ED.

magic, and which the vulgar amongst them believe to be something supernatural. They are very superstitious. Beside their magic, or medicine lodge, in which they have a great collection of magic, or sacred things, every one has his private magic in his lodge, or about his person. Any thing curious is immediately made an amulet, or a talisman; and is considered as devoted or consecrated, so as to deprive the owner of the power of giving it away. The principal war chief lately took advantage [160] of this. Having obtained a very fine horse, which he was desirous of keeping, but fearing that some one might ask him as a gift, and as to refuse would be unbecoming a great man, who ought not to set his heart upon a matter of so little importance, he announced that he had given, or consecrated his horse to his magic or medicine! Some parts of their superstitious devotions, or modes of worship, are the most barbarous that can be imagined. I observed a great number whose bodies were scarred and cut in the most shocking manner; I was informed that this was done in their devotion; that to shew their zeal, they sometimes suspend themselves by the arms or legs, or the sides, by hooks. I was shewn a boy, who had drawn two buffaloe heads several hundred yards, by cords fixed in the fleshy part of his sides. I might enumerate a variety of other particulars, in which this strange self punishment is carried to the greatest lengths.<sup>47</sup> They have frequent public holy days, when the greater part of the village appears to desist from labor, and dress out unusually fine. On these occasions, each one suspends his private magic on a high pole before his door; the painted [161] shields, quivers of a variety of colors, scarlet cloth, and highly ornamented

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<sup>47</sup> George Catlin, the painter of Indians, described at some length the religious mysteries and the self-torture of the Mandan tribe. His account was discredited, but appears to have been substantially correct. See *op. cit.*, pp. 349-383.—ED.

buffaloe robes, which compose these trophies, produce a very lively effect. I several times observed articles of some value suspended on the trees. I was told, they often leave their property in this manner without being under any apprehension that any of the same tribe will touch it, provided that there be the least sign to shew that it is not lost. A kind of superstition similar to that of the Druids, which protected their offerings hung up in the woods.

Since the unfortunate affair of lieutenant Prior, these people have shewn themselves friendly to the whites. Lieutenant Prior had been sent in a boat, with twenty or thirty men, to convey the Mandan chief to his village, after his visit to the United States, in company with Lewis and Clark. On arriving at the Arikara village, he was set upon, and made his escape with great difficulty, one half of his little party being killed or wounded. The expedition of the Missouri company, which ascended the next year, demanded satisfaction for this outrage, and every concession having been made [162] by the Arikaras, the matter was adjusted. Since that time they have endeavored to keep a good understanding with the whites, and express much regret at the unfortunate occurrence, which, as is usual, they disavow as the act of the nation, but declare it to have been perpetrated by a bad chief, who would not listen to their councils.

During my short stay amongst them, I endeavored to form a vocabulary of such words as are most likely to be primitive.<sup>48</sup> I found a great diversity in the pronunciation, which I discovered to be partly owing to the circumstance of the present population being composed of the fragments or remains of different tribes; but I was also informed by the chief, that amongst the principal families there was

<sup>48</sup> This, in the course of my peregrinations, has 'unfortunately, been mislaid.

a better language than that in use with the common people. The slaves, of whom there is a much greater number than I had supposed, and those of foreign tribes who have domiciliated themselves here, speak also an inferior dialect.

[163] To give an account of the vices of these people, would only be to enumerate many of the most gross which prevail amongst us, with this difference, that they are practised in public without shame. The savage state, like the rude uncultivated waste, is contemplated to most advantage at a distance. Mr. Bradbury had been an enthusiast, as most philanthropic Europeans are, on the subject of Indian manners, and I was myself not a little inclined to the same way of thinking, but now both agreed that the world would lose but little, if these people should disappear before civilized communities. In these vast plains, throughout which are scattered so many lovely spots, capable of supporting thousands such nations as the Arikara, or wandering Sioux, a few wretches are constantly roaming abroad, seeking to destroy each other. To return to the subject of their moral characters — they have amongst them their poor, their envious, their slanderers, their mean and crouching, their haughty and overbearing, their unfeeling and cruel, their weak and vulgar, their dissipated and wicked; and they have also, their brave and wise, their generous and magnanimous, their rich and [164] hospitable, their pious and virtuous, their kind, frank, and affectionate, and in fact, all the diversity of characters that exists amongst the most refined people; but as their vices are covered by no veil of delicacy, their virtues may be regarded rather as the effect of involuntary impulse, than as the result of sentiment. In some respects they are extremely dissolute and corrupt; whether this arises from refinement in vice, or from the simplicity of nature, I cannot say; but much are they mistaken who look for primitive innocence and simplicity

in what they call the state of nature. It is true that an intercourse with the whites, never fails to render these people much worse than before; this is not by imparting any new vices, but by presenting temptations which easily overcome those good qualities, which "sit so loosely about them." Want of constancy, and uniformity of character, is the defect universally remarked with regard to the Indians, and this naturally arises from the want of fixed principles of virtue. One thing I remarked as constituting the great difference between the savage and the civilized state, *their youth undergo no discipline*, there are no schools, [165] and the few instructions which are given by parents, are directed only to the mere physical man, and have little to do with the mind, unless it be to inculcate fortitude and courage, or rather ferocity and thirst for blood: no genuine virtues are *cultivated* and the evil propensities of the individual are suffered to mature without correction, while he wanders about a vagabond, responsible to no one for the waste of time; like a young colt, he is considered as unfit for employment until he attains his growth. The lessons of morality are never taught either in public or in private; at least of that morality which instructs us how to fulfil all the duties attached to our social relations, and which regard us as candidates for a future and more happy existence. Instead of such lessons of morality, the precepts first instilled into their hearts, are cruelty, murder, and rapine. The first step the young savage is taught to take, is in blood; and is it any wonder that when manhood nerves his arm, we should see him grasp the tomahawk and the scalping knife, and his savage heart thirst for blood!

Amongst others of their customs which appeared to me singular, I observed that it was [166] a part of their hospitality, to offer the guest, who takes up his residence in their lodges, one of the females of the family as a bedfellow;

sometimes even one of their wives, daughters, or sisters, but most usually a maid-servant, according to the estimation in which the guest is held, and to decline such offer is considered as treating the host with some disrespect; notwithstanding this, if it be remarked that these favours are uniformly declined, the guest rises much higher in his esteem. Self control, in the midst of temptations which overpower the common mind, being thought, even amongst these people, to indicate a superior character. Our common boatmen soon became objects of contempt, from their loose habits and ungovernable propensities. To these people, it seemed to me that the greater part of their females, during our stay, had become mere articles of traffic; after dusk, the plain behind our tents, was crowded with these wretches, and shocking to relate, fathers brought their daughters, husbands their wives, brothers their sisters, to be offered for sale at this market of indecency and shame. I was unable to account for this [167] difference from any people I had ever heard of; perhaps something may be attributed to the inordinate passion which had seized them for our merchandize. The silly boatmen, in spite of the endeavors of the leaders of our parties, in a short time disposed of almost every article which they possessed, even their blankets, and shirts. One of them actually returned to the camp, one morning entirely naked, having disposed of his last shirt — this might truly be called *la dernière chemise de l'amour*.

Seeing the chief one day in a thoughtful mood, I asked him what was the matter — “I was wondering,” said he, “whether you white people have any women amongst you.” I assured him in the affirmative. “Then,” said he, “why is it that your people are so fond of our women, one might suppose they had never seen any before.”

This want of chastity among the Arikara was by no

means universal — perhaps a more minute acquaintance with them might have enabled me to explain the phenomenon: indeed from the remains of a singular exhibition, which several of us witnessed, I was induced to believe that Diana had not altogether yielded [168] the village to the dominion of her rival goddess. On one of their festive days, as we drew near the medicine lodge or temple, we saw in front of the entrance, or door, a number of young girls tricked out in all their finery of paint, beads, and dresses of the antelope, agalã, or deer skins, red or white, according to the taste of the wearer; their robes were richly ornamented with porcupine quills, stained of various colors, and with fringes, or borders, of silvery ermine. We observed a cedar bough fixed in the earth on the top of the lodge. Prizes of beads, vermilion, and scarlet cloth were exhibited: and the old men who live in the temple to the number of five or six, now proclaimed, as I was informed, that whosoever amongst the young girls of Arikara had preserved unsullied her virgin purity, might then ascend the temple and touch the bough, and one of the prizes would be given to her; that it was in vain to think of deceiving, for the Manitoo, or Spirit, knowing all things, even their secret thoughts, would most certainly reveal the truth; and moreover, the young men were enjoined under the severest denunciations, to declare all that might be within their knowledge. Curiosity [169] was now much excited. In a few moments, the daughter of the interpreter, (a Frenchman who had resided upwards of twenty years,) a beautiful girl of sixteen, came forward, but before she could ascend to touch the bough, a young fellow stepped forth, and said something, the amount of which I easily conjectured from its effect, for the young lady instantly shrunk back confused and abashed, while the surrounding crowd was convulsed with laughter. A pause ensued, which lasted

for some considerable time. I began to tremble for the maidens of Arikara, when a girl of seventeen, one of the most beautiful in the village, walked forward, and asked, "where is the Arikara who can bring any accusation against me?" then touched the bough, and carried off the prize. I feel a pleasure in adding, for the honor of the ladies of Arikara, that others followed, though I did not take the trouble of noting the number.

### [170] CHAPTER VIII<sup>49</sup>

Proceed to the Mandan villages — A buffaloe hunt — Arrival at the Mandan village.

ON *Wednesday the 19th*, it was resolved by Lisa, to leave one of his men to continue the trade with the Arikaras, and then to continue his voyage. As a part of the price of the goods bought from Hunt, was to be paid for in horses, a party was sent by land to the company's fort at the Mandan village, for the purpose of bringing them. Mr. Bradbury, desirous of seeing the interior of the country determined to accompany them.

We sat off about eleven o'clock in the morning with a favorable wind, but the weather rainy and disagreeable. Having made fifteen miles, encamped. The moschetoes more troublesome than they have yet been known — I am informed that this is not usual on the Missouri, and is owing to this being a wet season. Indeed, since our departure, we have scarcely [171] had three days in succession without very heavy rain.

*Thursday 20th.* Weather more pleasant, but the wind during a part of the afternoon, on account of the course of the river unfavorable. The water is at a very high

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<sup>49</sup> Notes upon the following subjects mentioned in this chapter are found in Bradbury's *Travels*, vol. v of our series: Sheheke, Mandan chief, note 92; Missouri Fur Company's Mandan post, note 87.— ED.



stage, and now rising rapidly. Having made five points, or fifteen miles encamped. We continued our voyage on Friday with a fine breeze, which continued the whole day, and which enabled us to make an extraordinary run of more than forty miles. The appearance of the country thus far is very agreeable — handsome green hills, and fine bottoms, with but little wood. The navigation much less difficult, we sailed along the edge of beautiful meadows, clothed with grass about six inches high; the water is not more than three feet below the top of the bank.

*Saturday 22d.* The favorable winds still continued, but we found the river extremely crooked. We landed an hour or two to kill some buffaloe, several were standing close to the water's edge on a small bar covered with willows. Great numbers of them are to be seen on the sides of the hills. In viewing them at the [172] distance of six or eight miles, they appear to be diminished to mere specks or dots, which has a curious yet pleasing effect.

On the 23d, after proceeding a few miles, it was found necessary to encamp, while we were assailed by a dreadful storm, succeeded by a heavy rain. Towards evening it cleared up, but a violent north west wind prevailing, it was impossible for us to proceed. A party was formed and it was resolved to go in pursuit of the buffaloe. On ascending the hills, which rise at the distance of a quarter of a mile from the river, I discovered in every direction immense herds of buffaloe, some reclining, or quietly feeding, and many at such a distance as scarcely to be distinguishable by the eye — Immediately before me lay a deep ravine or hollow, about two miles in length, through which a small stream seemed to take its course, bordered with shrubs, and on the other side, the ground again rose with an irregular ascent into a high plain, terminated by hills. In this valley there appeared to be several thousand, chiefly

feeding. The question was now how to approach them undiscovered, there was no bush, or tree, nothing behind which we could conceal ourselves, [173] excepting the blocks of granite, strewed over the plain. Should we alarm one of these herds all the rest would start at the same time. On looking towards the southern end of the valley, we discovered that in this direction there was a space of half a mile in which no buffaloes were to be seen; and that passing round the valley with the wind in our favor we might steal along the brow of the hill on the other side and leaving half of our hunters here, would be able to place them between two fires. In company with the American hunter I set off and ran about a mile, having successfully passed round the hollow, we next advanced with great caution. Our approach was very much facilitated by a number of small ravines which make into the valley. Having advanced as far as was intended, we stole down to the opening of one of the ravines, and rising up, saw a large buffalo bull standing within a few yards of us; his body completely exposed to view, but feeding with his head down; we took aim over the intervening hillock, our rifles almost touching him — fired almost at the same moment, and brought him instantly to the ground. Those of his companions that were near him immediately [174] started and alarmed the rest, and in a short time they were every where in motion. We ran to an elevated point, and set up a shout in order to drive them towards the river, but without success for those of the valley and the side of the hill beyond it, made towards us, at which we were at first somewhat alarmed, lest the herd in moving in a crowd might run over us: they however passed up the different ravines on each side. There was something extremely pleasing in the sight of these armies of buffalo all in motion as far as the eye could distinguish in every direction. We succeeded in killing

another before they had passed us, and our comrades on the other side of the valley killed two. Great numbers of wolves were now seen in every direction; we could hardly go forty yards from the buffaloe, before a half a dozen would shew themselves. It was amusing to see them peeping over hillocks, while we pelted them with stones.

On our return to camp, the meat having been brought in by the boatmen, we sat about preparing our feast. A large fire was made, and each one cooked for himself. Certainly ours was not a feast to be despised even by the [175] epicure, although with no other seasoning than health and exercise. As our biscuit had been spoiled two months before, in consequence of being frequently wet, instead of bread we roasted some of the liver on one stick, and a choice morsel (for we had nothing but tit-bits,) on the other. The flesh of the buffaloe is remarkably tender and juicy, and highly flavored; it is universally allowed to surpass that of the common ox. Of all the animals given to satiate our carnivorous appetites, none can afford such a feast as the buffaloe. The hump is a delicious morsel; the tongue, the marrow, the tender loin, and the ribs are all excellent. The hump is formed by a number of bones in the shape of ribs, which rise on the back near the shoulders, gradually increasing and then diminishing in length, on which the fat and lean are finely mixed, and the meat extremely tender. The hump in a large ox, is about a foot in length, (when separated from the back bone, to which it is attached,) and six inches in breadth.

On the 24th, we proceeded on our voyage. This morning we had delightful weather. I could not help remarking the clearness of the [176] air, and the enchanting blue of the sky. Whether it is to be attributed to the Alpine height, to which we have attained, or to the openness of the country, which permits every breeze to have its full scope, and thus

chase away the vapors, I am not able to say. I have certainly not been misled by fancy. We are now two thousand six hundred miles from the ocean; as the Missouri, some distance above the Mandan villages, flows from the west, it is probable that its descent is not so great as below: so that allowing one foot per mile, we can be little short of three thousand feet above the ocean. It is said, that on the high plains of Switzerland, between the mountains, the sky is observed to possess a deeper azure; the same cause may produce the like effect on these plains. Here, we are elevated above the fogs and mists of lakes and rivers, and the sun does not transmit his rays through the white medium of clouds. The light dress of vegetation, with which these plains are clothed, may likewise be considered. Where the vegetation is luxuriant, dense vapours arise during the night; and noxious gases are produced, which floating into the atmosphere, lessen its brightness [177] as well as its purity. But, whatever may be the cause of the superior beauty of the azure in the heavenly vault, I experienced a peculiar pleasure in contemplating it. The sun beams seemed to have less fierceness than I had ever experienced, in fact, I could almost fancy myself in the midst of enchanted scenes.

Continued the greater part of the day with the cordelle, along the prairie. The country on either side, of a very pleasant appearance, with a number of wooded points.

*Tuesday 23d [i. e., 25th].* Hoisted sail this morning with a fine breeze. At ten o'clock passed the remains of a Mandan village, and at some distance espied a great number of Indians on shore, moving down the river. We soon discovered them to be Mandans. They sometimes go on hunting parties by whole villages, as was the case at present. They appeared to be about five hundred in number, some on horseback, the greater part on foot. A numerous

train of dogs were employed in dragging their baggage, tent poles, &c. On the great hunting parties, the women are employed in preserving the hides, drying the meat, and making provisions to serve them during winter. Very [178] little of the buffaloe is lost, for after taking the marrow, they pound the bones, boil them, and extract the oil. We stopped with them some time, made them a few presents of tobacco and knives, and then proceeded. This evening, the Mandan chief She-he-ke, who had accompanied Lewis and Clark to the United States, came to us with his wife and son, a small boy. He is a fine looking Indian, and very intelligent — his complexion fair, very little different from that of a white man much exposed to the sun. His wife had also accompanied him — has a good complexion and agreeable features. They had returned home loaded with presents, but have since fallen into disrepute from the extravagant tales which they related as to what they had witnessed; for the Mandans treat with ridicule the idea of there being a greater or more numerous people than themselves. He is a man of a mild and gentle disposition — expressed a wish to come and live amongst the whites, and spoke sensibly of the insecurity, the ferocity of manners, and the ignorance, of the state of society in which he was placed. He is rather inclining to corpulency, a little talkative, which is regarded [179] amongst the Indians as a great defect; add to this, his not being much celebrated as a warrior; such celebrity can alone confer authority and importance, or be regarded meritorious in this state of society. Encamped this evening on a beautiful meadow, the soil extremely rich. Immediately beyond it, there are some high hills, and on the points detached masses of granite and pebbles.

*Wednesday 26th.* Continued our voyage through a beautiful country, on both sides of the river. In the afternoon passed by all five of the Mandan villages, which are situ-

ated upon high open plains, the village of She-he-ke, divided from the others by a handsome stream. The inhabitants had gathered to the bank to see us, several waded into the water, but returned when we beckoned to them not to approach: The men were generally naked, the women dressed according to their age or quality, from the coarse elk skin, to the elegant agalia. It was late at night before we reached the fort of the Missouri Company, which is situated above all the villages, and sixteen hundred and forty miles from the mouth of the Missouri, and in latitude  $47^{\circ} 13'$  N.

### [180] CHAPTER IX

Mandan villages — Return to Arikara — Scene after a battle.

WE had now reached the utmost point of our voyage, for though it had been at first intended to proceed to the cataraacts of the Missouri, for the purpose of attempting a treaty with the Blackfoot Indians, the information received from Mr. Henry had produced a change in the intentions of Lisa. He resolved to wait for him at this place, or at the Arikara village; and, in the mean while, arrange the affairs of the company.

In the morning, we walked to the fort of the company, about two hundred yards from the bank of the river. It is a small triangular enclosure with bastions. Here I found Mr. Bradbury, who had arrived the day before. He had travelled about one hundred and fifty miles by land, and describes the country through which he passed, at least the distance of eight or ten miles from the river, [181] as very handsome; it is a succession of beautiful meadows, with some wood along the water-courses. On approaching the river it becomes more broken and hilly.

For some distance from the fort, the upland is washed

into ravines, and is stripped of its soil, presenting nothing but bare heaps of earth or clay. Many of these clay hills are completely detached from the upland, and washed by heavy rains into a variety of curious and fantastic shapes, generally of whitish color, though intermixed with strata of various hues. The ledge of limestone, upon which the earth or clay reposes, shews itself in many places, but mouldering and crumbling, from the action of the frosts and rain. This limestone constitutes at least one half in the washings which are carried to the Missouri; and similar appearances, are to be met with on all its tributary streams, from this upwards, as well as on many below. Some of these clay hills, at the first glance, look like towers or circular buildings, with domes and cupolas; and what contributes to this, the top of some of them are covered with a beautiful creeping vine, or evergreen, of a species, which Mr. Bradbury [182] informs me, is described by Mishaux *michaux* as growing on the lakes.<sup>50</sup> A short distance below the fort, the primitive ground, or upland, is washed into a steep precipice by the river; here we examined a strata of coal, of a good quality, and about eighteen inches in thickness. Lisa informed me, that on his first voyage up the Missouri, he observed smoke issuing from a fissure of this bluff, and that on putting down a stick, fire was communicated. On the most attentive examination we could discover nothing of this. Amongst other objects which attracted our attention, we observed quantities of petrified wood lying about on the surface of the clay hills. I traced a whole tree, the stump still remaining about three feet high, and not less than four in diameter. The bark was in general decayed, but we could easily find the position of the trunk and of its branches, as it had fallen. This fact seemed to me the

<sup>50</sup> This vine is a species of juniper, which Michaux classifies as *Juniperus procumbens*.— Ed.

more extraordinary, as the trees which now grow even in the richest bottom land, are very small, few exceeding a foot in diameter, and seldom more than forty feet in height; while on the upland, the soil has scarcely sufficient strength to give nourishment to a delicate [183] grass, and here and there to a few slender shrubs. These facts may afford a subject of amusing inquiry, to those who have leisure for such investigation. Mr. Bradbury is assiduously employed in collecting specimens, and in pursuing his botanical researches; but neither he nor Mr. Nuttall have much success in collecting minerals.

While wandering about in company with Nuttall one day, on entering a grassy piece of ground we observed a number of ripe strawberries. This was the first intimation that any of them grew in this part of the world, and was a pleasing treat. The season of the year, being now the month of July, rendered it still more unexpected.

On the *Fourth of July*, we had something like a celebration of this glorious anniversary. The two principal chiefs happened to be with us; the *One ey'd*, and the *Black shoe*. The former is a giant in stature, and if his one eye had been placed in the middle of his forehead, he might have passed for a cyclop.<sup>51</sup> His huge limbs and gigantic frame, his bushy hair shading his coarse visage and savage features, with his one eye flashing fire, constituted him a [184] fearful demon. He sways, with unlimited control, all these villages, and is feared by all the neighboring nations. I remarked that on one or two occasions he treated She-he-ke, with great contempt — Lisa having referred to something said by that chief, “What,” said this monster, “What! does that bag of lies pretend to have any authority here?”<sup>52</sup> He is

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<sup>51</sup> For the chief One-Eyed (Le Borgne), see Bradbury's *Travels*, vol. v of our series, note 98.—ED.

<sup>52</sup> She-he-ke is a fat man, extremely talkative, and no great warrior.—BRACKENRIDGE.



sometimes a cruel and abominable tyrant. A story was related to me of his cruelty, which has in it something of a more refined tragic nature, than we usually meet with amongst these people. Having fallen in love, (for even Polyphemus felt the influence of this god, who spares neither giants nor common men,) with the wife of a young warrior, he went to his lodge during his absence, and carried her off by force. The warrior on his return, repaired to the *One ey'd* demon, and demanded his wife, but instead of receiving redress, was put to death, while the wretched object of the dispute was retained in the embraces of her ravisher. The mother of the young warrior whose only child he was, became frantic, lost her senses from [185] excess of grief, and now does nothing but go about reviling him, and loading him with her curses: yet such is the superstitious veneration (by the by it deserves a better name on this occasion) for unhappy objects of this kind, that this chief, great as he is, dare not lay his hand on her, even should she haunt him like one of the Euminides, wherever he may appear.

We made several excursions to the villages below, the nearest about six miles off; but as they differ but little from those of the Arikara, I will give no particular description of them. I noticed but one thing as remarkable. About two miles on this side of the first village, my attention was attracted by a number of small scaffolds, distributed over several acres of ground on the slope of a hill. I soon discovered that this was a depository of the dead. The scaffolds were raised on forks about ten feet, and were sufficiently wide to contain two bodies; they were in general covered with blue and scarlet cloth, or wrapt in blankets and buffaloe robes; we did not approach near enough to examine closely, this frightful Golgotha, or place of human skeletons, but we could see a great number of valuable articles which had been left [186] as offerings to the manes of the deceased. Several crows and magpies, were perched upon them; we

could not but experience a sensation of horror, when we thought of the attraction which brought these birds to this dismal place. Some of the scaffolds, had nearly fallen down, perhaps overturned by the wind, or the effect of decay, and a great number of bones were scattered on the ground underneath. This mode of exposing the dead has something peculiarly horrible in it. The wolves of the prairie, the birds of the air, and even the Indian dogs, are attracted to the place, and taught to feed on human flesh. This custom prevails amongst all the wandering tribes; but amongst the Arikara, the dead are deposited in a grave as with us, which I think clearly proves their origin to be different from that of their neighbours; for there is nothing, in which men in all ages and countries, have manifested more solicitude, than in the treatment of the remains of their deceased friends.

On the sixth of July we set off from the fort to return to the Arikara village, where we arrived in two days after without any material occurrence. We found Mr. Hunt waiting the [187] coming of the Chiennes, to complete his supply of horses.

A few days after our arrival, a great commotion was heard in the village, before daylight; ignorant of what might occasion it, and from this alone, somewhat alarmed, when we recollected our situation, amongst beings in whom we had but little reliance, we hastily rose and ascended the plain in order to ascertain the cause. The interpreter, shortly after came to us with the information, that it was a party of three hundred men, on their return, after a battle with a party of Sioux the day before, in which they had been victorious, with the loss of two or three killed, and ten or twelve wounded, and that they were then within a few miles of the village, none but the chief of the party having come in. By this our minds were quieted. We waited

with anxiety for their approach to the village, which we were informed would be made with considerable ceremony; that they had halted within a few miles of the place, to prepare themselves for a formal and splendid entry, and that a great deal of Indian finery had been sent, to enable the warriors to decorate themselves to the best advantage.

[188] It was nearly eleven o'clock in the day, before their approach was announced; in the meanwhile a stilly suspense reigned throughout the village, all sports and business suspended, and resembling a holiday in one of our towns. We discovered them at length, advancing by the sound of their voices over a hill, about a mile below our encampment. In a short time they made their appearance; at the same time, the inhabitants of the town moved out on foot to meet them. I accompanied them for some distance, and then took a favorable position where I might have a full view of this singular scene. They advanced in regular procession, with a slow step and solemn music, extending nearly a quarter of a mile in length, and separated in platoons, ten or twelve abreast, the horsemen placed between them, which contributed to extend their line. The different bands, of which I have spoken, the buffaloe, the bear, the pheasant, the dog, marched in separate bodies, each carrying their ensigns, which consisted of a large spear, or bow, richly ornamented with painted feathers, beads, and porcupine quills. The warriors were dressed in a variety of ways, some [189] with their cincture and crown of feathers, bearing their war clubs, guns, bows and arrows, and painted shields: each platoon having its musicians, while the whole joined in the song and step together, with great precision. In each band there were scalps fastened to long poles: this was nothing more than the few scalps they had taken, divided into different locks of hair, so as to give the semblance of a greater number. The appearance of the whole, their

music, and the voices of so many persons, had a pleasing and martial effect. The scene which took place, when their friends and relations from the village, mingled with them, was really affecting; the pen of a Fenelon would not be disgraced in attempting the description of it. These, approached with song and solemn dance, as the warriors proceeded slowly through their ranks: it was a meeting of persons connected by the most tender relations — the scene would baffle description. Fathers, mothers, wives, brothers, sisters, caressing each other, without interrupting for a moment, the regularity and order of the procession, or the solemnity of the song and step! I was particularly touched, with the tenderness of a woman [190] who met her son, a youth reported badly wounded, but who exerted himself to keep on his horse, and from his countenance one would have supposed nothing had been the matter with him. She threw her arms round him and wept aloud. Notwithstanding this, the young man expired, shortly after being brought to the medicine lodge; for it is the custom to carry such as have been wounded in battle, to be taken care of in this place, at the public expense. As they drew near the village, the old people, who could barely walk, withered by extreme age, came out like feeble grasshoppers, singing their shrill songs, and rubbing the warriors with their hands. The day was spent in festivity by the village in general, and in grief by those who had lost their relatives. We saw a number of solitary females, on the points of the hills round the village, lamenting in mournful wailings, the misfortunes which had befallen them. For the two succeeding days the village exhibited a scene of festivity; all their painted shields and trophies, were raised on high poles near the lodges, and all the inhabitants dressed out in their finery — all their labors and sports were suspended, and [191] the whole joined in the public demonstrations of joy, while music, songs, and

dances were hardly intermitted for a moment. The temple, or medicine lodge, was the principal scene of their dancing. I entered with the crowd, and found a spacious building, sufficient to contain five or six hundred persons. I found to my surprise that the dancers were all females, with arms of the warriors in their hands, and wearing some parts of the dress of the men. They performed in a circular inclosure, some continually leaving it and others supplying their places. The orchestra was composed of ten or fifteen men, with drums, bladders filled with shot, deer's hoofs, affixed to rods, and shaken, some striking upon war clubs with sticks; the whole accompanied with the voice. The old men of the temple were continually going round the inclosure, and raising their shrill voices; probably saying something to excite and encourage. Rude as this may be supposed to have been, there was yet something pleasing; their music was by no means discordant, and exceedingly animated. It would be tedious to enumerate the various ways in which their festivity displayed itself. We see a nation, actuated [192] by the same feelings, and roused by the same incidents as are experienced by the most powerful on earth. How much superior does this little independent tribe appear, to the rich, but mean and spiritless province or colony, where nothing but individual interests are felt! — where the animating sentiments of national glory and renown, and all the vicissitudes of national calamity or prosperity, are never felt by it as by one man!

I must not omit a piece of hospitality, which exhibited more refinement than I had expected to meet with. Several of the principal chiefs came amongst us, and selecting each two or three, invited us to their lodges to partake of the feast. This was somewhat in the stile of an invitation to dine: I had the honor of being invited by the *Grey eyes*, the leader of the war party. I found various dishes, of buffaloe,

of dog meat, and of homony prepared with marrow. I had no inclination to touch the dog meat, although regarded as a great delicacy. During the repast, six young men entertained us with music; *after the cloth was removed*, or rather the dishes, several women made their appearance, the band struck up, and the dance [193] was begun. One of the dancers, an old woman, every now and then recited something which appeared to amuse the company very much, and called forth loud laughter. When the dance was over, the chief exhibited to me a number of dressed buffaloe robes, on which he had painted his different battles. The design was exceedingly rude, such as I have seen on the rocks of the Ohio. To represent the path of horse or foot-men, he had simply represented their tracks. There was nothing like hieroglyphic painting, or any mark which could convey an idea of the time when the action occurred.<sup>58</sup>

#### [194] CHAPTER X

Set off to return — Battle of buffaloes — Fort Clark — Arrival at St. Louis

By this time, the curiosity which first prompted me to undertake this voyage, being amply gratified, I began to feel a strong desire of returning to civilized pursuits. My habits were not formed to this wild, irregular existence, and I began to wish for a return with much anxiety. Lisa was disposed to second my wishes; he had resolved to load with skins two of the boats purchased from Hunt, to put six men in each, and to give me the command of them. Mr. Bradbury gladly embraced this opportunity of returning, and put on board all his boxes of plants and his collection of specimens. About the last of July, with

<sup>58</sup> For a representation of painted robes, see *Smithsonian Report*, 1885, part ii, pp. 397-406. On picture-writing in general, consult Mallery, "Picture-Writing of American Indians," *Bureau of Ethnology Report*, 1888-89.— Ed.

joyful hearts, we bid adieu to the village of Arikara. Lisa gave me particular directions not to stop on account of any Indians, and if possible, to go day and night. The river was now extremely [195] high, and with six oars, we were able to make little short of twelve miles an hour.

The first day, weather uncommonly fine, we passed the Chienne river, and continued under way sometime after night; but considering this not altogether safe, we thought it prudent to lie by until daylight. Early the next morning we reached the great bend. Vast numbers of buffaloes were seen at both sides; as this was near the season when the bulls seek the society of the cows, for at other times they are never seen in the same herd; the most tremendous bellowing was heard on every side. The country, from the Mandan villages thus far, about four hundred miles, is beautiful, and the soil of the river bottoms rich. The proportion of wood is about the same as would be suffered to remain if the land were in the highest state of cultivation: but the upland is entirely bare, and the traveller might go many miles before he would come to another stream where any but dwarf trees or shrubs might be seen. The wind rising, we were compelled to remain in the bend during the whole afternoon. On the N. E. side, the river is lined for the whole distance, by bluffs, nearly bare, [196] and cut up into numerous gullies; cherries, currants, gooseberries, and dwarf plum trees, are seen along the shore. On the S. W. side, there is a tract of bottom land the whole way, and better wooded than any between this and the Mandan village. The islands, which are met with at the distance of every few miles, are all surrounded by cedar or cotton-wood, but the inside are meadows.

The next day we passed the White river, which appears to be about the size of the Chienne, each of which is as large as the Alleghany or Monongahela, and navi-

gable to a great distance. No doubt, in time, towns will be built at the confluence of those rivers, as is the case on the Ohio at this day. With Mr. Bradbury, I amused myself in making remarks upon the appearance of different spots, as we glided rapidly past them; seated on the stern of the boat from morning till night, we had no other mode of passing the time. At no great distance below White river, the Black bluffs begin — a barren and miserable country for nearly an hundred miles along the river: there are scarcely any bottoms, and the bluffs in most places without even a covering of [197] grass. What the country may be, at some distance from the river, I do not know; but certainly as it respects the margin of the stream, I see no likelihood of any settlements ever being formed along it; there must consequently be a hiatus between the settlements which may hereafter be made above, and those below. Yet we contemplated this part of the country with much pleasure, for its wild and romantic appearance. Descending in the middle of the river, we had a much better view than when we came up, being then compelled by the swiftness of the current to choose either one side or the other. In some places, the hills rose to the height of mountains; nothing was wanting but some old ruined castles, to complete the sombre, yet magnificent amphitheatric landscapes. It contributed much to our amusement, to observe the herds of buffaloe, ascending and descending by a winding path.

Towards evening the sky became dark and lowering, the hollow sounding wind, and the feeble distant flashes of lightning, with a frightful redness around the edges of the horizon, foretold an approaching storm. Our oarsmen [198] exerted themselves to their utmost, to reach some woody point, behind which we might seek a shelter. But in vain—the bleak and dreary bluffs continued on each side, and the lurid darkness of the coming storm was fast obscuring



what remained of daylight. It was thought prudent to land in a little recess of the bluffs, the best the moment would permit us to choose; but the wind had full scope, as we were in the midst of a long reach. We were not long in suspense. The flashes of lightning became every moment more vivid, and the thunder, in tremendous peals, seemed to shake the earth. A dreadful gale ensued, which threatened every moment to dash our little barques to pieces, or whelm them in the waves: and called forth our utmost exertions to preserve them. For nearly an hour, it was found necessary to hold our blankets to the sides of the boats, to prevent them from filling. Our strength was almost exhausted with fatigue, when the violence of the wind abated, and was succeeded by a heavy rain, which poured upon us the whole night. Had our boats sunk we should have lost every thing, and most probably have perished. For myself, I was accustomed [199] to these things; but I felt for my friend Bradbury. Poor old man, the exposure was much greater than one of his years could well support. His amiable ardor in the pursuit of knowledge, did not permit him for a moment to think of his advanced age; and wherever he may be, (for I have not heard from him for several years,) he carries with him the warmest wishes of my heart.

The next day we passed the Poncas village. The inhabitants had gone into the plains. In the evening when within a few miles of a point above the isle *a Bon homme*, our ears were assailed by a murmuring noise. As we drew near it grew to a tremendous roaring, such as to deafen us. On landing we discovered the grove crowded with buffaloe, the greater part engaged in furious combat — the air filled with their dreadful bellowing. A more frightful sight cannot easily be imagined. Conceive several thousand of these furious animals, roaring and rushing upon each other, producing a scene of horror, confusion, and fierceness, like the

fight of armies: the earth trembled beneath their feet, the air was deafened, and the grove was shaken with the shock of [200] their tremendous battle. I am conscious that with many, I run the risk of being thought to indulge in romance, in consequence of this account: but with those who are informed of the astonishing number of the buffaloe, it will not be considered incredible. We soon discovered that a herd of males had broken in amongst a number of females and that these were the cause of a conflict, which raged with unparalleled fury. We fired amongst them but without producing much effect; we then embarked and proceeded on our voyage. On the hills in every direction they appeared by thousands. Late in the evening we saw an immense herd in motion along the sides of the hill, at full speed: their appearance had something in it, which, without incurring ridicule, I might call sublime — the sound of their footsteps, even at the distance of two miles, resembled the rumbling of distant thunder.

The next morning great numbers of buffaloe were seen swimming the river, we frequently steered amongst them, and fired on them through wantonness, which I could not restrain, however blameable. The weather was delightful, and we had an extraordinary [201] run of one hundred and forty-two miles from daylight till dark. In the evening we passed the grave of Floyd, and for a moment we thought it proper to

“— suspend the dashing oar,  
To bid his gentle spirit rest.”

At the Maha village we found no one. This was not disagreeable to us, as we supposed the *Big Elk*, who is a chief of great celebrity, would not be disposed to treat us well, in consequence of the neglect to pay him our respects in ascending. From the Poncas to the Mahas, the bottoms are wider,

and better wooded than above, but the upland much the same. We found the lowlands almost every where under water — were in consequence compelled this evening to encamp on some drift wood. It was dangerous to proceed after night on account of the number of trees fixed in the bottom of the river, and besides in almost every bend there were a number which had fallen in: even in the day time there was frequently great difficulty in passing along, we several times narrowly escaped being dashed to pieces. The arks, or flat boats, in use on the Ohio and [202] Mississippi, could not possibly navigate this river.

The following day we passed the Blackbird hill, and the river Platte. The navigation in this part is much more dangerous than above, from the number of trees fixed in the bottom. The bottoms are also much wider, and better wooded; in some places for twenty miles and upwards, we were out of sight of the high lands: but the low grounds were every where inundated. The water rushed into the woods with great velocity, and in bends it poured over the gorge into the river again; a sheet of water sometimes for a mile, flowed over the bank, forming singular cascades of eighteen inches in height.

In something more than two days afterwards, we arrived at Fort Clark, having come a thousand miles in eight or nine days, without meeting a living soul. Here we were treated politely by the officers. Mr. Sibly, the factor, had returned but a few days before, from a journey to the interior, and shewed us specimens of salt, which he had procured at the salines, on the Arkansas.

[203] We arrived at St. Louis early in August, having made fourteen hundred and forty miles in little better than fourteen days. Here we experienced all the pleasure of a safe return after an absence of nearly five months. I was

much gratified with my excursion and if there be any thing in this rude and hasty diary, to please my friends, that gratification will be more than doubled.

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ABOUT the latter end of October, Lisa returned to St. Louis. Mr. Henry had joined him at the Arikara village, having passed the mountains early in the spring, and having encountered incredible sufferings and dangers. Lisa had left trading establishments with the Sioux, below the Cedar island, as well as with the Mandans, and Arikaras. Mr. Nuttal, who had chosen to remain sometime longer with Lisa, had also returned.

The party of Mr. Hunt had set off for its destination on the Columbia.

[204] This immense tract of country has now become the theatre of American enterprise. There prevails amongst the natives west of the mountains, a spirit of wild adventure, which reminds us of the fictitious characters of Ariosto. The American hunters constitute a class, different from any people known to the east of the mountains. The life which they lead is exceedingly fascinating. Their scene ever changing — ever presenting something new. Confined by no regular pursuit — their labor is amusement. I have called the region watered by the Missouri and its tributaries, *THE PARADISE OF HUNTERS*; it is indeed to them a paradise. I have been acquainted with several, who, on returning to the settlements, became in a very short time dissatisfied, and wandered away to these regions, as delightful to them, as are the regions of fancy to the poet.

“Theirs the wild life, in frolick still to range,  
From toil to rest, and joy in every change.”

## APPENDIX<sup>54</sup>

[I extract the following from the "*Views of Louisiana*," to assist the reader in forming a general idea of that interesting portion of the American empire.]<sup>55</sup>

### CHAPTER III

Face of the country — Change which a part has probably undergone — Climate — Extent and importance.

THIS extensive portion of North America, has usually been described from a small part which is occupied by the settlements; as though [224] it were limited to the borders of the Mississippi, as Egypt is confined to the vicinity of the Nile. Some represent it, in general description, as a low flat country, abounding in swamps and subject to inundation. Others speak of it as one vast wilderness;

"Missouri marches through his world of woods."

BARLOW.

If Louisiana were to be described like other countries, not from a particular section, but from the appearance of the whole, combined in a general view, we should say, that it is an extensive region of open plains and meadows, interspersed with bare untillable hills, and having some resemblance to the Steppes of Tartary, or the Saharas of Africa, but

<sup>54</sup> Brackenridge includes in his appendix, matter which is also given by Bradbury (vol. v of our series), and which therefore is here omitted: 1st, Sibley's journey to the salines, incorporated by Bradbury in the text of his journal, pp. 191-194. 2d, extract from the *Missouri Gazette*, on voyage of the Astorians — Bradbury, appendix iii. 3d, oration of Big Elk — Bradbury, appendix ii.— ED.

<sup>55</sup> Brackenridge in the early part of 1811 wrote some articles on Louisiana for periodical publication. These he afterwards revised and enlarged, and incorporated in a volume entitled *Views of Louisiana* (Pittsburgh, 1814). From this he has extracted chapter iii, to include in the appendix to the journal. See preface to the present volume.— ED.

without the morasses and dull uniformity of the one, or the dreary sterility of the others. The tracts lying on the great rivers, it is true, constitute the most valuable parts of Louisiana; but these, in geographical extent, are very inconsiderable, when compared with the remainder. They are principally on the Mississippi, Missouri, Arkansas, and Red river; and are vallies, seldom exceeding ten or twelve miles in width, [225] of a soil exceedingly rich and productive, but much interspersed with lakes, and reflux currents, or bayous. To give a more perfect and satisfactory view of this country, it will be convenient to examine it under three divisions.

1. The regions beyond the settlements.
2. The territory of the Missouri.
3. The state of Louisiana.

Volney has properly called the country drained by the Mississippi and its waters, a valley; but it is to be observed, that the western side is nearly three times as large as the other, and traversed by much more considerable rivers: and the mountains which enclose it on the west and southwest, are of a much greater magnitude than the Alleghanies.

To pursue some plan in these views, I propose to take up the first book, with some general description of Louisiana, its rivers, soil and productions, and to give in the next book, a more detailed account of the territory of the Missouri, and of the state of Louisiana —

The Rocky Mountains are without doubt a continuation of the Andes. Their course is nearly north and south; in width and elevation, some of them are little inferior to the [226] mountains of South America. There are a number of peaks of immense height, and covered with perennial snows. Their highest elevation, (which may be considered the table land of North America,) is not further north than the  $41^{\circ}$  of lat. It is from this quarter that many of our greatest

rivers take their rise, and flow in opposite directions;<sup>56</sup> the Colorado of California, Rio del Norte, the Arkansas, the Platte, and the Roche Jaune, (yellow stone.) It will be to the geologist an interesting work, to trace the various ridges, connexions, spurs and dependencies of these mountains. There is a long chain of hills, which generally separate the waters of the Missouri from those of the Arkansas and Mississippi, and which are commonly called the Black mountains. The hills in the White river country, and those west of the Mississippi, towards the head of the St. Francis and the Maramek, so abundant in minerals, may be dependencies of the Black mountains. There are high rugged hills, approaching to mountains, between the upper part of the Washita river and the Arkansas, of which [227] some account may be found in Hunter and Dunbar's voyage up the Washita.<sup>57</sup>

Taking the distance from the Mississippi to the mountains, to be about nine hundred miles, of the first two hundred miles, the larger proportion is fit for settlements. There is a great deal of well timbered land and the soil is generally good; this quality, however, diminishes as we ascend north, where the soil becomes unproductive and almost barren, and as we advance westward the land becomes more bare of woods. For the next three hundred miles the country can scarcely be said to admit of settlements; the wooded parts form but trifling exceptions to its general appearance, and are seldom found except in the neighbourhood of streams; we may safely lay it down as a general remark, that after

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<sup>56</sup> See Pike's Journal.—BRACKENRIDGE.

*Comment by Ed.*—Pike, *Account of Expeditions to Sources of Mississippi, and through Western Parts of Louisiana . . . during the years 1805, 1806, and 1807* (Baltimore, 1810); new edition, Coues ed. (New York, 1895).

<sup>57</sup> The journal of William Dunbar and Dr. Hunter up the Red and Washita rivers was published in Lewis and Clark, *Statistical Account* (London, 1807), pp. 74-116.—ED.

the first hundred miles, no timber is found on the upland except it be pine or cedar. The rest of the country is made up of open plains of immense extent, chequered with waving ridges which enable the traveller to see his journey of several days before him. Yet a great proportion of the soil would bear cultivation, the river bottoms, being generally fine, and many spots truly [228] beautiful: there are other places, however, barren in the extreme, producing nothing but hyssop and prickly pears. The same description will suit the rest of the country to the Rocky mountains; except that it is more mountainous, badly watered, and a great proportion entirely barren.<sup>58</sup> In the two last divisions the bodies of land fit for settlements, are so distant from each other, that there is scarcely any probability of any being formed for centuries, if ever.

A great proportion of the country watered by the Missouri and its tributary streams, appears to have undergone some wonderful change, from causes not easy to ascertain; the influence of fire is however evident. I have seen in places, banks of clay burnt almost to the consistence of brick; of this kind, there is above the Poncas village what is called the tower, a steep hill one hundred and fifty feet in height, and four or five hundred in circumference: it is so hard as not to be affected by [229] the washing of the rains. Large masses of pumice are seen near these places, and frequently in the high bluffs of the river banks. These appearances were formerly attributed to the existence of volcanoes on the Missouri, but they are now generally supposed to be the effects of coal banks continuing a long time on fire. I am well satisfied that this fossil abounds in every part of the great valley of the Mississippi. Many of the river hills

<sup>58</sup> There are extensive tracts of moving sands similar to those of the African deserts. Mr. Makey informed me that he was several days in passing over one of these between the Platte and the Missouri, and near the mountains; there was no sign of vegetation.—BRACKENRIDGE.



present the appearance of heaps of clay, great quantities of which, on the melting of the snows, and in heavy rains, are precipitated and carried to the principal river. This clay is of a grey color, extremely tenacious, being mixed with a large proportion of calcareous earth; the incumbent soil having been first carried away; the rock on which it reposed being laid bare to the frost and sun, and perhaps affected by the burning of coal banks near it, gradually crumbled and united with the clay. In taking up a handful, one may pick out pieces of gypsum, (sulphat of lime) some of half an ounce weight. Near these spots are usually found glaubers salt, (sulphat of soda) and common salt, oozing with water out of the ground, and crystallized [230] on the surface. The most remarkable fact, is the appearance on these heaps of clay, of the remains of trees, in a state of petrification, and some of enormous size. Fragments may be every where picked up, but stumps of four or five feet in height, perfectly turned to stone, and the trunks of tall trees, may be seen and traced. This is extraordinary in a country, where even in the richest alluvions the timber attains but a stunted growth.

From these facts an ingenious theorist might conjecture, that the Missouri has not always brought down in its channel, that astonishing quantity of earth which it does at the present day. It is probable that other causes, as in Tartary, might have operated in preventing the growth of woods, in a great proportion of this western region; but something of a different kind must have effected a change in this country, which apparently was once covered with trees. What immense quantities of the earth must have been carried off to form the great alluvions of the Mississippi, by means of the Arkansas, Red river, and chiefly from the Missouri, not to mention the vast quantities lost in the gulf of Mexico. The result of a [231] calcu-

lation would be curious. The marks of this loss, are very evident in the neighborhood of nearly all the rivers which discharge themselves into the Missouri above the Platte. Some of the appearances may rank amongst the greatest natural curiosities in the world. The traveller on entering a plain, is deceived at the first glance by what appears to be the ruins of some great city; rows of houses for several miles in length, and regular streets. At the first view there appears to be all the precision of design, with the usual deviations representing palaces, temples, &c.; which appearances are caused by the washing away of the hills, as before described. These remains, being composed of more durable substance continue undecayed, while the rest is carried off. The strata have the appearance of different stories; the isolated and detached hills constitute the remainder. I had this description from hunters, and from persons of intelligence who have met with them, and I have myself seen places near the Missouri very similar.

There is but a small portion of this extensive region that is not calcarious; in this respect resembling the section of the valley which [232] lies east of the Mississippi. A fact which is singular enough, on the summits of many of the river hills, about one thousand miles up, large blocks of granite are found, of several tons weight; these continue to be seen until we reach the first range of primitive mountains. It is possible there may have been a lower range, which from the change produced by the wearing away of the earth has gradually disappeared.

Some of the peculiarities of climate may be noted in this place. The height of this western region, and the open plains which compose it, cause it to possess a pure elastic air. The sky has a more delightful blue than I ever saw any where else; the atmosphere in a serene calm evening is so clear, that a slight smoke can be discerned

at the distance of many miles; and it is of great importance to the Indians in detecting their enemies, and in giving warning; but it also exercises their caution in the highest degree. In point of health, it is unnecessary to say any thing; such a country must necessarily be salubrious. The heat of the sun is greatest in the month of July, and at that time is not less intense than in other [233] parts of the continent, but it is rendered more supportable by the breezes which continually fan the air. Spring opens about the last of April, and vegetation is in considerable forwardness by the middle of May. Such fruits as the country affords, principally berries, sand cherries, and currants, do not ripen until the latter end of July. I found strawberries ripe about the fourth of that month, near the Mandan villages. Plums ripen in the latter end of August. The winter sets in the beginning of October, but there is frost frequently in August and September. The cold is excessive during the winter seasons; there are frequent storms which continue for several days, and render it dangerous for any but Indians to stir out, without running the risk of being frozen. These observations apply to the greater portion of this region, but with respect to the part which lies south of the Arkansas, must be taken with considerable allowance.

To the north of the river just mentioned, rains are not frequent, but when they set in, pour down in torrents. To the south, there is seldom any rain, its place being supplied by heavy dews. In the dry season, at a distance [234] from the great rivers, water is every where exceedingly scarce. The Indians in their journeys, generally so shape their course as to pass where ponds of water are known to be; but they most usually carry a sufficient quantity in bladders. In this season, a person in traversing the country, will be frequently surprised at crossing the beds or channels

of large rivers, without finding a drop of water. After rains, or the melting of snows, torrents roll down these channels. It is not surprising that a country so distant from the sea, drained by a river which has a course of four thousand miles, before it reaches the great reservoir, should not be so well watered. This deficiency is another amongst the impediments to the settlements of that vast waste.

According to the boundaries before laid down, Louisiana is at least, one-third larger than the rest of the United States, and contains little short of one million and a half of square miles. But we should be greatly deceived if in estimating its importance we take into view only its geographical extent. Constituting the central or interior part of North America, the greater portion of it, is at too remote a distance [235] from the ocean to have an easy and advantageous communication with the rest of the world. When compared to other parts of America it may be considered as badly watered, and devoid of that facility of intercourse from navigable rivers which they possess. I am to be understood, as speaking of Louisiana generally; there are exceptions to these general observations: the territory of the Missouri, and the state of Louisiana, are amply sufficient to make amends for the unpromising character of the remainder, they may be justly reckoned amongst the most interesting portions of the American empire.

From what has been already said, it will be seen that the prevailing idea of those western regions, being like the rest of the United States, susceptible of cultivation, and affording endless out-lets to settlements, is erroneous. These out-lets when compared to the extent of country are extremely limited; they are much less considerable than on the eastern side of the Mississippi. The natives will prob-

ably remain in quiet and undisturbed possession, for at least a century, for until our country becomes in some degree surcharged with population, [236] there is scarcely any probability of settlers venturing far into those regions. A different mode of life, habits altogether new and suited to the situation, would have to be adopted. Settlements would have to be strung along water courses at such distances from each other, that they could not protect themselves from the wandering tribes. The distance from market, and the difficulties of reaching it, would render the agricultural produce of little or no value. Yet, I am convinced, that did not the Indians possess it, there would in a very short time, be many small groups of settlements scattered through it. This country, it is certain, can never become agricultural, but it is in many respects highly favorable to the multiplication of flocks and herds. Those delightful spots where the beauty and variety of landscape, might challenge the fancy of the poet, invite to the pastoral life. How admirably suited to that interesting animal, the sheep, are those clean smooth meadows, of a surface infinitely varied by hill and dale, covered with a short sweet grass intermixed with thousands of the most beautiful flowers, undeformed by a single weed.

[237] This contraction of the settlements will have its advantages. The territory we possessed before the acquisition of Louisiana, would not have been filled up for a great length of time: it will require ages, and even centuries before our lands can be cultivated as in Europe, or before the population presses on the means of subsistence. A thin and scattered population is a disadvantage, as it weakens a nation and retards the progress of improvements. There is also a consideration which will strike at the first view; the vast open plains which separate us from the Mexican

provinces will for a long time prevent any serious difficulties as to boundary, where there exist so little data for determining it.

To dilate upon the political advantages of the acquisition of Louisiana would fill a volume. It may be regarded as one of the most fortunate occurrences in our history. Had this country continued in the hands of any other power, it is highly probable that we should have been involved in expensive wars, or perhaps a separation of the western states might have taken place. To these states the free navigation of the Mississippi is absolutely necessary, [238] and while Louisiana remained in the possession of any European nation it would always have been subject to interruption. This consideration alone would have been worth the price paid for the province. The connexion between the existence of a republic and the extent of its territory, is still a *vexata questio* amongst politicians, and can only be decided by the experiment of ours. I will only venture to suggest one idea. In a small extent of country there is danger from the momentary bias of popular opinion; the *permanent interests*, may not be sufficiently diversified, and should the confederacy divide on this subject, into two great parties, nothing can long retain them in union. In an extensive region like ours, even with the aid of our *thousand newspapers*, popular feeling cannot be suddenly aroused to such a pitch of passion and phrenzy, as to break down the barriers of reason; and the northern and southern interests, (of which we hear,) are neutralized by the weight of several important states, whose interests are connected with that of both. The western states, like the southern, are devoted to agriculture, but at the same time, dependent on the commerce [239] of the northern for the conveniences and luxuries of life.

The security our western settlements will derive against the numerous tribes of savages, who would be at the disposal of any power holding Louisiana, may be ranked amongst the most certain advantages of the acquisition. Our vicinity to the Mexican provinces will enable us to carry on a trade, which, if permitted to be free, must in a short time become of incalculable value. It is ardently to be wished, that these people during their present struggles may be able to throw off the foreign government, which ruled them as it were by the spells of Circe, by using every art to retain them in ignorance, and to render them debased. Could these people become independent, and be regenerated by the ennobling spirit of freedom, the northern continent would be exclusively possessed by two great nations, Americans and Mexicans, united in friendship by harmonizing interests and sympathy of governments.

The intrinsic value of Louisiana, notwithstanding the vast extent which may be considered almost barren, is beyond calculation. The [240] territory of Missouri and the state of Louisiana, are equal in extent to any three of the largest states, containing every variety of soil and capable of producing whatever may administer to the convenience or luxury of man; rich in minerals, fertile in soil, and favorably situated for commerce and manufacture.

## A TABLE OF DISTANCES<sup>59</sup>

*From the mouth of the Missouri to the Mandan Villages —  
Rivers — Latitudes, &c.*

Places	Width of rivers, yds.	Side of Missouri	Distance	Total Dist.	Latitude
St. Charles . . . . .		N. E.	21		38° 59'
Osage river, (Little,) . . . . .	30	N. E.	20		
Charles' creek . . . . .	20	S. W.	27		
Shepherd's creek . . . . .		S. W.	15		
Gasconade river . . . . .	157	S. W.	17	100	38° 45'
Muddy river . . . . .	50	N. E.	15		
Great Osage . . . . .	397	S. W.	18	133	38° 31'
Marrow Creek . . . . .	20	S. W.	5		
Cedar Creek and island . . . . .	20	N. E.	7		
Lead Mine hill . . . . .		S. W.	9		
Hamilton's creek . . . . .	20	S. W.	8		
Split Rock creek . . . . .	20	N. E.	8	170	
Saline or Salt river . . . . .	30	S. W.	3		
Manitoo river . . . . .	30	N. E.	9		
Good Woman's river . . . . .	35	N. E.	9		
Mine river . . . . .	70	S. W.	9	200	
Arrow prairies . . . . .		S. W.	6		
The Charitons . . . . .	30				
	70	N. E.	14		
Ancient village of Mis- souri Indians, near which, fort Orleans formerly stood . . . . .		N. E.	16		
[244] Grand River . . . . .	90	N. E.	4	240	
Snake creek . . . . .	18	N. E.	6		
Ancient village of the Little Osage Indians } . . . . .		S. W.	10	256	
Tiger creek and Island . . . . .	25	N. E.	20		
A creek and island . . . . .		S. W.	12		
Fire prairie and creek . . . . .		S. W.	12		

<sup>59</sup> By comparison of this table with the more detailed list in Lewis and Clark's *Narrative* (Biddle ed., Philadelphia, 1814), ii, pp. 462-464, it will be noticed that several changes have been made by Brackenridge, both in the data and orthography, while the latitude is added. From internal evidence, there is some reason to believe that Brackenridge had access to the original journals of Lewis and Clark, but failed properly to interpret some of the proper names in the manuscript.— ED.



Places	Width of rivers, yds.	Side of Missouri	Distance	Total Dist.	Latitude
Fort Clark or Osage . . .		S. W.	6	306	
Hay Cabin creek . . .	20	S. W.	6		
Coal bank . . . . .		S. W.	9		
Blue Water river . . .	30	S. W.	10		
Kansas river . . . . .	233	S. W.	9	340	39° 5'
Little river Platte . . .	60	N. E.	9		
1. Old Kansas village . .		S. W.	28		
Independence creek . . .		S. W.	28		
2. Old Kansas village . .		S. W.	1		
St. Michael's prairie . .		N. E.	24		
Nodawa river . . . . .	70	N. E.	20	450	39° 40'
Loup or Wolf river . . .	60	S. W.	14		
Big Nihema . . . . .	80	S. W.	16		
Tarkio creek . . . . .	23	N. E.	3		
Nish-na-botona . . . . .	50	N. E.	25	508	
Little Nimeha . . . . .	48	S. W.	8		
Bald-pated prairie — the river Nish-na-bo-tona is at this place not more than 150 yards from the bank of the Missouri. }		N. E.	23		
Weeping-water creek . .	25	S. W.	29		
RIVER PLATTE . . . . .	600	S. W.	32	600	41° 4'
Butterfly creek . . . . .	18	S. W.	3		
Moscheto creek . . . . .	22	N. E.	7		
Ancient village of Ottoes do. of Ayuwas . . . . .		S. W.	11		
[245] — river . . . . .		N. E.	6		
[245] — river . . . . .	28	N. E.	11		
Council Bluffs . . . . .		S. W.	12	650	41° 17'
Soldier's river . . . . .	40	N. E.	39		
Little Sioux . . . . .	80	N. E.	44		
Bad Spirit river . . . . .		S. W.	55	788	
A bend in the river, 20 miles round, and but 900 yards across. }			21	809	
An island 3 miles N. E. of Floyd's village. }			27	836	
Floyd's river and bluff . .	35	N. E.	14	850	
Big Sioux river . . . . .	110	N. E.	3	853	38° 48'
Commencement of the Cobell, Alum; and Copperas bluffs . . . }		S. W.	27	880	

Places	Width of rivers, yds.	Side of Missouri	Distance	Total Dist.	Latitude
Hot or Burning bluffs . . .		S. W.	30		
White Stone river . . .	30	N. E.	8		
An old village at the mouth of Little Bow creek } . . .		S. W.	20		
River a Jaque or James R. Calumet bluff . . .	90	N. E.	12	950	42° 53'
Ancient fortification, Good Man's Isle } . . .		S. W.	13	976	
Plumb creek . . .	12	N. E.	10		
White Paint creek . . .	28	S. W.	8		
Qui Courre creek . . .	150	S. W.	6	1000	
Poncas river and village	30	S. W.	10		
The village of dog prair.		S. W.	20		
The island Cedar . . .			40		
WHITE RIVER . . .	300	S. W.	60	1130	
The 3 rivers of the Sioux	36	N. E.	22		
An island in the upper part of the Big Bend } . . .		S. W.	20		
[246] Upper part of the Big Bend, the gorge 1¼ mile across } . . .		S. W.	30		
Tyler's river . . .	35	S. W.	6	1208	
L'Oiselle's post, Cedar island } . . .			18		44° 12'
Titon river . . .	70	S. W.	37		
The upper part of five old record villages of Arikaras, reduced by the Sioux } . . .		S. W.	42		
Chienne river . . .	400	S. W.	5	1310	44° 20'
Old record village . . .			47		
Ser-war-cerna . . .	90	S. W.	40	1397	
Waterhoo . . .	120	S. W.	25	1422	45° 35'
Old village on an island		S. W.	4		
Arikara, 2 villages . . .		S. W.	4		
Stone Idol creek . . .	18	N. E.	18		
Warecore . . .	35	N. E.	40		
Cannon-ball river . . .	140	S. W.	12	1500	46° 29'
Old Mandan village . . .		S. W.	40		
do. . .		S. W.	40		
Mandan village . . .		S. W.	20	1600	47° 13'
Company's Fort . . .			40	1640	



