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**Life, Letters and Travels of  
Father De Smet among the  
North American Indians.**





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COUNCIL WITH THE HOSTILE SIOUX ON THE YELLOWSTONE RIVER.



LIFE, LETTERS AND TRAVELS  
OF  
FATHER PIERRE-JEAN DE SMET, S. J.  
1801-1873

Missionary Labors and Adventures among the Wild Tribes of the  
North American Indians, Embracing Minute Description of Their  
Manners, Customs, Games, Modes of Warfare and Torture,  
Legends, Tradition, etc., All from Personal Observations  
Made during Many Thousand Miles of Travel,  
with Sketches of the Country from St. Louis  
to Puget Sound and the Altrabasca

*Edited from the original unpublished manuscript Journals  
and Letter Books and from his Printed Works with  
Historical, Geographical, Ethnological and other Notes;  
Also a Life of Father De Smet*

MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS

BY

HIRAM MARTIN CHITTENDEN

Major, Corps of Engineers, U. S. A.

AND

ALFRED TALBOT RICHARDSON

FOUR VOLUMES

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## CHAPTER II.

### RETURN TO ST. LOUIS VIA PANAMA.

Over Mullan Pass to St. Ignatius Mission — New churches — Devout Indians — Forest fires — Captain Mullan's report — Father De Smet's full basket — Down the Columbia — New towns and new ways in the Northwest — California — The further journey home.

○<sup>1</sup> N<sup>1</sup> the 25th of August, I bade farewell to my dear brothers in Jesus Christ and left the Mission of St. Peter, to repair to that of St. Ignatius, west of the Rocky Mountains. The distance is about 250 miles, by the route laid out by the Government engineers. It leads across several small rivers, tributaries of the Missouri, such as the Prior, the Dearborn, the Prickly Pear, etc. This last might better be called Hop river, for this plant covers, literally, every bush and all the lower branches of the trees in the valley. Anise (*pimpinella anisum*) likewise abounds.

On the 29th, toward noon, we attained the summit of the great chain of the Rocky Mountains, by Mullan's Pass, at an elevation of 5,980 feet above sea-level. On the 5th of September I reached the Mission of St. Ignatius among the Flatheads and Pend d'Oreilles. A fine frame church, ninety by forty feet, has been erected here. I found the mission prosperous and flourishing. Notwithstanding this, it is impossible to overestimate the dangers which, just at this time, are threatening all the mountain tribes, through the approach of the whites, the ease with which liquors — "fire water" — so fatal to the Indians, can be obtained, and the accompaniment of all the vices and excesses of our modern civilization; especially as understood and practiced by our American pioneers. These things must be seen to be appreciated and believed.

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the French of the Linton Album, pp. 65-69.

The worthy and zealous Father Grassi, superior of this mission, has had all the materials prepared for the construction of a hospital and school buildings. He was, however, at a loss where to find nuns to conduct these new establishments — still he continued his work, trusting to the good providence of the Lord. I could do no less than encourage him as well as I was able in his useful labor, so necessary to the welfare of his neophytes, and the good Father's hopes were not in vain. On my return to St. Louis I approached, by letter, the worthy Sisters of Charity of the *Maison de la Providence* at Montreal, Canada. The Superior-General has generously granted my request; she answers me "that she grants most willingly this first colony of sisters for the Mission of St. Ignatius, and that she will do as much for other missions where there may be a need of sisters." I hastened to impart to the superior of the mountain missions this consoling piece of good news — and as for means, one may hope that the holy providence of the Lord will intervene here also.

On my way, I found the Reverend Father Ravalli in the St. Mary's or Flathead valley, with one Brother, occupied, with the aid of a few Indians, in building a new church. The site is twenty miles distant from the old Mission of St. Mary. In the same valley, thirty miles lower down, another little church has been put up for the use of French and Canadian colonists — and another still at the Flathead lake for the half-breeds and Indians. A church was in course of construction at Bannock, a mining town, where Father Grassi has obtained a subscription of \$1,500; the Protestants themselves contributed. There was a demand for several other churches in various mining regions. At the mission of the Kootenais, a branch of that of St. Ignatius, the good Indians have built a little church and a presbytery, for the use of the missionary who visits them. They remain in their primitive simplicity, fervor and zeal. They are the admiration of all the travelers who visit them, for

their diligence in all religious practices, their hospitality and love of justice. Theft is unknown among them.

Wherever I met with any of our Mission Indians, they overwhelmed me with marks of friendliness. The day after I had crossed the divide, I came toward evening upon one of their hunting camps. They were ignorant of my being in that country. I saw the chief sound the Angelus, and all his people prostrate themselves devoutly to recite it. This edifying Christian spectacle is repeated thrice every day in the remote wilderness. I came up in time to preside at the evening prayers of these dear children of my heart.

That same evening, to the great consolation of the Indians, and especially to mine, the Reverend Father Giorda, superior of all that mission, arrived in the camp. He was returning from California, and was then on his way from St. Ignatius to St. Peter's. Our mutual joy was great and profound. Let me add that it is in the desert that such a meeting, between two brothers in Jesus Christ, can be most truly appreciated. We exchanged eagerly all our little budget of news, good and bad — our hopes and our fears, for the present and the future of our dear missions and our dear neophytes.

The camp was going "to buffalo," east of the Rocky Mountains. Father Giorda gave them a long instruction that evening, and the confessions lasted far into the night, in their desire to approach devoutly the holy table. On the morrow I celebrated, *sub dio*, the most holy sacrifice of the mass, and addressed them some consoling words concerning religion and the joy with which this fortunate meeting inspired me. All the neophytes surrounded the humble altar, made of willows and poles, and chanted in chorus the praises of the Lord and the litanies of our August Mother the Holy Virgin. A large number piously received the holy communion.

Father Giorda and I remained in camp all this fine day, with these good Pend d'Oreilles and Flatheads around us,

hungry to listen to us. It was a pleasant day, and under the circumstances doubly beautiful, and certainly, to me, one of the most agreeable and consoling of all my long wanderings. I gave baptism to several new-born infants, and afterward distributed medals, scapulars and chaplets among such as needed them, and fish-hooks among the young men — an article very necessary and very much sought after among them. All day long they were coming to share their fish with us, and offered us big strings of fine spotted mountain trout (*salmo fario*). Others brought us potatoes, onions, carrots, turnips and fruits of various sorts, which they seemed to have in abundance, the fruit of their own industry.

I left St. Ignatius' Mission on the 8th of September. We were one day reaching Clark's Fork and three days going down the valley of this river, as far as the mouth of the river St. Regis and Borgia. Here we were kept by rain until the 16th. On that day we crossed the Regis-Borgia thirty-seven times. Different kinds of pine and fir abound in this valley. The undergrowth, in the mountainous part that we traversed, is very thick, and consists principally of a sort of bush with velvety leaves, which, when properly dried, yield an aromatic tea, very agreeable and beneficial. We arrived at the summit of the Cœur d'Alène Mountains about four in the afternoon. This is called Sohon<sup>2</sup> Pass and its elevation is 5,100 feet above sea-level.

Along the river in the Cœur d'Alène valley the forests are extremely thick, and one cannot but admire the astonishing thickness and height of the pines and cedars. I measured several of these giants of the forest, the circumference of which was five, six and even seven fathoms. In the shade of the cedars the *Lychnis* of Canada (or *Asaron Canadensis*) grows in profusion; it is a medical plant, of

<sup>2</sup> Over the Cœur d'Alène Mountains between the headwaters of the Regis-Borgia and the Cœur d'Alène river. Named for Captain Mullan's guide in his explorations of this country, 1858-1862.



which Charboni, in his history of New France (botanical section) tells wonders. The *Solanum trifolium*, with its handsome flower, likewise attracts attention everywhere.

A forest fire was raging during our passage, and had spread over a dozen miles of the mountain side and even to their highest parts. The smoke was very thick, and thousands of tree-trunks, fallen one upon another in confusion, obstructed the regular road and all the surface of the ground. We succeeded at last, axe in hand, and after plenty of minor miseries, in getting out of all the obstacles caused by the conflagration. In the course of the 17th we crossed the Cœur d'Alène river forty-two times. On the 18th we reached the Mission of the Sacred Heart.

The mission among the Cœur d'Alènes continues to prosper, under the prudent management of the excellent and worthy Father Gazzoli and his zealous companion, Father Caruana, and the good Brother Huybrechts from Antwerp and three other brothers. The Cœur d'Alènes continue to give great satisfaction and consolation to their worthy missionaries, by their constancy in the practices of religion and their perseverance in the faith. May heaven preserve them from the dangerous contact of the whites! They are threatened unceasingly with the loss of their lovely fertile lands and of the advantageous position occupied by the mission.

Captain Mullan, of the United States army, speaks as follows in a report which has recently been published by order of the Government and at Government expense. You will find the paragraph somewhat long, but I prefer to give it entire. The captain puts the Indian question to his Government very directly — the response, or at least the ordinary practice, when the whites take possession of the lands of the Indians, is to push them farther back into the wilderness or to exterminate them.

The captain in his report praises the missionaries and their converts very highly, and goes on to say:

“ They have chosen a beautiful site, on a hill in the mid-

dle of the mission valley, and it has always proved to the weary traveler and destitute emigrant a St. Bernard in the Cœur d'Alène Mountains. I fear that the location of our road, and the swarms of miners and emigrants that must pass here year after year, will so militate against the best interests of the mission that its present site will have to be changed or abandoned. This, for themselves and the Indians, is to be regretted; but I can only regard it as the inevitable result of opening and settling the country. I have seen enough of Indians to convince me of this fact: that they can never exist in contact with the whites; and their only salvation is to be removed far, far from their presence. But they have been removed so often that there seems now no place left for their further migration; the waves of civilization have invaded their homes from both oceans, driving them year after year toward the Rocky Mountains; and now that we propose to invade these mountain solitudes, to wrest from them their hidden wealth, where under heaven can the Indians go? And may we not expect to see these people make one desperate struggle in the fastnesses of the Rocky Mountains for the maintenance of their last homes and the preservation of their lives? It is a matter that but too strongly commends itself to the early and considerate attention of the General Government. The Indian is destined to disappear before the white man, and the only question is, how it may best be done, and his disappearance from our midst be tempered with those elements calculated to produce to himself the least amount of suffering, and to us the least amount of cost."

You may see from this extract from Captain Mullan's report to his Government, the real tendency of what we have to fear for the future of the Indian tribes in the vast Idaho Territory.

To proceed with my tale, the Church of the Sacred Heart, with that of St. Ignatius, are the two monuments of the Rocky Mountains; they are well adorned with pictures and statues, which are the admiration as well of the whites as

of the savages. This mission has two branch stations, with two little churches, one on the shores of the great Cœur d'Alène lake, the other among the tribe of the Spokans or Zingomenes, in a fair valley of the Spokan river. This tribe at one time had Calvinist or Presbyterian ministers; since the departure of these sectarians, conversions to our holy religion have been very numerous. The Mission of the Sacred Heart is at an elevation of 2,280 feet above sea-level.

Reverend Father Joset, who has been laboring with tireless zeal in the mountain missions for well nigh twenty years, is at the Mission of St. Paul at Colville, at the Kettle Falls of the Columbia. He was absent from his mission at the time of my arrival. I give below a few details concerning his apostolic labors, which he has given me since.

"Your Reverence knows that I am at St. Paul to reopen the mission. I have many excursions to make, among the Kalispels of the Great Lake of the Columbia, among the Pend d'Oreilles of the Bay, on Clark's Fork, one of its main tributaries, among the Simpoils, the Okinagans — but the church to finish, the house to build, keep me often at Colville, to my great regret.

"I am looking for my companion to arrive from one day to another; with two presidents, I hope that we shall be able to meet the needs of all, though there will be plenty of work for us both.

"On my return from Walla Walla, where I had been buying my supplies of provisions, etc. (October 16th), I arrived in time to bury two dead; to-morrow I go again to the new church, to try to push the work. I have just registered the eighty-second birth for this year, so that your Reverence can infer what the population of this district is. There are besides a great number of unmarried men, soldiers, miners, etc.

"Besides the whites and the Christian tribes, that is, the Kettles, the Gens des Lacs and the Kalispels, we have the Simpoils, the Tlakam, the people of the stone islands, the

Spiozensi and the Satlilku, who can only receive religious aid from St. Paul. All speak nearly the same language, and a great number of them have already received baptism. Your Reverence will observe that our task is large and our labors multifarious, in the administration of the holy sacraments and the instruction of so many tribes.

“ Pray for us and have others do so, that we may accomplish worthily the duties that the Lord lays upon us; that is, that we may be good *religieux*, worthy children of St. Ignatius.

“ I spend the greater part of my time in a tent, eating what comes, sometimes in abundance, sometimes in penury, performing my spiritual exercises as best I can, regulating my time by the sun and stars when the weather is clear, otherwise, by the occupations that offer. When I am among the Indians, my time is very much occupied, I hardly have leisure to do more than think of them and their spiritual and bodily profit. But amidst the whites, I seldom see them except on Sunday, unless I go after them myself.

“ Although whisky is making great ravages among the Indians, especially at Colville, still the Lord has reserved himself a goodly number untouched by corruption. With these it is always the same avidity to hear the word of life, the same eagerness to approach the sacraments. As for the other bands, one may truthfully say ‘ *Parvuli petierunt panem et non erat qui frangeret eis.*’ I raise my hands to heaven, and full of trust in the divine goodness, I pray and hope that, this mission once re-established, it will be otherwise for the future.”

I owe a great debt of gratitude to my dear brothers in Jesus Christ for the truly fraternal charity and kindness that they have shown me, during my short but consoling stay among them. May I, however, add that it occurred to one of the missionaries to compare me to the good St. Nicholas, “ who never came with an empty basket.” It was really a great happiness to me to be able, this time, to relieve my

dear brothers in their pressing needs, and to share with them my little belongings. When one leaves the land of civilization for a long journey or mission among the Indian tribes, where everything is lacking, one necessarily takes precautions — and the benefactors of the missions in St. Louis had stocked me up very well. Father Grassi had just finished a new church, which had not one obolus' worth of ornaments, vestments nor sacred vessels; at his earnest entreaty, I let him have my little traveling chapel. His joy and gratitude repaid me amply, and made me forget the great privation I had laid myself under.

I have since learned that the Reverend Fathers have received the provisions, clothing, church vestments, tools, etc., intended to supply the different missions. My little cargo amounted in all to nearly 1,500 pounds. The worthy captain of the steamboat, Mr. Charles Chouteau, was so exceedingly obliging and charitable as to give me a free passage, together with the two brothers, as well as transportation for our baggage and all the things destined for the missions — a charity on his part, which would otherwise have cost us upward of \$1,000. We shall pray, and venture to hope, that heaven will reward him, with all his respectable family, for his great goodness and charity to the missionaries and their missions. This Good work he repeats with pleasure every spring and at each departure for the mountains.

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I<sup>3</sup> reached the Sacred Heart Mission on the 18th of September and left again on the 23d, in the best of company, that of the worthy Father Gazzoli, who had to go to Walla Walla in the interests of his mission, and of a respectable Irish physician, Mr. W. T. Martin, of Dublin, an old pupil of the College of Notre Dame of Namur. He has abundant claims on my most lively gratitude. With

<sup>3</sup> Translated from the French of the Linton Album, pp. 70-74.

true Christian charity, he bestowed all his care and attention on the sick and infirm savages in the camps we came across. Everywhere that Mr. Martin went he was the benefactor of our missions; I shall always recall with the most lively gratitude the really fraternal kindness and attention which he lavished on me from St. Louis to San Francisco. His intention was to continue his little tour, returning to Dublin by way of the Sandwich Islands, the Philippines, Japan, China and the East Indies — almost the only parts of the world that he had not yet visited. May heaven protect him — our poor prayers will go with him throughout his long and dangerous voyages.

The principal rivers crossed on our route were the Spokane, the Paloos, the great Snake river or Clark's [Lewis'] Fork, the Touchat and the Walla Walla. After a very favorable and pleasant journey, on the eighth day we came to Walla Walla City (915 feet above sea-level). This is barely a town of yesterday, but already it has over 2,000 inhabitants, with all the signs of civilization in full swing. Its movement and commerce are very great; arrivals and departures of travelers and merchandise from morning till night. All the places adapted to agriculture are covered with vast farms, for thirty to forty miles around. The Very Reverend and very zealous Mr. Brouillet, Vicar-General of Monseigneur of Nisqually, was at Walla Walla, busied about the erection of a new church and a convent for the instruction of the children of the city, under the care of the excellent Sisters of Charity of Montreal.

On October 6th I took the stage coach for Wallula, a small town situated on the Columbia thirty miles distant from Walla Walla. Early on the morning of the 7th I embarked upon the steamboat which makes regular trips to the Dalles. To avoid the falls and the bad places in the river, there is a little railroad ten or a dozen miles long, which brought us in the evening to Dalles City, some 125 miles from Wallula. Settlements are still very scarce along

the river, but we passed Umatilla, Grand Ronde City and Celilo.

Dalles City is a town of about the same age as Walla Walla, and has few, if any, more inhabitants. It is a better business town, because it controls a larger section of country. The respectable curate of this city is the Reverend Mr. Vermaersh, a Belgian. He has a handsome frame church and was watching the erection of a convent, for the education of youth, under the direction of the Sisters of Jesus and Mary. A series of little towns and villages are rising as if by enchantment, all along the river as we go down, and all through the interior of the country.<sup>4</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

On the 8th of October I resumed my journey, going forty-five miles by steamboat. Five miles of this distance, through the Cascade Mountains, is made by rail. Then we take the steamer on the Columbia again and reach Vancouver toward evening. This is a town of 700 to 800 inhabitants. It is the ordinary residence of the Bishop of Nisqually, Monseigneur Magloire Blanchet. This diocese, established in 1850, contains six secular priests, eight regular priests, seven lay brothers, eleven churches and chapels, twenty sisters of charity, a college, four literary institutions for girls, three similar establishments for boys and four charitable institutions. The white Catholic population was 6,000 souls before gold was discovered, and must have more than tripled since. The arch-diocese of Oregon comprises twelve priests, ten churches, five religious institutions for the education of girls and five for that of boys. Portland is the ordinary residence of Monseigneur the Archbishop. It is the chief city and the commercial metropolis of Oregon, having some 6,000 inhabitants. Twelve Sisters of Jesus and Mary are conducting a fine religious institution for the education of girls, which is in a very prosperous condition, enjoying the confidence of the public,

<sup>4</sup> For omitted portions of this letter, see p. 1518.

as well of Protestants as of Catholics. I owe the greatest gratitude to the venerable Archbishop of Oregon and to Monseigneur the Bishop of Nisqually, for the truly paternal kindness that they showed me — their Grandeurs overwhelmed me with charities in their hospitable residences at Portland and Vancouver. At Portland I had the pleasure of meeting a fellow-countryman, the Reverend and worthy Mr. Fierens, curate of the cathedral.

On the 13th of October I set sail from Portland for San Francisco. We passed the dangerous bar at the mouth of the Columbia in safety. The steamer touched at Victoria, the capital of Vancouver Island, one of the new towns, admirably well situated, from both practical and picturesque standpoints. Its commerce is already important, and growing day by day by reason of its nearness to the mines on Fraser river and in the Caribou Mountains.

The worthy Monseigneur Demers, Bishop of Vancouver Island and the western part of the Rocky Mountains, in the English possessions, resides at Victoria. Besides the cathedral and the attached school, the Reverend Oblat Fathers have opened a college and church here. The Sisters of Jesus and Mary have a boarding-school, very well patronized, and a school for the instruction of girls. These worthy *religieuses*, like the respectable Sisters of Charity of the Asyle de la Providence of Montreal, are doing an immense amount of good in these remote regions. Monseigneur was absent, and had extended his apostolic tour in search of his flock as far as to the miners of the Caribou Mountains. The Reverend Oblat Fathers have several missions among the savages of the interior of the island and on Fraser river, where they are working with the greatest zeal and the happiest results; numerous conversions have everywhere crowned their noble efforts.

The steamer left Victoria on the 16th, and after a fortunate voyage, although with some severe gales, I arrived in San Francisco on the 21st — happy to find myself once more in the midst of my dear brothers in Jesus Christ.



Reverend Father Sopranis, visitor of all the missions of the Company of Jesus in North America, was awaiting me at San Francisco.

During my short stay in California, I visited the College of Santa Clara and the residence of our Fathers at San José. The college is in a very flourishing state, as is that at San Francisco. At San José I visited the establishment of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, whom I had conducted to America in 1843, to the number of five sisters. These first founders are still in good health. The sisters have now two fine large establishments in California. The convent at San José contains twenty-two professed sisters, seven novices and two aspirants; there are 120 pupils in the boarding-school, seventy-five day scholars and about the same number attending the school *gratis*. On Sundays they have a class for servant girls, and assemble the Catholics for Christian teaching. The convent at Marysville has fourteen sisters, who also have around them a good number of children, inmates and outsiders; and are following in the same line with the sisters of San José. The convents of the Sisters of Notre Dame are rendering very great service wherever they are established in America. Their scholars in Cincinnati and Boston are counted by thousands. This religious congregation is growing marvelously.

I left San Francisco on the 3d of November. I had the consolation and happiness to serve as companion to our Reverend Father Visitor in his voyage to New York. Several of our dear brothers of St. Ignatius College escorted us on board the vessel. The Pacific Ocean showed itself truly pacific, calm and beautiful, and varied scarcely at all throughout the voyage. We stopped at Acapulco, a Mexican port, to coal and take on the mails.

We reached Panama the night of the 17th, and the following morning we crossed the Isthmus of Panama, forty-seven miles, by rail. Toward evening of the same day we took ship again at Aspinwall, on the steamer *North Star*.

The weather continued clear and lovely, though varied at times by hard squalls and head-winds. The Reverend Father Visitor was very much inconvenienced and suffered much from sea-sickness, and for several days his condition alarmed me seriously. We passed within sight of Jamaica, Cuba and several low islands of the Bahama group, and at last, on the ninth day out, reached the good harbor of New York, on the 26th of November, Thanksgiving day by proclamation of the President of the United States. An hour later, we found ourselves in the midst of our dear brothers in Jesus Christ, at the College of St. Francis Xavier, who received us with their usual kindness, that is, with the most fraternal charity. The Reverend Father Provincial of Missouri was expected in New York, and I decided to wait for him.

On the 9th of December I set out to accomplish the last portion of my long journey. We came by way of Baltimore, Washington, Frederick City and Cincinnati, in all of which cities the Father Provincial had business to transact. In Washington I had also an errand — matters to bring before the Government in favor of our missions among the Indians. Finally we reached St. Louis safe and sound on the 17th of December. The day following, I offered the holy sacrifice of the altar, as a thanksgiving service for all the benefits received from heaven, in my long, painful and dangerous tour, upon rivers and seas and diverse lands — through numerous bands of hostile Indians — in the mountainous portion of Idaho, infested by white marauders and assassins of the lowest and vilest sort — and on the two great oceans, the Pacific and Atlantic, ranged at present by hostile ships of the American Confederacy. Glory to God alone and to the glorious Virgin Mary, for all the favors obtained.

I commend myself most specially to your good prayers. Every day at the altar I form most sincere vows in behalf of your Reverence and all our benefactors in Holland and

Belgium. We shall not cease to pray, with our dear neophytes, for their happiness here below and for eternity.

\* \* \* \* \*

I may later write you a longer account of my last trip, as you have called for in several of your letters; on this occasion I have little time left and must necessarily be short; I can only give you a cursory notice of the country I passed through.<sup>5</sup>

I left St. Louis on the 9th of May. I baptized several hundred children on my way up the Missouri, at the different posts where Indians had gathered to await the arrival of the boat. All were very kind and attentive to me. We had no hindrance, neither from enemies nor from any other obstacles on the river, till we reached the mouth of Milk river — 2,400 miles above St. Louis. Here, good depth of water failed, and the captain put all his passengers ashore (eighty in number) and 200 tons of merchandise; this left us about 300 miles from our destination. Three days after the boat had left us we were attacked by a powerful band of Sioux warriors, about 600 in number. Our camp was in an awful fix and no ways prepared for such a visit. All rushed to their arms in a rather confused manner. For my own part I had no time to reflect and had nothing to do with fire-arms. I recommended myself to the Lord, and full of confidence in the prayers which I knew were [being] offered for me in many places, I walked, or rather ran, up to the vanguard of the enemy, about forty strong. The partisan or captain of the band happily recognized me and he cried out, "It is the Black-gown, who saved my sister." They all looked bewildered, but were kind and shook hands with me. We had a long talk, in which I gave them some salutary advice, backed with some coffee, sugar and hard biscuits, and they left us without further molestation. The Indian brave, my friend, was the

<sup>5</sup> Additional data upon the journey of 1863.—*From a letter to Father Murphy, March 30, 1864.*

son of Red Fish, the great chief of the Sioux Ogallala tribe, whose history I have left on record,<sup>6</sup> as also that of his daughter, in the fifth of the *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres*, published in Belgium, and to which you may refer, should you feel inclined to know the whole circumstance. It would rather be too long for me to repeat it here. Only two of our men had received arrow wounds and happily recovered later.

We waited about a month at the mouth of Milk river, when horses and conveyances arrived from Fort Benton. After a tedious journey through a desolate country, where all vegetation had disappeared under the long summer drought, we reached the fort on the day of the glorious Assumption of the ever Glorious Blessed Virgin. I here met Father Imoda, and after a few days' rest, and having baptized a good number of Crow and Blackfoot children, we proceeded together to St. Peter's Mission, seventy-five miles distant.

The mission register contains about 1,500 baptisms of children and adults. Thousands of whites are flocking in the new Montana Territory in search of gold, within the district of St. Peter's Mission. They have erected several cities, of which the most conspicuous are Virginia City and Banack, with thousands of miners within and around them; so that the Fathers, two in number, will have their hands full, both with Indians and whites. \* \* \* West of the mountains I met with many old friends among the Indians, who welcomed me among them with the utmost kindness and affection. The Missions of St. Ignatius, of the Sacred Heart, of St. Paul at Colville, were still prosperous and doing well. They direct some fifteen different stations, where small churches have been built. The Flat-heads and Kalispels will soon have a convent. I obtained a little colony of Sisters of Charity of the *Asyle de la Providence* at Montreal, who will take charge of it. I passed

<sup>6</sup> See pp. 630 and 791.

through Walla Walla, Dalles City, Vancouver City and Portland in Oregon, where religion was progressing. Embarked at Portland, via Victoria in Vancouver Island and reached San Francisco on the 21st of October. The distance may be put down from Benton to San Francisco at 2,580 miles.

In California, the affairs of our Society look rather crooked, and I am afraid some of ours have not been over-prudent. No good can come from that quarter, unless kind Providence comes to our rescue; the presence of the Visitor has done nothing toward mending and filling the breach. I left in his company for Panama and Aspinwall, which we reached in due time and safe and sound, a distance of 2,347 miles. We next embarked for New York, 2,000 miles, where we were welcomed with open arms by the good Fathers of St. Xavier College — a few days' rest, and *en route de nouveau*, via Washington and St. Louis, which I reached on the 17th of December last. Please present my best respects to the good Fathers in New Orleans and pray for me.

### CHAPTER III.

#### PEACE MISSION TO THE SIOUX IN 1864.

Still planning for the Sioux — Precarious state of health — Government's invitation to visit the hostiles puts him in a dilemma — Another voyage up the river — Changes in Iowa — Omaha — Ministrations by the way — The unhappy Winnebagoes — Yankton — Barbarities of soldiers and savages — Indian warfare — Native eloquence — Interviews and councils — Praying for rain — Peace mission of no avail — Returns to St. Louis — Travels abroad.

St. Louis University, Feb. 23, 1864.<sup>1</sup>

*Very Reverend Father-General:*

¶ I WILL add a few lines to my long letter (journey of 1863) to inform your Paternity that no definite decision relative to my renewing my missionary work among the Indians in May has yet been reached. When I was in Washington the Secretary of the Interior and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs seemed very desirous that I should repeat my visit to the Sioux this spring, and even offered to pay my traveling expenses. It is going to be very difficult to obtain peace with those terrible savages. I have not compromised nor engaged myself in any way with those high officials.

My health is returning gradually. Meanwhile I have written to two Sioux interpreters, trusty men, raised among those tribes, to consult them and obtain information regarding the present state of the Sioux country with respect to the war, as to the disposition of the Indians in regard to peace, and whether my presence among them could be of any use, to either the Indians or the whites, in the capacity

<sup>1</sup> The four letters next following are from the personal letter-books of Father De Smet, the first three being translations from the French.

of peacemaker. I am waiting for the interpreters' reply; if it is favorable and my health permits, and above all under the wise direction and with the permission of the Reverend Father Provincial, I propose to visit those warlike tribes in the course of the coming summer. My only object would be to announce to them the word of the Lord, with the words of peace, and to put an end, by wholesome advice, to the massacres of the whites and thereby prevent the entire extinction of the Sioux nation, which must be the final result of this unfortunate and cruel war.

\* \* \* \* \*

In union of your holy sacrifices and prayers I have the honor to be, with the most profound respect.

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St. Louis University, March 14, 1864.

*My very dear Silvie:*

I cannot express to you the joy and consolation that your good letters have brought me. They are the first I have received from the family, and I am exceedingly grateful to you. I am glad to see that your uncle Francis and dear Paul have received mine of December 24th. I do not get any answer; I know not to what I must attribute the delay; I own to you that the delay pains me deeply. \* \* \*

I cannot hide from you, dear Silvie, that my health has been wavering for some months past, and begins to be threatening. I am broken down with all sorts of troubles: I suffer particularly with my head; it is seldom that I can leave my room. In case my health should permit, I will have to make an effort to take the road again, to undertake a very long and dangerous journey among the Indian tribes. In the present difficult circumstances, the Indians being in a state of war, the Secretary of the Interior begs me to go and visit them in the capacity of peacemaker, etc. The interests of our missions, the security of the whites in

that country and the happiness and tranquillity of the Indians, all seem to require that I should go. I speak of this because I feel that it would be a very sensible affliction to me to have to start out again on a long and uncertain road to the Great Desert without having first received late letters from your uncle Francis, dear Paul, etc.

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St. Louis University, March 15, 1864.

*My dear Gustave:*

I have received your two dear good letters of the 11th of January and 11th of February. \* \* \*

Since my return to St. Louis after my long and painful journey I have been in rather bad shape. Like a regular old man, I am full of infirmities — my head especially troubles me the most. I can seldom leave my room and go out of the house. For some time past my greatest privation is to be unable even to celebrate holy mass. It is the first time since I was ordained priest in 1827 that I have been prevented by sickness from celebrating at the altar. I can see that the doctors are not without some uneasiness on the score of my health. As for myself I am not without hope; for that matter, we are in the Lord's hands; may he do with us according to his holy will. I am conscious of a wish to be able to renew and continue my missions and travels among the Indian tribes of the great plains. They have great need of being visited and of receiving good advice. For the last two years they have been making merciless war upon the whites, pushed to the limit of endurance by the injustices and provocations of the latter. Three to four thousand soldiers are on the point of leaving St. Louis to subjugate the warlike tribes, and annihilate them if they can. The Government desires me to go thither as pacificator, and I will do so gladly if in any way my health allows it. As the old Flemish proverb says: "When the



legs creak the heart is good." The steamboat for the upper Missouri is to leave about the middle of next month, etc.

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St. Louis University, March 30, 1864.

*Reverend and dear Father Murphy:*

This, to be sure, is rather waiting too long, to write to your Reverence. I will try no excuse; yourself must have made it already. Immediately at my arrival in St. Louis toward the end of the year, I found the ledger and day-book gaping and calling for a closing. In order to appear decently before his Paternal eyes it took me about a month hard labor, cyphering and corresponding all the while, with the brethren scattered far and wide among the Osages and Potawatomies, in Illinois, in Wisconsin, in Ohio, Kentucky and Missouri. Next came my correspondence with Europe which required immediate attention. I wrote a letter of twenty-four pages, on my last journey and mission among the Indians, to Reverend Father-General, according to promise and as requested. I wrote another of twenty-six pages to my near and dear friends in Belgium, who believed that I was dead and buried and I wanted to undeceive them by a long rigmarole of facts and dates. And then came Father Terwecoren, anxious to have some chaff and mixture to feed his *Précis Historiques*, and I gave him thirty-two pages. You see, dear Father, I have not been idle; and all the time I was sickly, \* \* \* so I have been pretty much kept within doors; and thanks, after all, to these little miseries, being kept in, I was allowed and able to put out and let loose my flying sheets, under the wings of steam, by land and by sea. I hope my poor and little narrations will reach their various destinations and will obtain some prayers and some means, for the poor and destitute Indians and their poor and zealous missionaries.

I am now occupied in buying goods for the upper missions, to the amount of about \$3,000. I am allowed to draw for \$1,400 on Father Congiato and shall have to look out and make an effort for the balance. And then comes my eight days' retreat, after which I am much panting. And should my health permit, I am next to enter again on another long and dangerous trip. I have been even requested, by the Commissioner of the Indian Department at Washington, to undertake the journey and to bring about, if possible, a peace among the hostile Sioux, acting in concert with the general of the troops and the appointed agents.<sup>2</sup> They offer to pay all my expenses, with a handsome remuneration for myself. Not being well as yet I have not accepted of their request. I fear I would lose all caste among the Indians. They have hitherto looked upon me as the bearer to them of the word of the Great Spirit and have universally been kind and attentive on all occasions and wherever I have met them. Should I present myself in their midst as the bearer of the word of the Big Chief of the Big Knives in Washington, no longer their Great Father, but now their greatest and bitterest enemy, it would place me in rather an awkward situation. I have written to the Commissioner, that if I can go, I will go on my own hook, without pay or remuneration; visit the friendly Sioux first, and in their company try to penetrate among their fighting brethren and do my utmost to preach peace and good will to them, and to make them come to a good understanding with the general in command and the agents of Government. It may be a month or somewhat longer before I shall be able to leave. Should I go, I am fully aware of the great dangers I may meet with; but will be assured, at the same time, to be remembered in your holy sacrifices and prayers.

\* \* \* \* \*

<sup>2</sup> See p. 833.

On board the *Yellowstone*, Yankton city, capital of the Dakota Territory, 1,093 miles from the mouth of the Missouri, May 17, 1864.<sup>3</sup>

A day of fine weather gives me an opportunity to send you a report of the progress that we are making, and of my new journey of 1864. The water is low, and we are continually hindered by sandbars. We have barely advanced six miles in the last eight days. I spend my leisure hours in reading and in taking notes upon the Missouri, its numerous tributaries and the immense region of 500,000 square miles which it drains. I examine, I draw upon my own fund of experience, I question the best-informed travelers, and then I write. I feel confident of being able to give you a pretty exact idea of this great and interesting portion of the vast American continent. First let me say a word of my departure from St. Louis.

On the 16th of April the steamer *Yellowstone* left the port of St. Louis. I left on the night of the 20th, by the Northwestern railroad, hoping to outstrip the boat and meet it at St. Joseph. I even ventured as far as Leavenworth, in the company of our Reverend Father Provincial, to present my respectful homage to Monseigneur Miège, S. J., vicar apostolic for Kansas, and to our dear brethren in Jesus Christ. Upon my arrival, I learned, to my great surprise, that the *Yellowstone* was fifteen hours before me and making good time, favored by a heavy rise in the river and a good moon. I therefore found myself under the hard necessity of taking a carriage and starting after the boat, on the right [left] bank, up hill and down, on a drive of 200 miles. I will give a sketch of the aspect of this country, the greater portion of which is embodied in the State of Iowa.

<sup>3</sup> This and the following letter are translated from the third Belgian edition, volume V. To whom written not stated, but probably to the editor of the *Précis Historiques*.

I had traversed this same country in 1838, when I was going for the first time among the Potawatomies at Council Bluffs, with Father Verreydt, to open our first Indian mission. All that region, then in its primitive condition, was in peaceable possession of the Indians; it was a grazing ground for the numerous herds of wild animals that ranged it. I shall always recall, with interest, the impression made on my mind by the first sight of these interminable plains and lovely prairies, enameled with flowers and plants that were perfectly unknown to me; surrounded by forests and fringes of woods, which seemed to frame them and the lines of which one could follow into the distance. The axe of the woodman had not yet penetrated thither. The whole face of the country, for hundreds of miles in length and breadth, from the Missouri to the Mississippi, has been changed, within the last twenty-five years, under the influence of civilization and the labor of an industrious people. One beholds with astonishment and admiration a succession of towns and villages in full prosperity, several of which already contain over 10,000 souls, like Leavenworth and St. Joseph. They are surrounded with vast and beautiful farms and immense pastures, where innumerable cattle are raised without trouble. Everywhere is heard the sound of the hammer on the anvil, and the puffing of steam in saw and gristmills. In all this region the soil is of extraordinary fertility.

I reached the city of Omaha on the 25th of April. This time, fortunately, I had gotten ahead of the steamboat. Monseigneur O'Gorman, the vicar apostolic for Nebraska, since May 8, 1859, received me with the greatest benevolence and the most paternal charity. I had time, until the 28th, to recover from my fatigues and to resume the religious practices prescribed by our rules. This important point requires a particular effort in an American stage, where nine or ten persons find themselves shut up, crowded and squeezed as in a small boat, and this for two days and a night. Presently I took farewell of Monseigneur the Bishop,

and with his blessing received from His Grandeur all the necessary powers for exercising the holy ministry in his immense district, which embraces the Territories of Nebraska, Wyoming, Montana and a part of Dakota. I took the boat on the 28th of April.

As on former occasions, Mr. Charles Chouteau received me on board his boat with his habitual kindness and cordiality. He gave me the quietest and most commodious stateroom, and at once had an altar prepared therein. Thanks to his charity, I found myself installed as if at home in one of the Society's houses. I have the consolation of offering the holy sacrifice every day, in a kind of antechamber contiguous to mine. A good number of Catholics can assemble here, and they come every Sunday to assist at mass and fulfill their religious duties.

Among our travelers, who are some 150 in number, we have all the various shades of the Protestant sects, deists, atheists and believers in "elective affinities," who have broken all marriage and family ties. On a long-distance American steamboat, a priest therefore finds abundance of occupation. In the crowd he always finds some persons who respond to the Lord's grace, willingly receive instruction and are converted. One can awake better thoughts in most of them, and often remorse, which bears fruit later. When he first comes into the midst of such an assemblage, the priest is attentively observed: they seem to measure you from head to foot; it is like the curious beast in the menagerie, they stare at you with surprise, and are rather slow in approaching you. But the first reserve once broken, you are overwhelmed with questions concerning all the points of religion, some quite often sensible, but ordinarily they are outlandish, sometimes even rude and indelicate; this denotes a profound and deplorable ignorance, which inspires only pity and compassion.

From the 28th of April until this 17th of May, the boat has barely made 340 miles. It is constantly running aground on heaps of sand, which practically bar the river.

We are obliged to unload part of the cargo, to lighten the boat and permit it to cross, and this occasions great delays. These delays have given me opportunities to make excursions into the forests and prairies near the river, and practice my holy ministry. Here is the result.

In a point of woods called Oak Cove, in the Nebraska Territory, I found a Canadian who had been established there for eight years, and who was married after the fashion of the country, that is, by simple mutual consent, either before witnesses or a judge. His wife was a half-breed Blackfoot, and had received baptism in infancy, at the time of my first visit to her tribe. The first entrance of a priest at Oak Cove was a day of surprise and joy for the family. The father and mother were eager to have their four children baptized, and prepared at once to receive worthily the nuptial benediction.

Upon the opposite bank, in the Dakota Territory, I entered a cabin occupied by a young half-breed Yankton chief and his family. He recognized me and saluted me affectionately. I had baptized him upon one of my first visits to the Sioux. Later he had spent several years in our Indian school at St. Mary, among the Potawatomies. He presented to me his four sons, of whom the eldest was scarce six years old, and begged me to baptize them.

Along the banks and at some wooded points, I have regenerated in the holy waters of baptism eighteen children belonging to the nation of the Winnebagoes, a good part of which is Catholic. I will give a brief note of what I was able to learn concerning their sad and unfortunate condition.

Formerly they lived happy and contented near certain "branches" and lakes upon the upper Mississippi, where they occupied fine reservations. At the outbreak of the Sioux war in 1862, in which the Winnebagoes had taken no part, and in spite of their demonstrations of attachment to the whites, they were forced by the civil and military authorities to leave their peaceable abodes, their fair fields and gardens, and immediately their "reservation," which

had been guaranteed them in perpetuity, was invaded by the whites.

The allotment made by the Government for the transportation of these poor unhappy banished folk was quite considerable, and there was abundance of provisions. Nothing was omitted from the large promises that were made them, "to manage everything for them, to make them happy and comfortable in their new home, where they would lack nothing." About 2,000 Winnebagoes submitted, forcibly, to this agreement. Last year (1863) they were put on board steamboats, which were chartered for the conveyance of these strange figures (*figures étranges*); and set ashore on their new reservation, situated below the Big Bend of the Missouri, 1,363 miles from its mouth and about 3,000 [300?] from their old dwelling-places. What preparations had been made to receive so many wretched beings, who saw themselves forced to leave their tents, cabins, fields, gardens, mills, fishing-grounds? They were given in exchange a portion of desert, comparatively uncultivated and miserable, destitute of animals and game, and besides this, they were set down in the vicinity of the Sioux, their mortal enemies from ancient times.

When they reached this place, the planting season was already too far along for favorable results. Last winter was long and severe. These savages were put on short rations. This spring they found themselves in addition without grain or seeds. A great number of their children have already died of destitution; for the most part, they have starved to death. To-day they are to be found scattered all over, in groups of two, three or four families, hiding upon the islands or along the shores of the Missouri. I was able to approach several of them, and, to their great joy, give baptism to eighteen of their little ones. Soldiers are stationed at different points along the river, to intercept them and take them back by force upon this "reservation" of desolation, where eighty of the poor wretches have succumbed already. It is one more link attached to the long

chain of cruelties and injustice inflicted upon the unhappy natives. Some of the newspapers have made an outcry, asking: "Who is to blame for this barbarous conduct toward the Winnebagoes?" And the answer is "Who?" In fact, no light has yet been obtained upon this sad affair; but an investigation has been made. May this be for the sake of form? I will let you know the results, if any are ever made known.<sup>4</sup>

On the 11th of May, we found ourselves completely arrested by a sandbar a mile above Yankton, capital of the Territory of Dakota. This new town is still in its infancy. Its population consists of thirty or forty families. The capitol, the Governor's residence, and all the houses are made of logs and frame. Its situation upon the river, where the ground is high and sloping, is well chosen. Yankton will become a city of more and more importance, as the country settles up.

Just now we are fairly stuck. The water continues low, and the difficulty of loading and unloading has been so great, that the captain has resolved to have a large boat, of the kind called Mackinaw, built, which will carry seventy-five tons of freight, to lighten the steamboat.

The pioneer settlers are living here in a continual state of uneasiness, and are on the alert day and night. Though the Sioux are driven out of their ancient territory, far from the tombs where the ashes of their ancestors repose, bands of marauders still range their old domain, to rob and slay the invaders of their soil. Quite recently, six of the unhappy inhabitants have fallen at their hands. The paper of the 10th of May announces, on hearsay, no doubt, that our boat will meet great opposition on the part of 3,000 Sioux

<sup>4</sup> This forcible expatriation of the Winnebagoes, and the absurd scheme adopted of sending them from Mankato down the St. Peter's to Fort Snelling, thence down the Mississippi to the Missouri, thence up the latter stream to their new reservation, a total distance around of 1,900 miles as against 300 miles overland, were public measures which, viewed from this distance, appear unjustifiable.



warriors, who are meditating an attack on Old Fort Clark, and resolved to dispute the passage of the river with boats that may try to go up. We can judge of the worth of this news in a few days. It is added that they are well armed; they have two cannon, abundance of powder and lead, fire-arms and arrows. We shall see. I put my trust in the Lord's providence and the protection of the holy Virgin Mary, our kind mother. I am sent out by obedience, and under the auspices of the Government, in the capacity of "messenger of the word of peace." Still, it is impossible to deceive one's self — this is a very critical moment; but *si Deus pro nobis, quis contra nos?*

The situation is aggravated and peace rendered almost impossible by the recent occurrences which I have related in connection with the unhappy Winnebagoes, which have inflamed the hatred of the whites in every Indian heart; and also by the continual aggressions of our raw frontier soldiery, little habituated to military discipline, who abandon themselves to all sorts of cruel and shameful excesses. Two instances will show you what I mean.

Eight friendly Indians, riding at full speed, according to their custom, approached a troop of soldiers. The latter, not knowing the signal to stop them, called to them to halt. The Indians did not understand either the language or the order, and rode on. The soldiers fired on them and killed seven. The single one who escaped brought the news to his camp. The reprisals were terrible and barbarous. They took vengeance some time afterward, first by an attack upon a steamboat, in which four men were killed, and further by attacking a Mackinaw containing fifteen men, a young girl and a woman with two children, all of whom were massacred in the most frightful manner.

Here is another. Some soldiers, in a state of drunkenness, came to an Indian lodge in which several women were assembled. They grossly insulted the squaws, who tried to run to escape their brutality. Then they shot after them, and several of the poor creatures were struck and killed.

That is enough about the causes which are augmenting the present difficulties and accumulating them around us. The Lord alone can appease the wrath and calm the hearts of the savages, inflamed by the spirit of hatred and vengeance. Let us pray and hope in the divine mercy and the intercession of our kind Mother, *Refugium nostrum*.

I will finish this rather long letter with a characteristic anecdote, very suitable to the people of this region. On the 23d I found a Canadian, who had a cabin near the river and a woodyard for the service of the steamboats. He spoke to me of the great dangers to which his family was exposed, by the proximity of the Sioux and their hostile nocturnal visits. I tried to give him some salutary advice, suited to his position, such as he no doubt needed very much. I wound up by recommending to him "to keep himself always in readiness to receive the visit of the Lord; that he might come in the night when least looked for; that it would be most unfortunate to appear before his judge without being well prepared." Evidently he had not understood a thing of my little harangue, and was thinking only of Sioux. He answered, "Father, it is as you say; they come unexpected, these terrible Sioux, and without giving warning fill you full of bullets and arrows. As for me, I am not prepared at all, because I am poor; I have no powder nor balls to take my revenge. It is a sad situation, isn't it, Father? But to-day I have better luck. I have sold my wood to the boat; I will buy bullets and powder. Then let them come, these villains of Sioux, and they will find me ready to receive them." This is about the way all these rangers of the wood and plains talk to you. They have been raised in religion, but that is all. They do not practice it; they say to you "when I was young I served the mass; I made my first communion; but in this country, where I have spent the greater part of my life, I have forgotten everything." Moreover, by their continual contact with the Indians, they have become imbued with their manners and their superstitious ideas. But they can be brought

back, little by little, by gentleness especially, and by recalling to them the great truths of religion concerning the end of man. Why have we not here two dozen zealous missionaries? Will Europe refuse them to us?

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Fort Berthold, June 24, 1864.

(1,916 miles from St. Louis.)

On the 25th of May the boat stopped a moment at the Yankton Agency, to allow me to visit a poor sick woman and to confer the sacrament of baptism on two children. The same day it stopped at Fort Randall, where six children received the same benefit.

On the following day, while the boat was taking on its supply of wood for the day, I made my way into the forest. A rather roomy path brought me to a little hut not far from the river. The solitary inmate recognized me at the first glance and saluted me in the most affectionate manner. He was surprised but glad at the fortunate meeting. He called his Indian wife and they presented their children to me for baptism.

May 31st, the boat halted at Fort Sully, the old Fort Pierre, to discharge part of its cargo. This stop gave me several hours; I improved this time to take a little exercise, of which I had need after my long detention on the boat; I utilized it also for the good of souls. The half-breeds invited me to come to the principal cabin, and directly there came the mothers to have ten of their children regenerated in the holy waters of baptism.

The news of my arrival went out at once to two camps of Sioux Indians, the Kettles and the Yanktonnais; they observe a kind of neutrality, and hold more or less aloof from the hostile bands. The chiefs came to pray me to enter among them, saying "that the mothers had come out with their little ones, to put them under the special pro-

tection of the Great Spirit," that is to say, to receive baptism. They had gotten together and were squatting in a ring in the middle of the camp, in the open air. I gave them an instruction on the importance and necessity of baptism, and the principal dogmas of religion. They all appeared very attentive.

An Indian assemblage, come to listen to the word of God or to be present at any religious act, always behaves in the most respectful manner, which is really edifying to see. Watching them under these circumstances, one would imagine himself among Christians, rather than among unhappy pagans. Before the instruction, the chiefs keep saying to the priest, "Black-robe, give us strong words, because our hearts are so hard; we are ignorant as the animals on our plains; we need to hear thee. Speak; we are listening."

On the present occasion I distributed 164 images, bearing the names of the patron saints of the children baptized. I gave with each image a medal of the holy Virgin, to be borne about the neck as a token of their baptism. They keep these devotional objects with the greatest care.

The chief of the Yanktons, called Man Who Strikes the Ree, begged me most earnestly to obtain them an establishment for the instruction of their children. I promised that I would represent their distress and their good desires to the head chiefs of the Black-robos, that is, to the bishop and my superiors; I told them to hope, and to prepare themselves for this great favor by a good life, which would bring the blessings of the Great Spirit upon them. I then told them all about the Government's intentions in regard to them and the mournful consequences of war, and exhorted them to continue to keep the peace.

June 3d, as we went along, I espied sixteen lodges of Yanktonnais, grouped on a hill. They made us a signal to approach; we went to see them, and they invited us to a council, to deliberate upon the affairs of their country. They seemed irresolute, but hungry for news. We told

them all about the trouble the tribes that had become hostile were going to get into, and exhorted them to keep quiet.

As we advanced farther into the hostile country, our crew had to be on the alert day and night, not to be surprised.

A word upon the habits of the Indians of these parts will not be out of place. Our regular troops are going to meet these wandering tribes of marauders, exasperated to the highest pitch against the whites. The Sioux are five or six thousand warriors in number, mounted for the most part on swift horses. War is to them not only a business or a pastime, but the occupation *par excellence* of their lives. The tactics followed by these Indians renders the regular system of warfare impotent or almost useless. They are here to-day and somewhere else to-morrow. All at once they are scattering panic among the horses and mules of the emigrants, who are crossing the desert in long caravans, and then they reappear once more on the Missouri river, waiting for the passage of boats to pillage them and massacre the feeble crews. The Indian has the gift of being everywhere without being anywhere. These savages assemble at the moment of battle, and scatter whenever the fortune of war is contrary to them. The Indian puts his wife and children in shelter in some retired place, far from the scene of hostilities. He has neither towns, forts nor magazines to defend, nor line of retreat to cover. He is embarrassed with neither baggage trains nor pack-horses. He goes into action when a favorable occasion is presented, and never risks himself without having the advantage of numbers and position on his side. The science of strategy is consequently of little use in operating against such a people. There is not on earth a nation more ambitious of military renown, nor that holds in higher estimation the conduct of a valiant warrior. No Indian could ever occupy a place in the councils of his tribe until he had met the enemy on the field of battle. He who reckons the most scalps is most highly considered among his people. The redskins are

strangers to all care, they live without artificial wants, they are happy as kings, provided that in the course of their whirlwind vagabondage they can find buffalo and antelope. Every man among them is a warrior, and each has the conscientious conviction of his personal valor.

As the boat advances, we perceive numerous traces of the passage of large herds of buffalo, along the shore. Between the 4th and 7th of June, without stepping off the boat, our hunters killed ten buffalo in the water and on the bank, besides six antelope, a deer, a hare and two wolves. They took three calves alive, that had got mired and were struggling to escape from the mud. It is easy to raise these calves.

On the 9th, the boat arrived at Fort Berthold,<sup>5</sup> 1,916 miles above the mouth of the Missouri. I stopped here to wait for news concerning the movements of the Sioux bands. I hastened to send them an express, to acquaint them with my arrival and intentions. I expect their response within a fortnight; if it is favorable, I shall, with the Lord's grace, do my best to go to them in the interior of the country.

The three united nations, the Grosventres, Aricaras and Mandans, received me with the utmost cordiality. They appeared to be delighted when I announced that I had come to spend some time in their village. On the following day, I collected the principal Mandans and Grosventres in one of their big lodges or earthen houses; they are about 150 feet around and can contain over 600 persons. I made known to them the motives of my visit, which were to announce to them the word of the Great Spirit, to baptize the little children, to penetrate, if possible, among their enemies, the Sioux; and to endeavor, in the name of the Great Spirit, to make them relish the words of peace of which I was the

<sup>5</sup> Fort Berthold was built as a trading-post in 1845, but was occupied as a military post in 1864. It was the successor of Fort Clark, the old trading-post of the Mandan Indians. It was an important military post during the Sioux wars.

bearer from the President of the United States, Mr. Lincoln. I spoke for two hours, and they listened with the greatest attention and the liveliest interest. The chief, Manchoute, "Soaring War Eagle," (he is six feet six inches in height) addressed me in reply, in fitting and well-chosen words, accompanied by a really remarkable oratorical bearing and gestures. This facility in speaking seems to be natural to the Indians of the plains. In his long harangue, he thanked me particularly "for my good will or benevolence toward them," and expressed the hope "that my counsels and advice would be strictly followed and observed." In closing, he added: "I renew to-day the desire that I have already expressed for some years past: we are poor wretches and ignorant; we wish to know the way in which the Great Spirit orders us to walk on earth. Oh! let the Black-robcs come and reside among us, to put us, with our wives and children, in the path of truth, and we shall live happy!"

After the advice and the speeches, the Indian mothers came into the lodge with their babies, and placed themselves in a double and triple circle. What a consolation! Two hundred and four children were regenerated in the holy waters of baptism. Everything passed off in the best of order, though not altogether without noise. During the ceremonies, we were honored from time to time with a deafening chorus. All that was needed was for a young savage, seized with terror at the approach of the Black-robe, to exhibit the strength of his young lungs in piercing yells, to set all his comrades going in the same key. It was really enough to split one's ears. The dogs on the outside added to the uproar by reinforcing the cries of the children with their frightful howls and roars. But all in all, the 10th was for me a beautiful and consoling day. The religious ceremonies occupied it all. Through the constant bending of my somewhat obese body, to give the baptism, I was scarcely able to move for several days afterward, *met het geschot in den rug*: with a "crick" in my back.

On the 12th, I was invited by the Aricara chiefs. After smoking the calumet, I opened the council by announcing to them the motives of my coming. Just as among their brethren the Mandans and Grosventres, my words were listened to with religious attention, and approved. The head chief, Net-soo-taka, or White Parfleche, made me a long and handsome response, very much to the purpose. Then I had to listen to and condole with a succession of complaints of their enemies and the Government agents. The meeting lasted three hours, or thereabouts. Then the men left the lodge and gave place to the mothers and their babies. I took my place in the middle of the lodge, seated on a buffalo-skin, and all the small children, to the number of 103, were presented to me by twos to receive baptism.

On the 13th we had an alarm in the camp. A band of Sioux were perceived in the neighborhood. After having killed a Grosventre, wounded an Aricara and stolen some horses, they gained the open and escaped pursuit.

I will add a circumstance which has contributed considerably to increase the Indian's respect for our holy religion. Last year, in consequence of an excessive drought, the harvest had been very meagre; they had hardly got enough for this year's seeding. Hoping for better results this time, these poor people had worked hard and put in something like a thousand acres. All their farm implements were a few mattocks and poor spades, with crooked or pointed sticks and shoulder-blades of buffaloes. After preparing this land in this manner, they had sowed it. Unluckily, this year again the spring had been without rain or even dew. Corn and other vegetables were not growing and their hope of a good crop was fast vanishing again. The Indians were feeling very bad about it. At the meeting on the 12th, they begged me to implore the aid of heaven to obtain them an abundant rain, that would fertilize their lands. "Black-robe," they said, "you who have such power, can you not also make a little rain come?" I answered them that I had not that power, that the Great



Spirit alone is omnipotent; but that anything can be obtained from him by prayer. I exhorted them to have recourse to him, who is always ready to listen to humble and well-disposed hearts, since he says to us himself, "Ask and ye shall receive." I said further, "Let us implore heaven together, and offer our hearts to God. I will say the greatest of prayers (the mass). Let us hope in the infinite mercy of the Great Spirit, who is our Father; he sends help and grants protection to his children on earth, when they try to make themselves worthy." I offered to God the propitiatory victim. The next day, the 13th, the sky clouded up for the first time in a long while, and a gentle and abundant rain fell at intervals for about twenty-four hours. This fortunate circumstance filled all hearts with respect for the word of God, and at the same time with hope and joy. On the 17th we applied to heaven again, and the Lord granted us a second rain, which did much good. These favors from on high made a deep impression on these simple-minded Indians.

They attended willingly, and with great assiduity, at all the instructions. A large number of adults, together with all the old men and old widows, the sick and the blind, prepared to receive baptism worthily. I find them really admirably disposed, and already the chiefs have taken it upon themselves to devise a remedy for the pagan vices and superstitions which have hitherto desolated the three tribes.

I shall never forget the assistance so generously furnished me at the time of my arrival at the fort by the worthy Mr. Gerard, in charge of the establishment; Mr. Pierre Garreau, the interpreter; Mr. Gustave Cagnat, clerk, and all the employees. I shall not cease to make vows for their welfare. May the Lord repay them a hundredfold for their kindness and thoughtful charity toward me.

I made an allusion to the eloquence of our Indian orators. This is the textual translation of the address of Little Walker, a Mandan chief, to the President of the United States:

“Great Father, I am desired to send you a word. What can I say? Once we were a powerful nation. What are we to-day? Ask your agent; he visits us every year — he knows our number, and he will say ‘Alas! there are not many Mandans left.’ What has become of them? What part of the earth do they occupy? Great Father, look over the prairie, when it is covered with grass and dotted with beautiful flowers of all colors, pleasant to the sight and the smell. Throw a burning torch into this vast prairie, and then look at it, and remember the life and happiness that reigned there before the fire. Then you will have an image of my nation. My great ancient village was like this lovely prairie; my people was this rich growth of grass; our women and children were the flowers. The smallpox was the torch that set fire to and destroyed our fair gardens, of which, alas! only the memory remains to us.— But we have buried the spirit of hatred and vengeance. We no longer reproach the white man for having thrown the burning torch in our midst.

“Death has thinned our ranks. Today three different peoples form only a single village. When the Aricaras and Grosventres are hungry and suffering, we share it with them. I have heard the speeches that our allies have made. I have thought it my duty to add my feeble voice, hoping that you will take pity on us and protect us against the attacks of our enemies.— Stretch out your powerful arm, and it will form a barrier so strong that the Sioux will not try to pass; and we shall sleep at peace, without bows and arrows at our side,— Assuredly, the strong and powerful will not hear in vain the weeping and sighing of the weak, who call on him for succor; especially when the weak can attribute to the strong all his troubles and the decadence of his nation.”

This language of Little Walker is not without eloquence. How say you?

<sup>9</sup>On July 8th another formidable party of Sioux warriors, to the number of 200 or 300, presented themselves before Berthold on the opposite bank of the river Missouri. It was clearly a risk to cross over to their side. Contrary to the advice of all the whites in the fort I went to meet them. They received me with unmistakable tokens of friendship and respect. They had repaired to the spot for the express purpose of having a conference with me. The council lasted nearly three hours. The great chiefs spoke favorably with regard to peace, and heard with pleasure and satisfaction the words I addressed to them on the part of the Government. Our interview concluded in the most favorable manner.

During my stay at Berthold I received tidings of the great tribe of the Santee Sioux who had the chief hand in massacring the inhabitants of the State of Minnesota in 1862. They reckoned, on that occasion, above 700 hapless victims, most of them children, women and old men. Their present abode is on the English frontier, on the north. I was assured that they too would be glad to see me and hear the announcements I was authorized to make on the part of the Government. Before setting out to them I wished to consult the general of the army, which was 5,000 men strong, and inform myself of his dispositions toward the savages. So I descended the Missouri and at a distance of about 200 miles I found the great camp of the whites. I gave the general an account of my mission and of my different interviews with the Sioux. He told me plainly that circumstances obliged him to punish by force of arms all the Sioux tribes that harbored in their camps any murderers of white men. "Unfortunately," he added, "all the Indian camps harbor some of these desperate ruffians, over whom the chiefs have little or no power."

<sup>6</sup>Fragment found loose in one of the letter-books without date or other means of identification, but evidently relating to the subject of Father De Smet's expedition in 1864, referred to in the preceding letter.

In consequence of the general's declaration and the circumstances of the case, my errand of peace, though sanctioned by the Government, became bootless and could only serve to place me in a false position: namely, that of being face to face with the Indians without being able to do them the least service. So I took the resolution of returning to St. Louis. I reported to the Government all that had passed during my stay in the plains.

\* \* \* \* \*

At the post of Berthold there are three tribes united in one large village, numbering about 3,000 souls. The Minnetarees, or Grosventres, the Aricaras and the Mandans. They welcomed me with the greatest cordiality. They seemed enraptured when I told them that I was going to spend some time in their village.

The day after my arrival I gathered together all the principal chiefs or braves in one of their great lodges or clay houses, which are from 100 to 200 feet in circumference and will hold more than 600 people. I acquainted them with the reasons of my coming, viz: first to preach to them the word of the Great Spirit; second, to administer baptism to all children who had not yet received it; third, to introduce myself, if possible, among their enemies the Sioux, and endeavor, in the name of the Great Spirit, to make them relish the words of peace, of which I was the bearer on the part of the President of the United States. My address lasted two hours.

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Letter to Father Imoda,  
near Sun river, August 6, 1865.

You, no doubt desire to know what I have been at for these — months. Here is a little synopsis of it which you will please communicate to Father Giorda and to the other

Fathers: On the 20th of April, 1864, I left St. Louis for the upper country on a mission from the Government, to endeavor to obtain a peace with the whites among the Sioux. Owing to various circumstances the object of my mission failed. The Indians I met felt pretty well disposed, at least as to appearances, but the military authorities thought it could not be granted without the Indians surrendering all the murderers of Minnesota of 1862, which was altogether impracticable, or rather impossible. I spent the greater portion of the summer (1864) among various Sioux bands, among the Aricaras, the Mandans and the Minnetarees or Grosventres of the Missouri. I had the great consolation to baptize over 700 of their little children and a great number of adults, chiefly old men and women in extreme old age, and persons in danger of death by sickness. I was several times in great danger on the part of the Sioux; even a plot was laid, on one occasion, to murder me and my band of whites, had not kind Providence interfered. A chief recognized me and attributed to me the deliverance of his daughter, a captive among the Crows. At the earnest request of the chieftain, I had offered the holy sacrifice of the mass for her return. She made a miraculous escape from her enemies, though pursued by a large band of young warriors, and succeeded in reaching her father in safety after a six days' flight with very little repose.

If the thing be possible and the times allow of it, one or two missions will be established — one among the well-disposed Sioux, and one for the three above-named tribes. At the end of August, 1864, I returned to St. Louis. I proceeded to Washington in the beginning of September, to give an account of my visit among the Indians to the Government. Having no written authorization to show, either from Father Giorda or Grassi, I could effect nothing with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs — An authority should be sent to me in proper order and if possible signed by the Governor of the Territory, who acts as Superintendent over the Indians. Whilst in Washington I was not a little surprised

to see, from a letter to Father Van Gorp from San Francisco, how unwelcome and uncharitably the poor sisters had been received by F. C. The thing is unaccountable to me. I wrote to his Reverence on the subject. I have not received an answer. I would like to hear some explanation given on the subject, in the interest of the missions, and would thank Father Kuppens for it, being at that time on the spot. I now rejoice that, notwithstanding the endeavor to the contrary of F. C., the good sisters have reached the mountains.

Toward the end of September I was back in St. Louis. The Father Provincial had received meanwhile, a letter from the Father-General with a permit and invitation for me to come over to Europe. I left New York on the 20th of October and arrived in Rome on the 9th of November. The next day I had the great consolation to assist at the solemn beatification of blessed Canisius. I saw his Holiness different times and shall ever remember his paternal kindness. In December I returned to Belgium; visited different cities; visited Holland, the Duchy of Luxembourg, England and Ireland. I met with proper success everywhere. On the 7th of last June I embarked in Liverpool with four candidates from Holland, five from Belgium and three from England, besides four sisters of Ste. Marie from Namur. We had a prosperous and happy sea voyage. We landed in New York on the 19th of June — left New York on the 26th and arrived in St. Louis on the 30th, safe and sound with all my companions, who are now in their pious avocations in the novitiate.

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Mr. Charles Chouteau, the great benefactor of the missions, has sold out his whole concern in the trading posts on the Missouri river, except at Fort Benton. He may even sell that post before long. This would bring a great contrariety in regard to the upper missions, as freight on all the goods might be exacted, which would make a con-

siderable amount. However, let us hope in kind Providence. Should Chouteau cease running on the Missouri, some other kind friend might step in his footsteps. I shall try my best. Remember your benefactors in your holy sacrifices and prayers and do not forget me.

Remember me to all the good Fathers and Brothers, particularly to the Reverend Father Giorda, to whom I shall soon write. Should this letter reach your Reverence you will please communicate to him and to Father Grassi its full contents.

## CHAPTER IV.

### OCEAN AND RIVER VOYAGES OF 1865 AND 1866.

Bringing recruits to America — A dash through England — Neptune still on duty — Whales and icebergs — War news — Embarrassing reception at home — Up the river again — Description of boat and crew — Occupations of travelers — Scenery and natural history — A buffalo farce — Damage by high water — Violence of current — Prepared for battle — Sufferings and wrongs of friendly Indians.

Ostende, June 2, 1865.<sup>1</sup>

**A**T six o'clock this evening, I leave anew my native country, my family, my friends; my benefactors, my brothers in religion. Adieu, adieu to all — and who knows? it may be forever, until the supreme reunion in heaven.

This separation — why should I not own it? gives me no small heartache; but I hope to be able to work yet a little for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; this is the supernatural magnet which draws me so far away from dear Belgium and the affection that I have found here. I always miss something when I am not among my good Indians; notwithstanding the kindly welcome that I meet everywhere, for the sake of my apostolic mission, I am conscious of a certain void wherever I go, until I come again to my dear Rocky Mountains. Then calm comes back to me; then only am I happy. *Hæc requies mea.* You will readily understand: after having passed a good share of my life among the Indians, it is among them that I desire to finish the few years that are left me still; it is among them also, if it be the will of God, that I desire to die. Ah! this would be my last and greatest happiness on earth.

Before going on board the steamship which is to transport me from Ostende to London, I wish to thank once more my countrymen who have been so kind to me, and

<sup>1</sup> From the French of the third Belgian edition.







PORTRAIT OF FATHER DE SMET, SHOWING THE LEOPOLD DECORATION.

in especial my benefactors. I thank God, my journey in Europe has been blessed; I leave content, and go home happy. All the persons who have taken an interest in my mission will learn with pleasure that I am taking with me thirteen young men and one of our Fathers. They are going to devote themselves to the great work of civilization by means of the gospel, the only one that is possible, as I have satisfied myself in many places in well nigh forty-five years of continual missionary labor. Together with these companions, I am taking to America four Sisters of Saint Mary, of those whose mother-house is at Namur. You will observe that the mission to the Rocky Mountains is in some sort a Belgian work, like that of Calcutta.

On Wednesday, the 7th of this month, with the grace of God, we shall embark at liverpool for New York, on the steamer *City of New York*. We hope to arrive for the feast of Saint Louis Gonsaguez.

Now I have only to request your prayers and masses for a fortunate voyage. This will be the ninth time that I have crossed the great ocean, under the protection of heaven, with an entire and filial confidence in the Star of the Sea, *Stella maris*, the kind Mother of us all. I shall pray for all the persons with whom I have come in contact, and will have the Indians pray for them. May we, some day, meet again in paradise! On earth, everything is vanity, nothing entirely satisfies the heart; I have had many opportunities of convincing myself of this, having traveled and talked with men of all religions, all opinions and all classes of society: believers, that is, children of the Church, are the happiest; and it is among them also that those are found who make others happy; they have not their personal interests in view, but act out of pure devotion and charity.

Adieu! I shall continue to send you accounts of my travels. The journal of the present voyage begins to-day with our departure from Ostende.

Instead of waiting to send it from New York, if kind Providence should permit us to reach that place, I will add

to this letter a curious little matter that I have found in my notes. It is the Indian tradition of the rainbow. It will be seen that the biblical truths find traditional confirmations in all places, even among savages who live in countries the most remote from all communication. How, after so many proofs of our holy and so consoling religion, can so many remain incredulous? That is what I have never been able to understand, nor shall I ever.

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University of St. Louis, Aug. 24, 1865.<sup>2</sup>

I have been back in St. Louis since the end of June. Pressure of work and the little indispositions that have disabled me since my arrival, have delayed the sending of this letter.

Agreeably to the promise I made you upon leaving Brussels, I will give you a little sketch of my voyage, although there is nothing especially interesting to tell. It was quiet and fortunate, which is saying a good deal in a few words.

I left Tronchiennes and Ghent, with my dear traveling companions, on the 2d of June. Toward six in the evening, we embarked at Ostende and took our farewell of Monsieur Albert Montens, my dear brother-in-law Charles Van Mossevelde, of Termonde, and the other friends who had accompanied us to the landing place. We had serene and beautiful weather for our passage of the channel.

The next day, about eight in the evening, we landed at St. Catherine's quay in London. Father MacCann and a young Jesuit, not a priest, were awaiting us with several carriages. It took us nearly an hour to cross this quarter of the great modern Babylon and reach the Liverpool station. Toward noon an express train took us away. We went very fast. We had little time to contemplate the rich and beautiful fields, the numerous cities, the big towns and villages; all disappeared like a flash. Toward six in the

<sup>2</sup> From the French of the third Belgian edition.

evening we arrived at our destination and took lodging at the Queen's Hotel. We had been almost fasting since we left Ostende. You can easily imagine that we did honor to the great roast of beef and other dishes that passed rapidly under our hands.

The good Fathers of Liverpool were most fraternally thoughtful of us and overwhelmed us with tokens of friendship, goodness and charity.

On the 7th, we took leave of them. Reverend Father Weld, the Provincial, and several other Fathers conducted us on board the fine new vessel, the *City of New York*. About five in the afternoon the anchor was weighed and we left the harbor. I had taken the precaution to engage our seventeen places two weeks beforehand. The first night out, the engine got out of order and the boat stopped for several hours. During the forenoon of the next day, we cast anchor in the port of Queenstown, in Ireland, to take on passengers and the mails. The number was then complete; it approached 450. All the nations of Europe and America were represented.

Our crossing may be reckoned among the most fortunate ever made; no tempest, no accident, only three of my companions and three of the sisters were called upon by the inexorable Neptune, and were forced to submit to pay him tribute. Each of them had to show him his or her pale face, and make gestures and grimaces which sometimes caused a good deal of mirth.

We saw a great many whales, some of them very near. They passed majestically near the sides of the vessel and projected two columns of foam from their nostrils. Other large sea-fish also showed themselves very numerously.

For several days the air was very keen and chilly. All made haste to get out their winter coats. This was not strange; we were gradually approaching the floating masses of ice, detached from the glacial pole. Several in fact came within reach of our curious gaze. It was the first time that most of the passengers had enjoyed this marvelous sight;

so they opened their eyes wide and could not tire of contemplating these transparent isles, until finally they disappeared in the distance. One of these mountains of ice had the appearance of an immense amphitheatre, seen at the distance of a quarter of a league.

Every day some sailing vessels and steamships were signaled. The direct route between Liverpool and New York is very much frequented. In case of a meeting the national flag is hoisted on both ships, and the pilot continues to keep his eye on the compass, not deviating by a mark from his course. Only on signals of distress do they approach and communicate.

We had several days of fog in the vicinity of the banks of Newfoundland, where codfishing is carried on on a large scale. It is a noted region for mist and rain. I do not remember to have passed there once, in all my various crossings of the Atlantic, in calm and serene weather. As long as the fog lasts, day and night, the great steam whistle of the boat is blown every five minutes, to avoid collisions.

Early on the morning of the 19th we came in sight of Sandy Hook. The American pilot had come aboard the night before, with his package of newspapers. On stepping on deck he found himself besieged by a crowd of curious people, eager to learn the great recent happenings in the United States. The journals were devoured and discussed with ardor, for we had amongst us many politicians of the old and new hemispheres, and a large number of merchants.

I learned with consolation that the sad and unhappy American war was drawing to its close, that quiet was returning among the masses, and that law and order, despite the abolition of slavery, seemed to be returning little by little in the States where secession had caused so many misfortunes and ruins. The spontaneity of spirit of the people of the South, which precipitated so large a number of States into the rebellion, caused likewise at the North a general rally to the Union. To-day, no one in the South seems to

think any longer of undertakings hostile to the Government. The majority of the Southerners ask nothing but a fair chance and the means of lifting themselves up once more. A true policy must tend to assure a solid peace and durable prosperity. It is to be hoped that President Johnson will remove from his side the vengeful agitators, and then the return to the Union will render this land more beautiful, prosperous and great than it has ever been. But the more violent and widespread the fire, the longer time will it take to extinguish it. The American torment has been disastrous in its effects; but the wisdom of the people will avail to heal it in the end, at least we must hope so.

On the 19th, toward nine in the morning, the *City of New York* entered the vast harbor of the great American metropolis, which contains to-day more than 1,100,000 inhabitants. What strikes the stranger first on his arrival in New York, is the splendor of the public establishments, of the great hotels and houses; her commerce and prosperity, her luxury and extravagance. The war has been a gold mine to the city; the great contracts have made it wealthy in the last four years.

On the day of our arrival, we dined at St. Francis Xavier's College. Our Fathers received us with the most perfect cordiality and the most fraternal charity. Their establishment is very prosperous and contains about 500 pupils. It is very popular. The city government, the members of which are for the most part Protestants, granted it in the course of the year a subsidy of \$4,000.

My companions needed exercise; they took it by ranging the city and its environs, and visiting the most interesting public buildings. I had my missionary affairs to think of. I obtained free entry for all our boxes and trunks. The chief of the custom-house, to whom I presented myself with a good recommendation, was extremely civil to me.

In the morning of the 26th, we took the railroad at Jersey City, by way of Cincinnati, where we tarried eight hours to visit our dear brethren of St. Xavier's College. Finally

we reached St. Louis on the 29th of June. It was the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. We were in time to attend the solemn distribution of prizes which took place that day at our university. I was truly delighted to be at the end of my long travels, with all my companions, safe and sound. I was moved to the bottom of my heart at finding myself among my dear brothers in Jesus Christ. I went at once to join them in the hall where the exercises were taking place. There was a great audience present to hear the addresses of the pupils and witness the giving of the prizes. To my great surprise and confusion, my return was saluted by them with clapping of hands and stamping of feet. I will admit that at this moment I was far from being at my ease.

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A word in regard to the Indians, and I am done. My ailments and the lateness of the season prevent me from visiting my dear Indians this year. The war against the Indians in the plains of the Missouri and its tributaries is being pushed to the utmost. Congress lately made an inquiry into the barbarous conduct of Colonel Chivington, accused of having ordered the massacre by his soldiers of 600 Cheyenne Indians, women, children and old men, without the slightest provocation on their part. The poor wretches had come to the fort to renew their professions of friendship to the whites.

To-day's papers announce to us the circular of General Conner, commanding the expedition against the tribes of the Yellowstone river and its tributaries, in which he outlines the policy to be pursued toward the Indians. The general enjoins upon his troops to pursue these unfortunates without rest, never stopping to parley with them and never leaving their trail before coming up with and chastising them. "They must be severely punished to begin with," he says; "then we will see whether, by good behavior, they show themselves worthy to escape complete extermination." Always the same atrocious policy. The cruelties committed upon the redskins will inevitably bring



about reprisals, and the promised extermination will likewise follow inevitably. I hope to see these poor tribes again soon.

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*Reverend and Dear Father:*<sup>3</sup>

Your most dear letter of the 27th of March last, with the beautiful and fraternal note of the venerable Father Tranqueville, have reached me safely. They come to surprise and console me amid the mournful and savage wilderness in which I find myself at present, the desolation of which seems still more sombre and terrible by reason of the war of vengeance and retaliation which has been raging with fury between the whites and the Indians for the past four years. I have just received your good letters, at this great distance from St. Louis, by the mail-post, or express. They will be to me an encouragement and a consolation, in my long and dangerous mission and excursion among the nomadic tribes of this vast region. I hasten to reply, with the most sincere gratitude, taking advantage also of the present occasion to commend myself, as well as the conversion of all the Indian tribes, in a most special manner, to your holy sacrifices and your good prayers.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Written in French and dated on board the steamer *Ontario* at Fort Benton, Mont., June 10, 1866. To whom addressed not stated. From the Linton Album, p. 82 *et seq.*

<sup>4</sup> Passport from General Sherman to Father De Smet:

Headquarters Military Division of the Mississippi,  
St. Louis, Mo., April 9, 1866.

All officers of the Army within this Military Division are required, and all citizens are requested to extend to the bearer of this letter, the Reverend Father De Smet, a Catholic Priest who has heretofore traveled much among the Rocky Mountains and is now en route for missions under his control, all the assistance and protection they can to enable him to fulfill his benevolent and humane purposes.

He has always been noted for his strict fidelity to the interests of our Government, for indefatigable industry and an enthusiastic love for the Indians under his charge.

W. T. SHERMAN,  
Maj.-Gen.

You ask me to send you some word from time to time, and to keep you informed in regard to the occurrences of such a journey, and go into minute details upon the sort of life that one leads upon a long-distance steamboat in the "Far West."

I shall endeavor to satisfy you. First as to the boat, on board of which I am. The steamer *Ontario* has a single wheel at the stern. It was built in 1863, carries 450 tons or 900,000 pounds, avoirdupois, draws thirty inches of water light, and has three boilers, which consume eighteen to twenty cords of wood daily. A cord of wood is eight feet in length by four in height and four in depth, and sells on the Missouri for \$4 to \$8 per cord.

The *Ontario* has two engines of 132 horse-power, and is already considered as past its prime. The constant service in which boats are kept on our great rivers of the West, where commerce and transportation are very considerable and much varied, uses them up in a very few years. They have to contend with impetuous currents, to ascend rapids, to cross banks or bars of sand or mud, where the full power of the capstan has to be exerted to get them over. Snags, or forest trees which drop into the current by thousands from the crumbling banks, and whose roots become imbedded in the bottom of the stream, often form dangerous and formidable barriers or obstacles, upon which a great number of steamers are wrecked or seriously damaged every year.

Going against the current, the *Ontario* makes five to six miles an hour; with the current, fifteen to eighteen miles. Her crew consists of a captain, two clerks, two pilots and an assistant, two engineers, two mates, a steward, two watchmen, one head cook and two assistants, one *hotellier* [barkeeper?], seven cabin boys, a porter or baggage man, eight deckhands (white), four firemen, nineteen negroes for all the work of the boat, and one chambermaid.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> This is one of the most complete descriptions of the Missouri river steamboat extant.

The main cabin of the *Ontario* consists of thirty staterooms, seven feet long by six wide, and with two berths each. There are thirty-two first class passengers, fifteen gentlemen, twelve ladies and five children. In the matter of religion, there are among these some ten Catholics, Protestants of diverse shadings, freethinkers or infidels and a few Jews. All this mixture is wafted in peace over the American waters. It is for the priest to make himself "all things to all men," to win them to Jesus Christ, according to the beautiful maxim of the apostle. I say mass in my stateroom, where I have scarce room to turn about at the "*Dominus vobiscum*" and the "*Orate fratres.*" Sundays and feast days I leave the door open, and the Catholics come to attend the divine service, outside, on the gangway; each time I have had the consolation of seeing several children of the Church devoutly approach the holy table. I often have an opportunity to discuss one or other point of our holy religion with my traveling companions, who never weary of asking me questions, and I invariably find them upright, attentive and respectful.

One Protestant lady has been regenerated in the holy waters of baptism, and I venture to hope that several others will have the good fortune to follow her example, for their fidelity to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the Lord's grace.

The long days are passed in social conversations, sometimes political, sometimes scientific or religious. Story-tellers or jokers are never lacking in an assemblage of American travelers. Some read, others play at cards or dice, or perhaps checkers or other games of chance, the names of which are unknown to me. Evenings, we amuse ourselves by proposing charades — somebody imitates some animal or other, as the antelope or buffalo, or suggests some word or question, and the audience guesses. But the principal amusement, in the main cabin, appears to be dancing to the sound of music, and on moonlight nights there are concerts out on deck, with mirth and refreshments.

The Missouri, or Muddy river, has an ordinary width of one to three miles; its length, up to the Three Forks, is nearly 3,300 [2,546] miles. It goes winding down this long course and often changes its channel, thus rendering very watchful and expert pilots necessary, who judge the depth of water by the appearance of the surface, and in spots where the water spreads out over a wide expanse they have recourse to the lead.

In the season of high water, in spring, the Missouri has generally two great rises. The first begins with the melting of the snows on the immense plains of the West. Then the numerous tributary streams discharge their superabundance of water into the mother river, which gathers them all into its vast bed. The second rise comes down from the Rocky Mountains and their subordinate chains, the chief of which in the upper country are the Black Hills, the Bell Mountains, the Little Rocky Mountains, the Bear Paw Range, the Coteau of the Prairies, etc. All these masses of water united often form an impetuous and irresistible torrent, which cuts away whole fields from one side and forms sandbanks and bars on the other. The water filters and penetrates into, and saps the base even of the high hills and bluffs that line the river, which crumble beneath their weight and often drop down to the river surface, or disappear entirely in its bed. These bluffs and hills, cut in half, are very numerous and remarkable, and reveal to the geologist all the different layers of which they are formed, to a height of more than a hundred feet.

When the boat stops to cut and load wood, which takes ordinarily one to two hours, some passengers busy themselves fishing or hunting, while the greater number go walking over the adjacent hills or through the forests along the river, making bouquets of the flowers of the wilderness or picking up shells and petrifications of various varieties. Geologists and amateurs of natural science examine the diverse formations and layers of the soil. I will give you a

little general notice of our observations, which may perhaps interest you.

From Independence to Fort Leavenworth, a distance of sixty-five miles, the river passes between a long series of bluffs and hills, belonging to the tertiary system of rocks. From the city of Omaha to Benton, the bluffs and hills have an elevation of about 156 feet; they are based upon erratic layers of rocks of varying dimensions, containing little shells rounded by the water, up to rocks of several thousand pounds thickness [weight?].<sup>6</sup> The following layer is a coarse-grained tufa, often covered with plates or leaves of some laminated metal; this is followed by a layer of fine-grained tufa, mingled with mica. This tufa-like stone is quite soft, and contains slight layers of gypsum, which disappear in the neighborhood of Heart river. As we proceed, we observe everywhere layers of yellowish or grayish limestone, often topped with blue clay, which contain petrifications (*Lymnea*) of various species. Other layers consist of argillaceous sands intermingled with a great quantity of oxide of iron, in the form of brownish or reddish balls of different sizes; layers of lignites, one to seven feet in thickness, extend for a distance of about a thousand miles. Farther on we find in abundance deposits entirely made up of petrified woods. This long series of bluffs and hills, as far as the Bad Lands, are often crowned with erratic blocks of stone of varying dimensions; heaps of petrified shells abound in several places, to the very hill-tops.

In regard to our little hunts. Our hunters, without going any great distance from the boat, killed a great number of antelope; this is the quickest and most graceful animal of the plains. The stratagems employed by the hunter arouse its curiosity. He walks, runs, crawls on all fours, lies down, shakes from time to time his handkerchief on the end of his ramrod; the antelope, drawn by his natural curiosity, stops, approaches in short springs, looks, stares, and at last

<sup>6</sup> French *épaisseur*.

receives the fatal shot. The flesh is fine and delicate. Herds of buffalo are very numerous this year, especially in the neighborhood of the Bad Lands. It is the daily bread of the Indian tribes in the upper plains. The various tables of the *Ontario* are well supplied at present with the exquisite meat of this noble animal. Yesterday (June 2d) we were all spectators of a striking scene, in which buffalo alone were the actors. The theatre was the most wonderfully wild and picturesque part of this region. Mountainous hills rise here to a height of 500 to 1,000 feet. They are wholly sterile, stony, adorned here and there with a few dark and solitary pines, while their smiling valleys are covered with flowers and herbage, and thousands of buffalo were cropping the tender grass as we approached.

As soon as they got wind of man's proximity and heard the noise of the steamer, they rushed precipitately to the nearest bluffs, whose slopes were fully  $60^{\circ}$  with the horizontal, and by pushing on and climbing stoutly in zigzag lines, they gained the summit. The dark, living, winding lines, the columns of dust that followed them, from the bottom to the top, and the noise of their tread and their dull bellowing, furnished the spectators a most charming and imposing spectacle, and moreover a revelation concerning the agility, muscular strength and capacity for endurance of this mighty animal of the American desert.

But the buffalo had not yet showed all their accomplishments; as in all spectacles a farce is usually the closing piece, so here three old buffalo bulls gave us one after their kind. The spot chosen was an almost vertical hill (something like  $75^{\circ}$  slope, and nearly a thousand feet in height). The bulls found themselves just about in the middle of the slope; it was hard to see how they could have got there. At the approach of the boat they made prodigious efforts to clamber up and gain the top. All eyes were fixed upon them; our cheers were a powerful encouragement to high speed. One reached the goal, and received the applause of the spectators; his two companions strained their

best, but still they slipped down; and beginning to slide with their enormous weight, they rolled head over heels, and by a long series of bumps and pirouettes, at a height of 400 or 500 feet, they came tumbling into the river within a few yards of the boat. The entire descent was accomplished in less than a minute. We supposed they were killed; but not the least in the world — to our great astonishment and admiration they rose to the surface and, snorting, blew the water from their nostrils. Their life was granted them — for the reason that our larder was well stocked. We saw them both reach shore, shake the water from their shaggy heads and necks, and each triumphantly hoisting his standard (his tail), they disappeared at full gallop.

In all the Bad Lands region, for a stretch of about a hundred miles, bands of bighorn are very numerous. The bighorn has a body like a deer, but his head resembles that of the goat, surmounted with an enormous pair of short, heavy horns. He haunts the inaccessible peaks and the wildest and least frequented valleys, climbing with ease and celerity almost perpendicular cliffs, jumping from rock to rock and grazing on the tender grass that he finds among them. The flesh, when the animal is fat, is more tender, succulent and delicious than that of any other animal. In its habits the bighorn resembles very much the chamois of Switzerland, and it is hunted in the same manner. They go in flocks, and when they have grazed they seek the most remote spot on the mountain and repose among the rocks.

This sterile region is the wonder of all travelers. Lovers of geology and nature will some day come to visit it to observe its strange marvels. In their way, I will venture to say that the Bad Lands are the most remarkable place in the vast territory of the United States. Although uninhabitable to man, the buffalo range it in large bands, the bighorn inhabits it, and it is the resort of the bear and the rattlesnake, the antelope, the common and the black-tailed deer. In my description of the Missouri I have tried to give you a little

general idea of everything that is to be seen. The boat is two days crossing the Bad Lands region. The varied views that it presents keep one in continual admiration, and it is impossible to leave it without regret.<sup>7</sup>

The ice of spring has caused much damage in the forests lining the Missouri. They bear in many places the imprint of desolation. Last February there was a general thaw. The abundant snow that was then covering all the upper plains with its white shroud, melted suddenly under the burning rays of the sun and the spring breezes. All this new water, freed from restraint, hastened then by the thousands of torrents and tributaries of the Missouri, into the great reservoir of that immense region, which drains and fertilizes one of the vastest and most beautiful valleys of America. Last winter was a very severe one, and had frozen the Missouri so solidly throughout that buffalo herds and camps of Indians, with their numerous herds of horses, crossed it without the least danger, as if on an iron bridge. Up to the time of this sudden thaw the ice had lost none of its thickness nor strength. It was broken up into numerous cakes by the great influx of water, which raised the river and converted it into a torrent. The freed Missouri rolled its tumultuous waters with noise and uproar, and formed here and there gorges and barriers of ice-cakes, one to two leagues in length and twenty to forty feet high, in the narrow places of the river. It overflowed in consequence, bearing its destroying icebergs, which in their furious course crushed all the smaller vegetation and uprooted the trees or stripped them of their bark, and changed these smiling valleys, with their thickets and forests, into arenas of desolation. They are now covered to a depth of one to three feet with sand and mud.

<sup>7</sup> This is not, strictly speaking, a "bad land" district; that is, it is not of the character to which that term is usually applied. It is a place where the river has cut its way through a system of rocks which are soft enough to be readily worn by the action of the elements. They present a wonderful display of strange, picturesque, and curious forms.



At the Muscleshell a convoy of twenty-five wagons and over 100 horses had halted and was encamped for the night. An avalanche of water and ice, leaving the bed of the river, spread over the bottoms with such rapidity and impetuosity that the whole train was swallowed up; all the animals perished; only the men succeeded in gaining in haste a neighboring hill, and were able to save themselves. At Fort Union and many other points, houses on the bank of the river were carried away or destroyed. The work of destruction was already in progress before I left St. Louis. The breaking up of the ice destroyed a number of steamboats. The losses are estimated at over \$1,000,000.

We left the port of St. Louis on the 9th of April last. From the outset the boat had to contend with the excessively high water, as I have mentioned in my letter, and with high west winds, which often made it impossible to proceed. The Missouri was bankfull and beginning to overflow into the forests and lower valleys. Consequently our progress was much retarded. In many places all the power of the boat's two engines was exerted, without being able to make head against the impetuosity of the current. Then we had recourse to the slow but resistless capstan, which succeeded each time in surmounting the obstacles. Once only the great cable broke, and we were carried a great distance down stream, not without danger.

*"Violenta non durant."* The river fell as rapidly as its brief rise had been swift. Then another kind of obstacles were presented, in the numerous sandbars of which the river is full, which change its channel frequently and which the ablest pilots cannot always avoid. Under the holy providence of the Lord we have thus far escaped all the dangers of navigation. We have had only one serious alarm, a salutary warning of the fragility and uncertainty of all human works and the swiftness with which everything passes and disappears and the fairest hopes decay. Under a high head-wind and against an impetuous current, the boat became unmanageable, resisted the skill and the efforts

of our excellent pilot, veered about and, driving rapidly down stream, struck violently upon a great hidden rock. The shock was great and caused a heavy leak. For a few moments the salvation of the *Ontario* was despaired of; she was filling rapidly. Several of the officers thought her lost and were for abandoning her, but others redoubled their efforts to repair the injury, and with the aid of all the pumps they kept her afloat, and she resumed her course. I have great confidence in the four lamps that burn night and day in the convents of St. Louis, before the statue of the Holy Virgin, our Good Mother, *stella nostra et refugium nostrum*, a confidence further strengthened by the prayers offered in Europe and America for the success of my long and dangerous excursion. In the course of our trip to Benton (3,100 miles) [2,285], we have passed thirteen boats that had ten to fifteen days' start of ours; permit me the expression, "A. M. D. G.;" we have been borne as if on angels' wings to the boat's destination. Under the puissant protection of the Queen of Heaven, and full of confidence in divine Providence, we hope that my mission will end happily and favorably, and that I shall return, safe and sound, among my dear brothers in Jesus Christ.

In the midst of this lonely wilderness, ranged over by numerous wandering tribes, made yet more barbarous and indomitable by the injustices and misdeeds of the whites; where ferocious animals and venomous reptiles,—the bear, the wolf and the serpent—resort and have their lairs; and despite the more agreeable spectacle of the numerous herds of buffalo, elk, deer, antelope and bighorn, which change the aspect and animate the sad monotony of these primitive verdure-clad plains, and come from time to time to refresh the spirit and the mind of the Christian traveler and add to his admiration and gratitude, to the providence of the Lord, who is so mighty in gifts and benefactions to his poor creatures here below—the "*Quam dulce*," etc.,<sup>8</sup> often re-

<sup>8</sup> How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity.

curs to my thoughts in this region, but unmingled with regret and without the slightest uneasiness. Guided by the holy obedience, we are, everywhere, in the Lord's hands.

Upon entering the Sioux country, the *Ontario* was put in fighting trim. The pilot-house was planked over and made safe against bullets or arrows, the cannon was mounted in the bow, all the carbines, guns and pistols were inspected and loaded, and above all, sentinels were posted by night to keep guard against any surprise by the enemy. The preparations appeared formidable indeed. We saw once in a while war-parties of Indians, coming and going and keeping at a respectful distance from the boat, without the least hostile demonstration. All the way to Benton, I am glad to say, our fire-arms have served only to slay the timid animals of the desert, which were at once cut up for the kitchen and dinner table, always abundantly furnished throughout the voyage.

The feast of the Glorious Ascension was in truth a day of consolation for me. I said mass early in the morning; my little congregation was present, and all devoutly approached the holy table. Two hours later we were at Fort Sully. The arrival of a steamboat is always an event in such a locality, and on this occasion especially it made a good deal of commotion. The fort was surrounded by a neutral camp of Sioux, of some 200 lodges, and from the top of the great pole in the centre, dominating all the plain, the starry flag of the Union was proudly floating in the fresh breeze of this elevated region.<sup>9</sup> The day was most beautiful. I met at Fort Sully a large number of acquaintances — whites, half-breeds, Indians and negroes — and when we had shaken hands amicably, according to the usage of the country, and exchanged our little compliments and items of news, I accompanied the Indian chiefs to their camp. They were a mixture of various Sioux tribes — Yanktons, Yanktonnais, Brûlés, Ogallalas, Two-kettles, Santees and Sioux-

<sup>9</sup> According to the observations of the scientist, Nicollet, Fort Sully has an elevation of 1,400 feet above the Gulf of Mexico.—*Author's Note.*

Blackfeet. We had a long talk, in the course of which all their miseries, sufferings and griefs came to light. They had just emerged (May 10th) from a long and severe winter; the new grass was barely beginning to show, or the leaves of the willows and cottonwoods that fringe the river to develop. For several months the Indians had subsisted on the flesh of their lean dogs and horses, together with a pittance of wild roots. A great mortality, especially of children, had brought desolation and mourning to most of the families; scarlet fever and other maladies were still continuing their devastation.

These Indians needed consolation — but good advice still more. In my quality of Black-robe I did my best to give them salutary counsels, as well as to console them. The grievances of the Indians against the whites are very numerous, and the vengeance which they on their side provoke are often most cruel and frightful. Nevertheless, one is compelled to admit that they are less guilty than the whites. Nine times out of ten, the provocations come from the latter — that is to say, from the scum of civilization, who bring to them the lowest and grossest vices, and none of the virtues, of civilized men.<sup>10</sup>

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Upon this visit to the Sioux, I spent the fair feast of the Ascension and the following day in giving them instruction in the various principal points of religion. They behaved with the greatest propriety and gave close attention to my words. Before my departure they brought me with eagerness their little children, to the number of over 200. I had the consolation and happiness of regenerating them in the holy waters of baptism. Having scarlet fever in their camp, I spoke to them of the necessity and urgency of baptism, and of the eternal happiness of the children who might fall victims to the disease. They gave evidence of most lively gratitude for this.

<sup>10</sup> For omitted portion of letter, see p. 1200.

For several years past the Yankton Sioux have been urgently asking for missionaries; and the Government agent, on the occasion of my visit, joined them in requesting a Catholic mission, under the direction of the Fathers of the Company of Jesus, for them. The Yanktons are many and have sufficient resources to provide for the support of their children. It is to be hoped that the superiors will take this important matter under consideration; the salvation of thousands of souls depends upon it. The Dakota or Sioux nation consists of a great number of tribes, forming together a population of 35,000 to 40,000 souls.

The Sioux at Fort Rice received me in the most friendly manner. The boat only stopped for an instant, consequently my talk with them was but short. I meant to visit this post on my return from Benton. There are a large number of Canadian and Creole Catholics there, who receive the visit of a priest once a year.

At Forts Berthold and Sully sickness has carried off a majority of the children of tender years. Fortunately the greater part had received baptism at the time of my last visit. They rejoiced at my presence, and hastened to bring me all the newly born of the three tribes, the Grosventres, the Aricaras and the Mandans, begging me to grant them the holy sacrament of regeneration. During the rigors of last winter, the famine and misery were so great among them, that some fifty persons died of starvation. I will have more to say later of the situation of these unfortunate tribes.

At Fort Union I baptized all the babies of the post and a great number of Assiniboin children, who were there just then. Here too the mortality had been equally great, but a large number had had the happiness of receiving baptism at the time of my last visit.

On our way we saw several large camps of Crows and Blackfeet, amounting to some thousands, in various valleys, on both banks of the river. Despite their pressing invitations, the *Ontario* did not slacken speed. All their demon-

strations were peaceable and friendly, and all the passengers returned their brotherly salutations.

Finally, on the 7th of June, after a voyage of fifty-seven days, I reached Benton, safe and sound, with all my belongings. I immediately made all arrangements for the transportation of the goods, to the different missions east of the Rocky Mountains. I have not had the consolation of meeting our Fathers of the Mission of St. Peter. A fresh and furious war has broken out between the whites and the Blackfeet, in which again the whites have given the first provocation, and our Fathers have been obliged to withdraw for the moment. In another letter I will give you some particulars of this war and some information as to the astonishing progress of the two Territories, Montana and Idaho. My visit to Benton has not been in vain. I have baptized seven adults and several children.

## CHAPTER V.

### EXPEDITION OF 1867 TO THE HOSTILE SIOUX

Another Government mission to the hostiles—Injustices of the whites—Reprisals of the Indians—Across Illinois and Iowa—Arrested by floods—Tribute to the Irish—To Sioux City under difficulties—Piety of a Yankton Indian—The shifty Missouri—Through wild Dakota on horseback—Many baptisms—Council with chiefs—Indian life a hard one—They ask justice—Hurricane and flood—Joins Government commissioners—Major De Smet—Work among soldiers—Various councils—Bitter complaints of the Indians—What can be done for them—Return to St. Louis in state of exhaustion.

¶<sup>1</sup> I SHALL be on the road within a week. The object is as follows: The Secretary of the Interior requests me to accept the mission of envoy extraordinary to the hostile Indian tribes, to endeavor to bring them back to peace and submission and to prevent as much as possible the destruction of property and murder of the whites. There is a very formidable coalition of Indian tribes which seems from recent information to be growing from day to day. Among the hostile tribes are the Cheyennes, Arapahos, Sans-arcs, Hunkpapas, Blackfeet, Bloods, Brûlés and a great many Sioux tribes. They are able to put a number of thousand warriors on foot, and they make war on the whites wherever they can find them.

As you see, I have a very large and difficult task, and all that encourages me is the prayers that accompany me. I have accepted the Government's commission, there being nothing contrary to my duties as a missionary, and with the distinct understanding that I shall not accept any remuneration for my personal services. I prefer to be altogether independent in money matters and my only object is

<sup>1</sup> Extract from letter in French to his brother Francis, March 29, 1867.

to be of use to the whites and still more to the poor Indians. They are for the most part the victims of the misdeeds of the whites. I do not hesitate to say that the depredations of the Indians are in general the result of incessant provocations and injustice on the part of the whites. When the savages raise the hatchet or go on the war-path, it is because they are pushed to the limit of endurance, and then the blows that they deal are hard, cruel and terrible. That is their nature.

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I<sup>2</sup> have a little leisure here at Sioux City and I will make use of it to send you a few words. I shall also make an effort during my long and dangerous mission to keep you informed from time to time in regard to what I see and what happens to me, whether good or bad, among the Indian tribes of the plains whom I propose to visit, if they will let me. Will they receive me among them? While all hatchets are raised against the whites, while hundreds of scalps dangle and flutter in token of triumph from the tips of their lances and are used for decorations for the warriors and their ponies? Eagle feathers are in great demand among the Indians at present and their bonnets and their horses' manes and tails are covered with them — each plume denoting a scalp taken from the enemy.

More than ever the fearful Sassakwi, the Indian war-cry, resounds throughout the great desert. The Government asks me to go thither in the capacity of envoy extraordinary. My superiors approve my nomination, and I am on the road to endeavor to accomplish my arduous mission, which is simply one of charity, in behalf of the whites and in the interest of the Indians themselves, who are threatened with total annihilation unless they can be brought back to submission and peace. In time of war the most terrible and atrocious cruelties are practiced by the savages; all their

<sup>2</sup> To Terwecoren, April 30, 1867; from the French.



passions are let loose and they abandon themselves wholly to the spirit of vengeance against the whites for all wrongs and injustices their race has suffered. It is always true that if the savages sin against the whites it is because the whites have greatly sinned against them.

I enter into these sad details and reflections to give you a faint idea of my position and especially that I may gain a share in your pious remembrances, and in those of my dear and worthy brethren and acquaintances. The firm conviction that I am accompanied by many fervent prayers is a most sweet consolation to me and a great encouragement. Conscious of my own nothingness, I place myself confidently in the hands of the holy providence of the Lord and under the protection of our illustrious and good Mother, the Immaculate Virgin Mary. Pray that I may render myself worthy of these powerful aids and I shall have nothing to fear. "*Si Deus pro nobis quis contra nos?*"

I will begin by tracing the route that I have followed in coming from St. Louis to Sioux City. You can easily follow me on the map of America. On the 12th of April last at three o'clock in the afternoon, I left St. Louis for Chicago, the principal city of Illinois, 280 miles away. This city, which I have seen born, already contains upwards of 200,000 inhabitants and is on the highway to prosperity. Our Fathers have built a fine large Gothic church there and established a school which contains nearly 1,600 pupils. Between St. Louis and Chicago there are fifty-three stations, big and little, of which Alton and Springfield are the chief. The railroad passes through a succession of rich and beautiful prairies and plains, diversified here and there by vast forests and thousands of farms, with their innumerable herds of cattle, sheep and horses. All this country is flat rather than rolling and the journey is made in fourteen to fifteen hours.

I left Chicago at half-past eight in the morning on the 13th by the Northwestern railroad for Omaha, capital of the State of Nebraska, at a distance of some 500 miles.

The road crosses the State of Iowa from east to west. Some forty stations appear, some of which are considerable towns. The soil is generally very fertile and more rolling than that of the State of Illinois.

On arriving at Boonesboro, 158 miles from our destination, we learned that the sudden melting of the snows had swollen all the streams and transformed them into rushing torrents. All the bridges had been carried away and all the bottom-lands flooded for a width of one to three miles. Though in great haste to get ahead, there was nothing for me to do but to have patience and make a virtue of necessity.

I found a good number of Irish Catholics at Boonesboro, who rejoiced in my misfortune in hopes of hearing mass the next day, which was Palm Sunday. They seldom receive a visit from a priest — three or four times at most in the course of the year. They have built a little frame church, consisting simply of four walls and a roof. The interior has neither chairs nor benches nor an altar nor even a cross or image. A little platform was put up in haste for the offering of the holy sacrifice. In spite of the rain which came down in floods a large number assembled to attend mass and instruction, and several approached the holy table with much fervor and piety.

I spent three days among these good Catholics. They showed me the greatest attention and overwhelmed me with kindness and charity. Wherever a priest has the good fortune to find a son of St. Patrick he is sure to find a sincere friend and benefactor ready to do for him whatever he may need. Wherever in America ten Irish families find themselves settled, no matter how great their poverty or distress, they erect a little temple to the Lord, in hopes that before long a priest will come to see them and settle among them. I will venture to say that three-fourths of the Catholic churches, orphan asylums and charitable institutions in the United States have been built by the zeal and gifts of the good Irish. The long and cruel persecution of our holy religion in Ireland by *la perfide Albion*

has been, under the holy providence of the Lord, the surest and most efficacious means to render the Church more illustrious and to propagate it more rapidly in all the regions whither the zealous cohort of apostles and fervent disciples of St. Patrick have gone to escape English tyranny. I will add that of all European countries it is persecuted Ireland, so oppressed and despised by her cruel tyrants and the enemies of religion, that furnishes America, Australia, the Indies and other places their most illustrious bishops and most zealous apostles. To-day the whole world calls for them.

On the 16th of April the railroad took us ninety miles farther to the little village of Denison. For the rest of the way to Omaha, sixty-eight miles, the railroad was for the present rendered impracticable by a continued series of washouts and other breaks caused by the flood. There was a single little tavern at Denison to which the greater part of the travelers went, though it could not properly accommodate half its guests. All rules fail in dry weather, says the proverb, and in these circumstances the travelers were put away three and four in a bed. For my part, as a very special favor, I had the happiness of spending the night alone on a fine bag of straw in a little kind of den without even a window.

On Good Friday, after being detained three days, the water having somewhat abated, five travelers joined me in hiring a wagon to take us to Sioux City, some hundred miles northwest of Denison. We got away late in the afternoon, and after making fifteen miles found shelter for the night at a solitary farm, six miles from the nearest neighbor.

On Saturday we reached the crossing of the Little Sioux river after a ride of forty-two miles. We passed the night in a little tavern kept by an honest Bavarian Catholic, who had not had the happiness of assisting at mass in several years. Judge of his consolation when he learned that I was a priest, and that he and all his family would on the

morrow have an occasion to discharge their Paschal duty, and that the holy sacrifice of the altar would be offered to their intention. He treated me with the utmost kindness and benevolence and showed great thankfulness for the spiritual benefactions received for the first time in his house on the great day of Easter.

We crossed the Little Sioux in a small skiff or rather ferry. The bottoms were still flooded for a good mile in width. We rented another wagon to take us to Correctionville, which has yet but a single dwelling, that of a good old Irishman, his wife and six children. This place is twenty-two miles from the Little Sioux. We spent a good night here. The family was eager for instruction and all my conversation with them was upon various religious points. The father of the family already had in mind the erection of a church at Correctionville as soon as ten or so of his countrymen shall have settled there.

April 22d, the Irishman brought us to Sioux City, twenty-seven miles, in his wagon. All the intervening distance consists of rolling elevated plains, with a fertile soil, rich in grasses, where innumerable herds of domestic animals would find ample pasturage. Deer and elk still range here in good numbers. All this region resembles an agitated sea, suddenly become motionless. Day after day, it is always the same monotony. You go up and down an interminable succession of larger or smaller hills and valleys; like terrestrial billows. A fringe of timber can be seen along the streams and in some deep valleys and ravines in the higher portions.

In summer this region is an ocean of verdure, adorned with flowers, always agreeable to the eye. In autumn fires run over it and cover the whole surface with the sad black tint of mourning. Then comes winter and extends its shroud over all nature. At present winter is just drawing to a close in these parts. The snow is melting and disappearing rapidly. In severe seasons it lies two to four feet deep over all the country. Numerous drifts and patches

still appear, icy and sparkling here and there on the blackened hillsides.

After we left Denison, we passed two little towns in the first fifty miles; in the second half of the distance only a few small farms. The winter is rigorous in upper Iowa and will keep back colonization for some time to come. Dubuque, on the Mississippi, is the principal town of the State. There are four churches there with a bishop and Catholic charitable institutions.

Reaching Sioux City I took up my lodging with the young curate of the place, Reverend J. Curtis. He practices the holy ministry here with the greatest zeal and edification. He enjoys the highest consideration among Protestants as well as Catholics. He is a pupil of the great Irish seminary All-Hallows, which every year sends its young, fervent apostles, filled with virtues and talents, to the various parts of the globe where the bishops may have called for their aid. In the twenty-five years that this seminary has been in existence, over 300 pupils have been sent out to foreign missions.

Sioux City has a little Catholic congregation of about fifty families; the greater part are Irish, the rest Germans or French. Mr. Curtis' mission extends 130 miles north of the Missouri river, and he ministers to more than 200 families scattered over this distance. The number grows each year.

The good chief Pananniapapi, with a band of twenty-eight Yanktons, has just arrived in Sioux City. We are hourly expecting a steamboat which is to take us all together to his country. He is on his way home from Washington where he has been at the summons of the Secretary of the Interior to transact some business for his tribe.

In my interview with him he told me with his natural simplicity that a young chief of his tribe and a near relative, who had gone east with him, had been attacked with a vomiting of blood during their stay in the capital, which soon brought him to great weakness, so that they lost all

hope of his recovery. In that extreme and afflicting situation Pananniapapi had recourse to prayer and implored the aid of heaven. Then he drew near to the bed of the dying man, and being filled with faith, exhorted him to put all his confidence in the Great Spirit, and showing him the cross of the Savior, which he had about him, he offered it to the sick man's lips, saying "Dear nephew, embrace the crucifix with confidence. The image of Christ reminds us of the Son of God who descended from heaven and came upon earth to redeem us and deliver us from hell at the price of his own precious blood. Jesus Christ can do everything. He will give you health and bring you back safe and sound to the bosom of your family." He embraced the cross with a pious ardor and full of faith. The spitting of blood then ceased, and from that day his strength gradually returned to him. "I hope," said the good chief, "that the healing of my nephew will help to bring all my tribe to the knowledge, service and love of the Great Spirit. I am happy to meet you, Black-robe, and to learn that you are coming to visit once more the Yanktons and the other tribes of my nation (Sioux). We shall have all we can wish for, if you can stay among us."

They tell me that the steamboat on which I am to embark, with Pananniapapi and his band, is in sight. I must make haste and pack up my little effects and close my traveling bag. The distance I have yet to go on the Missouri river is 260 miles. I propose to remain a few days in the territory of the Yanktons, and thence to penetrate into the interior of the country in search of the Sioux tribes.

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<sup>3</sup>As I announced in my letter from Sioux City, I embarked on the 30th of April [1867] upon the steamer *Guidon*. The boat was crowded with passengers and merchandise for the new Territories of Montana and Idaho. It was

<sup>3</sup>To Father Terwecoren. Written at the Yankton agency, May 15, 1867.

No. 15 of the immense fleet of steamboats that were going this year to Benton, a distance of 3,160 miles.

At the great melting of the snows which cover with their white shroud our vast plains and the Black Hills, the Missouri river and its numerous tributaries overflow, flooding all the alluvial bottom-lands. This spring rise never lasts long. When we embarked the river was already going down — the most critical and difficult moment for navigation. During high water all the different channels become filled with mud and sand and thus raise and level the bed of the river through all its width. As the water subsides new channels are formed little by little. At that time the great obstacles for steamboats, aside from the high winds of the West which prevail in the spring, are the numerous bars or sand-banks. Often hours or whole days are required to cross one or two.<sup>4</sup>

Above Sioux City we noticed a recent cut-off where the impetuous Missouri when bank-full had forced a passage through an immense forest of large cottonwoods a mile in extent and had scoured out a deep channel. It was only a matter of a few hours. This passage shortens the river fifteen miles. The *Guidon* was among the first to try it, always on the lookout for the threatening snags with which this new stretch of the river is studded. Without any other incidents than the bars, snags and winds, the boat took six days in going from Sioux City to the Yankton reservation, a distance of 260 miles.

The head chief, Pananniapapi, and his traveling companions were received with open arms by their families and friends after three months of absence. I too shared, in my capacity of Black-robe, in their friendly demonstrations. They were all delighted to see us again in such good health.

I took up my lodging in the house of the excellent interpreter of the nation, Mr. Alexis Giou, who loaded me with

<sup>4</sup> This observation upon the habits of the Missouri river is literally correct. The most experienced pilot could not have stated the case more exactly.

kindness and friendliness. He put me in possession of a nice little closet or attic, the only place available, where my altar, bed and all my things were straightway arranged, and in a few minutes I found myself in a real little *chez moi*, glad and happy to have escaped from the noise and tumult of the boat.

I went to work the next day, while awaiting the arrival of the steamboat *Bighorn*, which had on board my provisions and necessary outfit, for my long journey across the plains. Every day I have had the consolation of saying mass, instructing the Indians and baptizing the little children that they brought me, the number of whom already amounts to 200. The Yanktons are scattered over their reservation for a distance of thirty miles. The spring rains and winds often render travel by land quite difficult.

I learn that the *Bighorn*, which left St. Louis on the 12th of April, will be here to-morrow; so I wait. The leaves of the cottonwoods along the river are coming out rapidly; the grass on the plains is visibly shooting up and promises abundance for the wild animals and for travelers or beasts; everything seems to call me to be going.

I have given the chief Pananniapapi the beautiful interesting letter of Sister Louise Regiers, written at the request of the worthy Ladies of the Poor Churches. The chief asks me to thank those respectable ladies in his name for their great kindness toward him and especially for the good prayers that they offer to heaven in his behalf. He greatly admired the little images they sent him, which he distributed among the different lodges or families of his tribe.

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Fort Buford, at the mouth of the Yellowstone, 2,240  
miles above St. Louis, July 8, 1867.<sup>5</sup>

I suppose my letters of April 30th and May 15th have reached you. In the first, I gave you my itinerary from

<sup>5</sup> From the French of the third Belgian edition, volume VI.



St. Louis to Sioux City, and thence to the Yankton agency, near Fort Randall. At the agency, I had the consolation of regenerating in the holy waters of baptism more than 200 little children and some adults. Several of them are already enjoying eternal bliss. Happy innocents! They seemed to be awaiting my arrival, to go and take their places in the celestial habitation, among the angels and saints of the Lord.

The Yankton interpreter, Mr. Alexis Giou, gave me, during my sojourn among his tribe, a small apartment in his frame cottage. In this hospitable asylum I passed many happy moments; especially, I had the happiness of offering there every day the holy sacrifice of the mass. The two Sundays that I was among the Yanktons, a chapel was improvised, where Catholics and Protestants, whites, half-breeds and Indians, gathered to attend divine services. All showered attentions and regards upon me.

May 17th. The steamboat *Bighorn*, thirty-three days out from St. Louis, arrived at the Yankton agency, and landed in good order my wagon, my little traveling necessities, my two mules and my saddle horse. These three animals, on coming ashore after so long an imprisonment, performed capers without end. The attractive perfume of the fresh grass caused them a delirium of joy; they threw themselves down with all four feet in the air, rolled right and left on the sod, jumped and skipped, and carried on at such a rate that they were near playing the mischief with the spectators, assembled to admire their leaps and exploits. Still, these four-legged humorists did not forget the matter of refreshments; in a short time each was going around with a rounded paunch, looking like a bag of hay.

The captain of the steamboat deserves thanks for the care he had taken of my animals. Despite his watchfulness, however, the horse on one occasion got loose from his halter and managed to get off the boat, while it was in motion, and tranquilly went for a swim. His escape was not discovered for an hour afterward. At once the boat was

turned back down the river, in search of my courser, and he was found safe and sound at the foot of a bluff too steep for him to climb; otherwise he would have got to the woods and that would have been the last of him. The deckhands brought him on board again.

Three days were required to bring our quadrupeds into tractable shape. One of the mules showed himself nothing less than bull-headed, and revolted whenever the bridle was passed over his long ears. After several attempts, all of them fruitless, the driver, to punish the balky animal and get a little respite himself, left him the bridle, but took away the bit; the mule appeared satisfied and the driver had no further need to resort to the whip to keep him quiet.

May 21st. I left the Yankton agency, together with the good chief Pananniapapi and his band. My little caravan was composed of a Sioux interpreter, a guide, a horse herder and a hunter. For seven miles, the route lay across an elevated country, through lovely smiling prairies, slightly rolling. Then we came down on the bottom-lands, the valley proper of the Missouri. There the Yankton chief called Iron Horn and his little band have some cultivated fields. I gave baptism to all the little children. Six miles farther on, at the *Sentier de bois à proue*, [Prow-wood Landing?] I baptized several others. We had much difficulty in crossing the muddy stream opposite Fort Randall: all the baggage had to be carried to the farther bank on men's shoulders; all arms were required to help the two mules and the horse pull the empty wagon out of the sticky mud. Three miles farther, on the bank of the Missouri and on the land of the chief Magaska, or Swan, we camped for the night, at a distance of seventeen miles from our starting-point.

May 22d. I regenerated in the holy waters of baptism a half-breed family, father, mother and seven children, who had prepared themselves several years before to obtain this favor. The parents received the sacrament of marriage, according to the Roman ritual. Seventy-four children of

Magaska's band also received baptism. All the morning was taken up in these holy ceremonies. We left the camp toward noon and regained the uplands. Several showers of rain made the road muddy and slippery. After traveling eight miles, we set up our tent on the bank of Louison creek, with a flowing current and clear as crystal. To the traveler fresh from the turbid water of the Missouri, the sight and contrast are very agreeable.

At this place a solitary hostelry, consisting of two wooden shanties, had been erected and was inhabited by a Canadian, his half-breed wife and several of their children. All seemed happy to see me. Several other Canadians, who support themselves by cutting wood along the river to sell to steamboats, having been notified of my presence, had brought their children to meet me. All my hours, until late in the evening, were spent in instructions, for which these men seem hungry; they pay earnest attention to them. Ten children were presented to me for baptism, and a half-breed woman received, with the holy waters of baptism, the nuptial benediction.

May 23d. About ten in the morning I left the banks of the Louison, resuming our march by green and rolling roads. A spring shower brought agreeable freshness to the atmosphere. After a stretch of nineteen miles, we set up our tent on the bank of Pratt creek, alongside the Hamilton hostelry. The proprietor of the latter was an old acquaintance of mine, so he showed me many kindnesses. He put all the products of his farm at my disposition; his henhouse furnished us the necessary eggs to make a pretty good dinner on the following day, which was a Friday. There was a gathering at Hamilton's, like that at his neighbor's on Louison creek; they were waiting for me to confer baptism on two adults and thirteen little children. It was a goodly offering to make to God, on the eve of Our Lady the Auxiliatrice and the feast-day of the martyr of the Society of Jesus, the blessed Andrew Bobola.

May 24th. I offered the holy sacrifice of the mass early in

the morning. After doing honor to our host's eggs, we resumed our march to make twenty-two miles. The road crosses immense and beautiful plateaus, which present innumerable parterres, where, at this agreeable season of the year, the lovely little daisy abounds; it is really the queen of this country. It appears in all its splendor, in the most vivid and most varied colors; it ranges from snow white to purple, red, blue and the deepest yellow.

We came to Bijou toward three in the afternoon, and camped near a clear cold spring. These very high hills serve as landmarks in these parts; they can be seen for thirty miles away. Everywhere in these elevated plains you come upon numerous natural basins or reservoirs, which really deserve to be called lakes, being three to six miles in extent. They fill up every spring, at the time of the melting of the snow and during the rainy seasons. Ducks, wild geese, snipe and other aquatic birds abound; they make their nests in the reeds and tall grass.

We passed by several large prairie-dog villages. Their inhabitants live underground and seem to live in harmony with the owl, the prairie hawk and the rattlesnake. At the approach of the hunter, they are sometimes seen to enter the same hole all together. Formerly, these fair plains supported numerous herds of buffalo, elk and deer; to-day, since the military road has crossed them, the large animals have disappeared. We saw in the distance a few antelope, and along the road a great number of snipe, prairie-chickens, wild pigeons and a variety of small birds.

The Sioux chief of the Brûlé tribe, Katanka-Wakan, or Ghost Bull, joined us on the road, and we camped together at the foot of the hills at Bijou. Here a Canadian pioneer has built his cabin. I baptized his five little children.

May 25th. The night was cold; water froze in my tent. We left the hills at Bijou at six in the morning and resumed our journey. We crossed another series of plateaus, parterres of variegated flowers and slightly rolling prairies, where ponds of water are frequent. These usually evapo-

rate during the great heats of summer. Toward noon, we halted on the shore of Red lake. We had snipe and wild pigeons for dinner. We met a solitary family of the Brûlé tribe. I conferred baptism on five of their children. All along the road, we noticed a great many birds of different species. Our tent was set up on the banks of American creek.

May 26th. I celebrated the holy sacrifice of the mass early in the morning, having thirty miles to cover. We started betimes; the surface of the country was the same as on the two previous days. As we rode, and without leaving the trail, a hunter killed fifteen pigeons and several snipe. We crossed four small streams, the Crow, Prickly Ash, Elm and Box Elder, and arrived at Fort Thompson about seven in the evening. There we set up our tent, at a short distance from the Missouri. I made my call on the officers of the fort, and we spent a very agreeable evening. The officers of the American army are, in general, *gentlemen* in the full force of the word. They showed me the utmost cordiality and provided for all my wants.

May 27th. I found upward of 120 lodges of Indians in the vicinity of Fort Thompson, belonging principally to the tribes of Brûlés, Two Kettles and Yanktonnais. The object of my mission from the Government had already been announced to them; they received me with affability and confidence. I convoked the principal chiefs and the braves in council. As the names they bore may interest you, by reason of their singularity, I will give a few of them; besides, they are my spiritual children and my friends: I take pleasure in making you acquainted with them. They are Mazoéâté, or Iron Nation; Istamanza, or Iron Eyes; Tawâ-goekeza-numpa, or Two Lances; Tchétauska, or White Hawk; Mantowa-koua, or Hunting Bear; Gougounapia, or Knuckle-bone Collar, and Mantâtska, or White Bear. Thirty-six chiefs and braves attended the council. I opened the session with a solemn prayer to the Great Spirit, to implore his assistance upon all the members present and

each of the tribes represented by them. They kept their hands raised toward heaven throughout this invocation. Then I laid before them at some length the object of my mission, the desires and wishes of the Government in regard to them. I endeavored to strengthen them in their good dispositions, to keep them apart from the hostile bands, for their own security and that of their families, and to bring them to conclude a permanent peace. In their speeches in reply, the chiefs made solemn promises to listen to the advice of the Great Father, the President of the United States, and to keep peace with the whites. They laid before me, quite simply, their delicate and critical position. On the one hand, they alleged their nearness to and relations with the fighting bands, who are their own blood and kin; and the invitations of the latter to take up the hatchet against the whites in defense of the land of their birth; invitations always accompanied with insults and menaces. On the other hand — I will quote their own words: “Commissioners and agents of the Government come to us every year; they are affable and prodigal of speeches and promises in behalf of our Great Father. What is the reason that so many fine words and pompous promises always come to nothing, nothing, nothing?” Then they entered into a series of details concerning the injustices and misdeeds of the whites, and closed by saying: “We continue to hope that our words will reach the ear of our Great Father, that they will enter his heart and that he will take pity on us. The presence of the Black-robe to-day increases our hope and our confidence.”

The council lasted several hours, with every indication of a good and fortunate outcome. My religious instruction, which followed the great council, was most attentively listened to. As I spoke of the importance of the sacrament of regeneration, the several chiefs at once harangued their camps, and the mothers made haste to present me their little children, to the number of more than 160, “to dedicate them to the Great Spirit” by baptism.

The Indian life is a hard one; the climate here is very severe. A great number of children succumb before the age of reason, unable to resist the fatigues, privations and maladies which we understand, but for which they have no remedies.

It is a real feast day to baptize these poor little innocents: baptism will have opened heaven to a great number whom I have had the good fortune to meet in my long excursions. I am firm in the conviction that they are interceding with God for me.

The council and baptismal ceremonies lasted until far into the evening. It was a lovely day. I return thanks to heaven and to the Blessed Virgin Mary for all favors received.

May 28th. I said mass late in the morning and gave an instruction at Fort Thompson. The garrison is principally composed of Irish, Germans and French, all Catholics. It was the first visit they had received from a priest. Accordingly a good number made haste to profit by my presence to approach the sacraments. I spent part of the day with them, and employed the remainder in conferences with the Indians, which was the main object of my mission.

May 29th. Early in the morning I became aware that one mule and my horse had strayed away during the night. I was not altogether easy about them: it was quite possible that the hostile Indians, who often roam this region, especially in the dark, had carried them off. I had recourse to the good Saint Anthony, and to my great joy, the two fugitives were brought back to me a short time after my prayer. Breakfast was ready. By seven o'clock we were on the road. The country that we crossed offered the same aspect; various species of flowers continued abundant, while the singing and warbling of numerous birds enlivened to some extent those sad desert plains. We dined on the bank of the little creek called Chain of Rocks: pigeons, snipe and ducks came and offered themselves to our hunter and formed our meal. A curiosity remarkable enough to de-

serve mention is seen at the Chain of Rocks, near the stream: it consists of five deep and perfect impressions of a human foot. This place is renowned in the Indian legends; some time I will try to give you the whole story. Toward sunset, we camped on Chapelle creek, near three Indian lodges. I found among them old and good acquaintances; they loaded me with friendliness and eagerly presented me nine of their babies for baptism.

May 30th. The glorious day of the Ascension: I offered holy mass for the conversion of the Indian tribes. On leaving, at seven in the morning, the wagon got mired in the deep mud of Chapelle creek. As at the muddy stream near Fort Randall, we had to unload and carry everything over on our shoulders. We succeeded with difficulty and by main force in disengaging our vehicle from its embarrassed situation, and took up our march anew for twenty-five miles. We traversed a mountainous region, full of boulders, for the most part rounded by water. While we were dining at Medicine creek, several Sioux families who were on their travels crossed the stream and took advantage of my presence to obtain, in favor of eight of their children, the benefits of baptism. The road passes within sight of the Missouri and enters the river bottoms. We camped at old Fort Sully, now abandoned; about five in the afternoon, I found myself among 220 lodges of Indians, who received me with every demonstration of the warmest cordiality.

May 31st. As at Fort Thompson, I convoked the chiefs and braves in a grand council. Allow me to give you a second list of our Nestors of the plains. Their names, as in ancient times, are characteristic and significant; they have reference to some remarkable action of their lives. For the most part, they are names illustrious among the tribes of the Great Desert. They are as follows: Nâgi-wakan, or Chief Ghost; Tchêtangi, or Yellow Hawk; Zizikadaniakan, or Man Who Soars Above the Bird; Tokayâketé, or Killed the First One; Matowayouwi, or Dispersed the Bears; Tokaoyouthpa, or Took the Enemy; Wawantaneanska, or



Big Mandan; Wagma-tshawkaeyapi, or Serves as a Shield; Tchatêpêta, or Iron Heart; Ezzani-maza, or Iron Horn; Wâmedoupiloupa, or Red Tail Eagle, and a great number of others.

At the first summons they made haste to the council. I presented to the principal chiefs a miraculous medal of the Holy Virgin, which they received with eagerness and most sincere gratitude. They recalled the favors received from heaven at the time of the cholera, and accorded to the chief Pananniapapi and his band through the intercession of Mary.

As soon as they comprehended the object of my visit, they paid the closest attention to my words. They complained bitterly of the bad faith of the whites, of the commissioners and agents of the Government, always so prodigal of promises and always so slow in fulfilling them, if they ever do so. This conduct sticks in their minds; they propose to wait a while longer and see. In their speeches and in private conversation they declared themselves favorable to peace with the whites and ready to call on their young warriors to bury the hatchet and withdraw from the fighting bands. They expressed also a lively desire to settle on reservations and cultivate the soil. But until such time as their fields produce abundance, they choose to continue to lead the nomadic life and to range the plains peaceably in search of animals, roots and fruits.

This far, all that I have observed and been able to learn among the different bands of Indians makes me augur favorably of their good dispositions to live at peace with the whites, and to make efforts to withhold their young men from committing depredations. They ask, and have a right to demand, to have justice done them; that the annuities granted them by treaty should come to them; that the practice of putting them off with fine words should cease once for all; that they be protected against the whites who come to sow iniquity and misery in their country; and in conclusion they humbly beg their Great Father the President

to grant them agricultural implements, seeds, plows and oxen to till the soil. I repeat it, if our Indians become enraged against the whites, it is because the whites have made them suffer for a long time.

At the close of the grand council the mothers, with their babies to the number of 174, were waiting for me for baptism.

I have sent several expresses into the interior of the country to announce to the hostile bands my intention of visiting them. I expect their reply within the next two months. I venture to hope for some result; I offer my poor prayers to the Lord for the good success of my pacific mission, upon which depend my future movements. Meanwhile, I shall continue my visits among the redskins, in the region of Forts Rice, Berthold and Union. My messengers are to wait for me at Fort Sully. To go and come from Sully to Union and return, the distance is 1,430 miles.

June 1st. Heavy rain all night, thick fog and cold weather. Toward noon the sun came through and soon it was stifling hot.

I spent the whole day with the principal chiefs in conversation concerning religion and the present critical and dangerous situation of the plains tribes, toward the American Government. After the example of the whites, the Indians have proclaimed a sort of martial law; the war chiefs have assumed sole command.

To-day I conferred baptism on thirty-three young children of the Brûlé band.

June 2d, 3d, 4th and 5th. These four days were principally employed in conferences with the Indians. The heat is very great. The coming and going is without end. Little Soldier, second chief of the Yanktonnais, has joined the camp; his tribe reckons more than 400 lodges or tepees. He listened attentively to the religious instructions that I gave him and to the messages with which I was intrusted by the Government. Little Soldier in his turn talked to me about the friendly disposition of his tribe toward the whites, who

at this moment were awaiting us in the vicinity of Fort Rice.

During these four days, I administered baptism to thirty-nine Indian babies.

In the evening of the 5th a terrible hurricane, accompanied by continuous lightnings, turning night into day, and a roll of heavy thunder like the discharge of a thousand cannon, burst over our camp. One would have thought the last day was at hand. On this occasion, two lovely verses in Flemish presented themselves to my memory:

De velden dreunden door een dorren donderslag,  
Nooit zag de wereld een vervaerlyker dag.—

The fields rang with a heavy thunderclap;  
The world never saw a more fearful day.

The hurricane lasted several hours. A large number of tepees were blown down. Wagons were taken off in haste by the wind. The violence of the gusts came near carrying away my tent; it took three strong men to hold it upright. The play ended with a deluge of rain and hail, which flooded all the country.

June 6th and 7th. Baptism of two children. Arrival of Generals Sully and Parker, envoys extraordinary of the Government to take special information in regard to the complaints of the Indians against the whites, and the injustices of which they have continually been victims. They are both distinguished generals of the American army, equally noted for their bravery and their probity. We had a long conversation concerning the objects of our respective missions, and it is resolved that I shall accompany them as far as beyond the Yellowstone. We will unite our efforts to bring the tribes back to peace.

June 8th. Baptism of two small children. A grand council was called by the two generals. All the chiefs and braves attended. At the request of the American officers, I made a little preliminary address to the Indians, to draw

their attention and inspire confidence. I told them that their Great Father, the President, desired to know all their griefs, in order to apply, once for all, the proper remedy. Then the two generals spoke, and gave particulars concerning their mission to the Indians; they promised that all the speeches made in the council should be faithfully transmitted to Washington and submitted to the President. Each chief, in the name of his band, showed all his mind. The council closed in the most perfect harmony, with a great feast, which all attended, big and little, old and young, and brought excellent appetites with them. I will give you hereafter some of the speeches that were improvised by the chiefs; they are models of good sense and eloquence.

June 9th, Sunday. A large number of Indians attended the divine service and instruction. The meeting was composed of whites, half-breeds and Indians of various bands. Two marriages were celebrated. The divine service was hardly ended when the head war-chief, Mazakampeska or Iron Shell, with several of his braves, presented himself in the camp and paid us his call. A council was held at once. Iron Shell, after preambles too long to be reported here, declared "that he desired tranquillity and peace for his country; but to establish it, three conditions appeared to him absolutely necessary. First, he said, send all your soldiers out of the country; close all your public roads through the Black Hills; and prevent steamboats from coming up the Upper Missouri, so that the buffalo and other animals may not be disturbed." This was the *conditio sine qua non* of Mazakampeska.

General Sully made known to him "that the soldiers had been brought into the country by the massacres that had taken place in Minnesota and on the plains of the Missouri; that if these murders and massacres continued, the number of soldiers would be increased, until they would cover the country as the grasshoppers cover their fields. Bury the hatchet," added the general, "and the soldiers will return whence they came." He said further that he had come

to hear the complaints of the Indians and make a faithful report of them to the Great Father. The chief answered and promised to make use of his influence to bring the young men to peace.

Toward three in the afternoon, we started for the new Fort Sully by a fine road. We made twenty-five miles in three hours. The steamboat *Graham* was there with five companies of soldiers destined for the different forts. Our arrangements were quickly made; we left at the fort our vehicles, animals and baggage, and took our places on the boat. X

June 10th. The steamboat made an early start, but advanced scarcely twenty miles in the day. All the time was consumed in cutting and taking on wood to supply the furnaces. They are so greedy that they devour each day twenty-five cords of this combustible. The *Graham* is 249 feet in length. It is a floating palace, and the largest boat that has ever come up the Upper Missouri.

My quality of envoy extraordinary of the Government carries with it the title of Major, strangely mated, it must be owned, with that of Jesuit. Still, it must be said in its behalf that it gives me readier access among the soldiers, a great many of whom are Catholics. I gave them, not as a major but as a priest, all my spare moments. Sunday, I said mass in public, in the spacious ladies' cabin; and every day I offered the holy sacrifice in my private stateroom, with the consolation of being able to distribute holy communion to several. I found myself conducting a small mission on board: my days were passed in doing the catechism, and instructing and confessing the soldiers, who hastened to come before me. As we went along, I baptized a lady and her children.

June 16th. We arrived at Fort Rice, 260 miles distant from Fort Sully. Head-winds and the necessity of cutting wood had delayed us greatly. At Rice, on both sides of the river, were about 530 lodges encamped and waiting for our coming. All the tribe of the Yanktonnais, 380 lodges,

were here together. The other camps were portions of other bands: Hunkpapas, Blackfoot-Sioux and others.

June 17th and 18th. These days were spent in conferences and councils, in which all the chiefs and the principal braves took part. I will give you another time the particulars of these various gatherings. I made the opening speeches, at the request of Generals Sully and Parker, who made known to the chiefs the intentions of the Government toward them. The chiefs spoke admirably in answer, being both wise and eloquent, and showed a disposition to maintain peace with the whites. Our relations with the Indians promise well for success, and our sessions lasted until late in the evening. The camps being at some distance from the fort and on the other side of the river, I only had opportunity and time to baptize fifteen of their babies. I was taken to one poor little thing that was in its agony, and died a few instants after receiving baptism.

I hope to meet camps of the same tribes upon my return from Fort Union, and to speak to them more especially of religion, of which they seem very hungry to hear.

June 19th. We left Fort Rice early in the morning. The distance to Fort Berthold is 175 miles. We arrived there without the slightest incident.

June 23d. On the way, four antelope were killed by the hunters. My time on the boat was employed in hearing the confessions of the Catholic soldiers and preparing them to approach the sacraments. A native of Brussels, named Charles Smet, was among the number; it was a great consolation to both of us to be able to speak our mother language. He had lost none of his accent. An Irish couple, the servant of the general and a sergeant, profited by my presence to receive the nuptial benediction.

We spent some hours at Berthold in council with the chief of the three combined tribes, the Aricaras, Mandans and Minnetarees of Grosventres. They have always remained faithful to the Government. A final council will

be held on our return from Fort Berthold. I will tell you of this later.

June 24th. The steamboat pursues its course. We saw the first herd of buffalo. A large number of passengers leaped ashore to go in pursuit of the animals. A single buffalo was killed. One of the hunters, still green in this kind of hunting, got lost; and in spite of all searches and firing of cannon, could not be found.

June 28th. We reached Buford, near old Fort Union, at the mouth of the Yellowstone. This place is situated 255 miles from Fort Berthold and 2,240 from St. Louis. Fort Buford contains five companies of soldiers. I am dividing my time between writing and making myself useful to the soldiers and to the thirty lodges of Assiniboin. I have baptized a soldier and forty-seven Indian children, and given the nuptial benediction to three couples.

July 7th. Arrival of the Assiniboin chiefs and grand council. All declare themselves friendly to the whites and promise not to yield to the solicitations of the hostiles. We are waiting for the arrival of the Crow and Santee chiefs, to announce and explain to them the wishes of the Government. After that, I shall go down the river to Fort Rice or Fort Sully, and set out into the interior to visit the hostile bands, if the thing is practicable. The number of baptisms up to date is 857.

Pray for me and present my respects to all the brethren.

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University of St. Louis, September, 1867.<sup>6</sup>

At the Yankton agency, near Fort Randall, (1,285 miles from St. Louis) I met the camp of the Yanktons (a Sioux tribe) who are about 2,500 in number. They are at peace with the whites, practice agriculture successfully and are cultivating with care some 1,200 acres. The chiefs, with

<sup>6</sup> Extracts from letter in French to Charles De Coster, Belgium, September, 1867.

Pananniapapi at their head, begged me to grant them a mission and establish schools in the tribe. The head chief, a good many adults and all the children of this tribe have been baptized.

At Fort Thompson (1,441 miles) I found upward of 100 Indian lodges (each lodge containing eight to ten inmates) belonging to the tribes of the Brûlés, Yanktonnais and Two Kettles. I had several conferences with them relative to their present situation toward the Government, and especially in regard to religion, to all of which they gave the closest attention.

At old Fort Pierre or Sully (1,525 miles) 200 lodges were set up in a beautifully elevated plain. This was a mixed camp of various tribes — Blackfoot-Sioux, Two Kettles, Brûlés, Yanktonnais, Yanktons, Sans-arcs, Minneconjous and Ogallalas. I spent a good fortnight among them in counseling with the chiefs and instructing the people, and during all my stay among them they treated me with the utmost benevolence, affability and attention. I was surrounded from morning to night.

In the region round Fort Rice (1,810 miles) over 500 lodges, something like 5,000 souls, were awaiting our arrival. The camp was composed of the greater portion of the Yanktonnais (380 lodges) with bands of the Cut Heads, Hunkpapas and Blackfoot-Sioux. They evinced much friendliness for us. At the first appeal, all the chiefs met in council and promised solemnly to maintain peace with the whites, to hold aloof from the hostile tribes and to prevent their young men from going on the war-path. I presented each of the chiefs with a large miraculous medal, which they received with the liveliest gratitude, promising to wear them as souvenirs of fidelity to their promises. I spent my time very agreeably among them, instructing the Indians and baptizing their children.

At Fort Berthold (1,985 miles) I met my old friends the Aricaras, Mandans and Grosventres or Minnetarees, who form one large village nearly two miles in circumference.



There are some 3,000 of them; they live in permanent earthen houses. All their children are baptized; they are at peace with the whites; they cultivate a large field (1,200 acres), raising corn, potatoes, melons, and beans, with no tools but sharpened sticks, with a few spades and mattocks. They complained bitterly of the Government agents and the soldiers. They first deceive them and rob them in the distribution of their annuities, and the others demoralize them by their scandalous conduct. All last winter they were the playthings and slaves of a hard and tyrannical captain, who seemed to make it his business to torment the poor wretches. When the old women with their starving babies came up to the fort to pick up the filthy refuse thrown out of the soldier's kitchen, they were pitilessly driven off with scalding water, thrown upon their emaciated bodies, covered only with rags in the severest of the cold weather. The head chief of the Aricaras, named White Parfleche, in his speech to Generals Sully and Parker, drew a vivid picture of the miseries of his tribe. Their crop having failed, they were reduced to famine and all assistance was refused them by the captain of the fort. "Reduced to the last extremity," he said, "I implored the Great Spirit in the name of the children baptized by the Black-robe. My prayer was granted. The excessively cold weather moderated, and before the sun set we killed several buffalo alongside our camp-fires. Yes, the Great Spirit loves his little children."

At Fort Buford, at the mouth of the Yellowstone (2,240 miles), a good number of chiefs and braves belonging to the various bands of the Assiniboina made their peaceableness and fidelity to the President evident to the Commissioners. At all the military posts on the Missouri river a good share of the soldiers are Catholics, and my ministrations were called for everywhere. A general of the army and several officers set the good example of approaching the holy table.

In all the public speeches of the chiefs and in all the private talks I had with them, they all showed a friendly

disposition toward the whites and a strong determination to keep aloof from the hostile bands. We kept a strict list of all the complaints made by the Indians, which has been transmitted to the Department of the Interior. I am firmly convinced that if the just claims of the Indians are attended to; if their annuities are paid them at the proper time and place; if the agents and other employees of the Government treat them with honesty and justice; if they are supplied with the necessary tools for carpentry and agriculture, the Indian tribes of the Upper Missouri, of whom I have spoken above, would maintain peace with the whites; and the warlike bands who to-day infest the plains of the Far West and the valley of the Platte, where there is so much destruction of property and loss of life, would promptly cease their depredations and would not be long in joining the stay-at-home tribes. "If the savages sin against the whites, it is because the whites have greatly sinned against them."

There is much talk just at present of placing all the Indian tribes on one or two large reservations. It is not possible to change the nature of any race of men in a moment. The Indians told us "that they were born to be hunters and to range the country in pursuit of animals." It will take patience to transform them into cultivators; the thing will necessarily require some years. The Indians whom we visited were disposed to choose reservations, suitable for agriculture, on their own lands. In every band a good number of families showed a favorable disposition to go to work without delay and urged us to have them furnished with plows and oxen. If they succeed for the first three years in their noble efforts, the example of that industrious portion would soon be followed by the mass in every tribe: and if once the great advantages of agriculture, of raising domestic animals and poultry, were understood, especially after once living in abundance as the result of their own labor, they could afterward easily be led to one or two large reservations like those of the Delawares, Cherokees and Choctaws.

While I was among these river tribes, I sent several Indians as deputies among the hostile tribes. I stocked them with packages of smoking tobacco, to distribute among the chiefs. Each package served as a letter of introduction, to invite them to come and talk over their position. Upward of 100 chiefs and warriors came at my request to Fort Rice, in the hope of finding me there with the Commissioners, Generals Parker and Sully. They waited there for us for ten days, and only went away when the lack of provisions forced them to do so. They therefore set off on their two-months' buffalo hunt to provide for their families. At leaving they sent word to me especially by two interpreters that they greatly desired to see the Black-robe and talk with him. I was assured that they all seemed favorably inclined toward peace. I hope that my health may permit me to go among them early next spring.

I have just this instant received a letter from the Secretary of the Interior, dated the 24th of this month, in which he gives the following testimonial, which it gives me pleasure to communicate to you: "You will please accept my thanks for the faithful and efficient manner in which you have discharged the duties intrusted to your care."

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August 30, 1867.<sup>7</sup>

Here I am again at my post in St. Louis after an absence of four months and some days: Upon my arrival here the thermometer was in the neighborhood of 100°, and coming from 48° North I found myself singularly exhausted and feverish. I had been unanimously admitted at Leavenworth among the Peace Commissioners recently sent out by the Government among the Indian tribes of the Far West. I had accepted my nomination but was obliged to return to St. Louis, having sent thither my trunk, bed and all my

<sup>7</sup> Extract from letter in French to Reverend Father Cosemans, Belgium, August 30, 1867.

traveling necessaries. Then this sickness coming upon me, I had to give up this second mission by the doctor's orders.

My four months among the Indians have had a happy and consoling result, with the grace of the Lord, and the intercession of our good Mother Mary, aided by so many prayers of my dear brethren and acquaintances and those of our little children in our schools. The baptisms of children amount to nearly 900, and forty-six adults. \* \* \* I visited a great number of Sioux tribes or parts of tribes, coming altogether to some 15,000 Indians, and everywhere I was received with the greatest kindness and eagerness. They gave diligent attention to all my religious instructions, and listened favorably to the words that I brought them from the Government. They promised to hold aloof from the hostile bands and not to yield to their invitations. A good many even of the hostiles came to see me and I believe a general peace could be brought about, if honest agents were employed to treat with them. \* \* \*

I had a long interview with the Commissioners which has been published by their orders.

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St. Louis University, September 17, 1867.

*Dear Mr. Galpin:*

I received, yesterday, your kind favor of the 24th ultimo, and rejoiced to hear from you. I trust you will favor me frequently with news from above; particularly concerning the hostile bands in the plains. I will give you here a short statement of my situation and of the impossibility I am in of returning to the upper country in the course of this fall.

I left you with an intention to return to Fort Rice and await the arrival of the Indians (during one or two months). At my arrival at Sully, I found my wagon and animals in an unfit condition to stand a long trip and determined on proceeding with Generals Sully and Parker.

At Leavenworth I met the new Commissioners and held a long conference with them. I accepted of their invitation to accompany them on their visit among the Missouri tribes. I left immediately for St. Louis, where my traveling effects had preceded me. At my arrival home, such was the heat ( $100^{\circ}$ ), that I became sick and have since been incapable of moving about. Let the Indians know, particularly the hostile bands, that I am very desirous to see them, in the name of the Great Spirit and for their own welfare. I shall try my best to be at Fort Rice early next spring and leave St. Louis by the first good steamer. To that effect, I have offered my services to the Secretary of the Interior, should they allow me means to defray my expenses. I trust we may be able to make such arrangements as may suit to bring about the desired understanding and good will between the Indians and the whites. I coincide with you, that if peace can be made with the Sioux, the other tribes will soon follow their example.

Please write often. Prepare the minds of the Indians in regard to my intended visit and let me know every particular concerning them.

I saw Miss Picotte the other day; she is very well. I sent two books by Captain Honey to Colonel Otis — I hope he will receive them. Present him my best respects and to your lady and friend Irane La Framboise and all other acquaintances.

Most respectfully, etc.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE PEACE COMMISSION OF 1868.

Projects for another visit to the hostiles — A German-Indian princess — With the generals to council at North Platte — Cheyenne and Sherman Pass — Back to Omaha and up the river — Reception at Fort Rice — Eagerness to accompany him — Start for the interior — Camp life — Sends tobacco to the enemy — Success of the scouts — Lovely landscape — Reception by the hostiles — Entry into Sitting Bull's camp — Confidential talks — The great council — Laying on of hands upon Indian children — The return — Successful consummation of treaties of peace — Testimonial of commissioners.

St. Louis University, Dec. 21, 1867.

*Messrs. Galpin and La Framboise, Fort Rice:*

**D**EAR SIRS AND FRIENDS.— I received your letter of the 12th October, in answer to mine of the 17th of September. The last letter of the 22d of October reached me some time ago. I am very thankful for the information you have had the kindness to give me. My health is tolerably good at present. I hope to be at Fort Rice in the spring, as early as possible. I desire much to see the hostile tribes. For their own good they must come to a good understanding with the whites and accept the peaceful measures the Government proposes to them. In case of refusal on their part I am afraid they will see hard times. Try your best to obtain a favorable reception for me among the hostile bands; I have only their welfare at heart. Give an answer at your earliest opportunity to the following queries:

Will I be able to obtain an interpreter at Fort Rice, to accompany me in the interior? A light strong conveyance, a driver and a couple of horses or mules? What sort of

goods and provisions should I best provide myself with? I mean goods to make little presents to the Indians I may meet, and provisions for my traveling companions and self during the trip.

Please attend to the following and give me a speedy answer: At the house of a Mr. Rudolph Mackwith in St. Louis, a half-breed Sioux girl has been brought up. Her father, a German, whose name I do not remember at present, was a trader at Fort Pierre, at Vermillion, and probably in other posts. He belonged to a noble family in Germany. His mother is wealthy and willing to adopt her Indian granddaughter. The German trader had for wife the daughter of the chief called "The One that Makes Stripes." Please give me his Indian name, and name of his daughter in Indian, with its meaning in English, and add whatever good qualities you may remember in regard to the chief and his daughter. To make the remembrance of the German trader clearer to you, he had also for wife (probably after the death of the daughter of the "The One that Makes Stripes"), the daughter of old Zephyr Rencontre,<sup>1</sup> who died at Yankton Agency, over two years ago and had been blind for a long time. If you will understand what all my inquiries mean, by stating confidentially that the relations of the German trader have been informed in due time of his marriage with an Indian princess, and they are anxious to admit the young princess into their noble family circle. She is young and beautiful and may in time become a European queen — who knows?

In your next letter enter into particulars, as much as you can, in regard to the hostile bands and their dispositions. The Commissioners, who have been lately on the Platte,

<sup>1</sup> Zephyr Rencontre was one of the most distinguished and capable of the Indian interpreters on the Missouri. His career was a long and useful one, running through some forty years of active service. He served on many important expeditions and was always trusted by his employers. His services to the Government were of great value.

are now in Washington, holding consultations on what has been done and on the future course to be adopted, in regard to the Indian war. Hitherto nothing is known of the resolutions taken. I hope they will terminate favorable.

Present my best respects to the worthy Colonel Otis and all friends who may remember me at Fort Rice.

Most respectfully, Dear Friends,

Your humble servant and friend,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

P. S.— I should have added to my first queries, to let me know the probable cost, monthly, for interpreter, driver, light wagon and horses or mules.

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St. Louis University, Jan. 28, 1868.

*General W. T. Sherman:*

General.— I hope my letter will reach you in Washington and you will please excuse the liberty I take of addressing you. I desire to expose to you my actual intentions and views, as to my future trip and visit among the Indian tribes on the Upper Missouri. I received several letters in the course of the present winter, from Messrs. Galpin and La Framboise, traders and interpreters at Fort Rice, acquainting me with their interviews with several chiefs and warriors of the hostile bands. They informed me that these Indians expressed on all occasions a great willingness and desire to see me and promised to use their influence to admit me among the hostile tribes. I have informed them that I was anxious to accede to their request and had an intention to make an early start and leave St. Louis in the first steamer bound for the Upper Missouri. Should my trip meet with the approval of the Honorable Mr. Taylor and Honorable Indian Commissioners, if thought worthy



of the charge, I would feel happy in exerting myself, to the best of my power, in carrying out any orders or intentions which might be confided to me. I hope I can truly say, that the object in offering my services in this affair proceeds merely from a feeling for the general welfare. In my long intercourse among the Indian tribes (for about thirty years) I have found the Indians always kind and attentive. I would feel happy indeed should I be able to do anything that might tend to promote their future welfare, in accordance with the views of Government.

My intention is to visit the hostile bands of Indians, who may be willing to receive me, as early as possible and to use my utmost to instill into their minds, "peace and good will to all men." I must add, that my means are rather limited. I ask for no emoluments for myself, and am only performing my yearly missionary excursion, to which I am in duty bound. When I sent in my accounts, last August, of the moneys confided to my care (\$2,500) by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, for my trip in the upper country, I had a surplus of \$923.30, which I placed at the disposal of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He left it in my hands till further orders. Might I not humbly ask for the use of that sum, toward the defraying of the necessary expenses of my coming excursion among the upper Indians. I shall need an interpreter, a small conveyance for my little baggage and provisions and one man in attendance. On such occasions and whilst there is danger of life, wages are pretty high.

Pardon me, General, for troubling you in your many occupations. Your being a member of the "Indian Peace Commission" has encouraged me to address you on this subject. I shall feel most grateful to receive from you a word in answer to the above.

With sentiments of the highest consideration of respect and esteem,

I have the honor to be, General,

St. Louis University, Feb. 22, 1868.

*Mr. Galpin, Fort Rice:*

Dear Sir.— I hope my letter of the 21st of December last reached you. I am anxiously awaiting an answer to my various queries. My health is tolerably good at present and should it continue, I propose leaving St. Louis in the beginning of next April, on one of the first boats, in company with Captain Hany. When occasions present themselves at Fort Rice, please let the Indians of the interior know of my coming and let them be well and fully persuaded that nothing is nearer and dearer to my heart than their welfare and happiness. I pray daily to the Lord that peace and quiet might be restored and reign again through the land. It would be to me the greatest consolation should I be able to do anything to bring it about. On it alone depends altogether the future welfare of the Indians. I trust I shall meet some of the chiefs and warriors at Fort Rice and its vicinity, and I shall be able to accomplish my desire of visiting their friends in the interior for that purpose. I rely strongly upon your promise of last summer: that either yourself or Mr. La Framboise will accompany me and aid me to obtain the desired object. I remember well how deeply you felt interested last year, in bringing about the pacification of the Indians and offering your services. As to the terms, I may as well here add, I doubt not we shall be able to come to a good understanding. As expressed in my last letter, I hope I shall be able to hire, at Fort Rice, some vehicle or conveyance, with the necessary animals for my trip in the country. I should gladly receive the list I called for, of the most necessary goods and provisions I may most stand in need of.

I see occasionally your good daughter. She is very well and continues to be much pleased with the academy.

✓ Please present my best respects to Colonel Otis, etc.

Yours,

St. Louis University, Feb. 25, 1868.

*Mr. F. F. Gerard:*

Dear Friend.—I received yesterday your kind favors of the 15th and 20th ult. for which I return you my most sincere thanks. Your graphic description of the wonderful appearance of the sun on the 14th of January has been read with great pleasure and astonishment and shall be preserved.

What you tell me of the condition of the Indians is truly afflicting and deplorable. I saw General Sherman a few days ago. He assured me that a resolution had been passed in Washington, that the distribution of annuities, henceforth, will be made under the special supervision of an officer of the army, whose special duty will be to prevent all frauds. An Indian Department, independent of all others, is to be instituted, very different in many points from the old Indian Bureau. I have not as yet seen its laws and regulations. When received I shall forward them to you. Continue to encourage White Shield and all our Indian friends about Berthold. All their speeches and complaints have been faithfully transmitted to the authorities in Washington, by Generals Sully and Parker. How far they may have been acted upon I cannot say. I have no doubt they will produce a good effect in favor of the Indians.

At my arrival (August 12th) in Leavenworth from the upper country, I met the new Commissioners and gave them an exposition of my visit to the various tribes. They have been out till late in the fall. Their reports have not yet been published. They will return to the Indian country in the coming spring. I hesitate not to say, that the gentlemen composing the commission are all animated with the best of feelings toward the Indian tribes and to provide for their future welfare. Resistance on the part of the Indians will finally be overcome and bring great misery amongst them. I need not dwell on the consequences. You know them as well as myself and you certainly will continue to give them your good advices.

I have always felt in favor of the Indians. In my long

intercourse with them, they have favorably impressed me and were it not for the continued injustices committed against them, they would, most assuredly, be a better people. For about thirty years I have visited the Indians and have found much consolation amongst them. I would feel happy if my humble and poor efforts could bring them any comfort, and in that desire I intend to pay them another visit, as early as possible. I will leave St. Louis (the Lord willing), at the end of next month, or beginning of April. I am fully authorized to make the trip. I must await circumstances to regulate my trip. I intend to visit Forts Rice and Berthold—your advice and experience are always precious to me. My intention is, if I can possibly effect it, to penetrate into the interior among the hostile bands. I know the dangers of such a trip. I have no other motives than the welfare of the Indians and will trust entirely to the kind providence of God. Please keep to yourself what I am confiding to you, only tell good and trusty Indians to let the hostile bands know of my intended visit and of my intentions in their regard. Remember me to my good friend and chief, White Shield, and all my other Indian friends at Fort Berthold. My best respects and good wishes to my old and good friends, Pierre Garreau, to Beauchamp and Pierre my god-son and to all other white friends.

At this moment the disturbances in Washington are very high in consequence of the impeachment of the President. You receive the papers. I shall not dwell upon political subjects. They are altogether out of my line. Our political horizon looks dark indeed!

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St. Louis University, Feb. 27, 1868.

*Honorable Sir:*

I received your favor of the 17th instant. Allow me to express my sincere gratitude for granting me the request

I made, in my letter to General Sherman, and which he had the kindness to refer to you, to wit: "To be allowed to expend the balance (\$923.30) left in my charge, toward defraying the expenses of my intended visit to the Indian tribes on the Upper Missouri river and plains."

I accept with equal thankfulness your very kind offer, "should the amount above stated not be sufficient to meet your expenses, the Office of Indian Affairs will see that the deficiency is paid upon the presentation of your statement and account."

My intention is to proceed (at the opening of the Missouri river, in the upper country, toward the end of March or beginning of April), to Forts Rice or Berthold, to which posts the various tribes usually resort during the spring, and if practicable, or in any way possible, I will hence proceed into the interior, to confer with the hostile bands, and use every exertion in my power to make them understand the dangers and evil consequences of the course they are following, and the benevolent views of Government in their regard.

I shall receive with pleasure any instructions you may deem proper to confide with me, which I shall try to execute with all diligence and fidelity.

With sentiments of the highest respect and esteem, I have the honor to be, Honorable Sir,

Your very humble and obedient servant,

Honorable N. G. TAYLOR,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

*Commissioner of Indian Affairs.*

*Washington, D. C.*

St. Louis University, March 13, 1868.

Honorable N. G. TAYLOR,

*Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.:*

Honorable Sir.—I hereby acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 6th instant and feel sincerely grateful for

the observations it contains in regard to my visit to the upper Indian tribes. Should the good weather continue, I hope I shall be able to set out on my mission at the end of the present month or beginning of April.

My principal object in writing is to communicate to your kind attention the inclosed letter I just received from Fort Berthold. I have been acquainted and have corresponded with Mr. Gerard for a number of years and have always found him very reliable in his statements. From what appears, the winter in the upper country has been unusually severe and the sufferings and destitution of the Indians at Fort Berthold have been very great. Ever since the treaty at Fort Laramie, in 1851, these poor Indians have ever been the true friends of the Government and have withstood all the endeavors, on the part of the hostile Sioux, to bring them over to their side.

With sentiments of the highest respect and esteem, I have the honor to be,

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St. Louis University, March 17, 1868.

Dear Sir.—I received your kind favor of the 9th ult. I am truly grateful to you for the exertions you have made to prepare the minds of the Indians in regard to the object of my intended visit and I am happy to learn of the good dispositions in which a great number of the Indians are in this respect. Continue to assure them that I have no other motive in visiting them than their own welfare and future happiness. It is assuredly my intention, if practicable, to see as many of the camps as I shall be able to meet.

You state in your letter: "Should the commission come up here and give me timely warning, I think I will have them all here by the time you come."

I shall communicate your proposition to General Sherman or to the Honorable Mr. Taylor, and should they act upon it, they will, no doubt, let you know in due time. In

asking instructions as to my own future movements in the upper country, I received, for answer: "Your judgment and experience will suggest to you the best manner in which to proceed in carrying out the desires and intentions of Government, and if, in your course, circumstances should require that other directions than those already given (in 1867) should be furnished, they will in due time be communicated to you." The telegraph from Washington (March 16th) in regard to the Indian Peace Commission, had the following: "The Indian Peace Commission will meet at Omaha the 2d of April. All the members expect to be present except Mr. Manderson. Generals Sheridan and Augur will also attend. The intention is to form parties to visit the Indian settlements, one to go to Fort Laramie and the other to New Mexico."

How far this telegram may be relied upon I cannot say. As soon as I receive inside news I will let you know. I intend to leave St. Louis for Fort Rice at the end of the present month. I firmly rely upon your promise and assistance in bringing about good feelings and confidence toward the Government and whites in general among the hostile bands.

I see your daughter occasionally at the convent. She is in the enjoyment of good health and very much beloved and esteemed by the kind and motherly ladies of the academy. I intend to pay her a final visit before I leave St. Louis, and shall take charge of her commissions, if she has any to send to her good parents.

Most respectfully, Dear Mr. Galpin,

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*To the Hostile Camp on Powder River.<sup>2</sup>*

Last March I was honorably requested by the United States Government, as in the preceding year, to go

<sup>2</sup>The following was prefaced to the copy of this letter which Father De Smet sent August 28, 1868, to the editor of the *Précis Historiques*, as published in volume VI of the third Belgian edition.

among the Indians of the Upper Missouri, principally among the hostile bands of the Dakotas or Sioux, to endeavor to bring them to peace and to make clear to them the critical and dangerous position in which they would be placed if they persisted in continuing their murders and brigandages upon the whites.

On the 30th of March I left St. Louis, by rail, in company with Generals Sherman, Harney, Sanborn, Terry, Sheridan and several other envoys of the Government, bound for Cheyenne City, Nebraska, by way of Chicago and Omaha. At North Platte City, at the junction of the two great forks of the Platte river, a council was held with Spotted Tail, head chief of the Brûlés, and his principal warriors. This council terminated favorably, and was followed by a rich distribution of presents — victuals, garments and weapons — which made the hearts of our savages melt with joy.

“I have finished my modest article upon my excursion among the Indian tribes of the Upper Missouri. According to my promise and my custom, I send you the first copy.

“This letter may very well be my last. My health is very much undermined in consequence of the fatigues of my late painful journey of about 6,000 miles, but still more by the shocking heat that we have suffered for three months past. In proportion as I advance in age, heat becomes more and more insupportable to me. Very often any one would say that I resemble a man whose end is at hand.

“Let us take up the subject of my travels.

“After a few days spent among the Potawatomes of Kansas, I found myself really, as you might say, demolished, panting with open mouth for the slight breeze, hardly able to stir the little fine leaves of the acacias which surround and shade the Mission of St. Mary's. This was on the 29th of July. Every one was languishing. I was under a burning sun, with the thermometer ranging from 104 to 109° in the shade, and up to 130 in the sun. I shall, I doubt not, feel the effects for a long time; but, let us be patient, and hope!

“I will try to give you in this letter an account of my missionary journey; but I beg that you will pay no attention to the disconnectedness of my narrative.”

From the French of the Linton Album, p. 132 *et seq.*



Cheyenne, by the way, is a real wonder in its way; it was barely six months old on the 6th of last April, and had already nearly 9,000 inhabitants. At the present time this floating city has hardly more than 3,000. Bentonville, in the same region, is only one month old, and on the fourth day of its existence it had a population of over 4,000. Together with the generals, we made an excursion of forty miles, for observation and pleasure, to the summit of the Black Hills, [Sherman Pass] which the railroad crosses on the way to San Francisco. We were assured that this is the highest point attained by a railroad hitherto, being 8,000 feet above sea-level. The Peace Commissioners then turned their faces toward Fort Laramie. According to the arrangement, I returned to Omaha, where I spent the Paschal period. I then took passage on the steamer *Columbia* for Fort Rice, a distance by water of 1,005 miles. The Missouri was at that time very low, and our progress slow in consequence; we had to get over and through many banks and bars of sand and clay. The greedy furnaces of our steamboat consumed fifteen to twenty cords of wood daily. When the boat stopped to cut or load a supply, I often had occasion to exercise the holy ministry among the inhabitants of the region who came down to the woodyard or wharf, marrying couples who were awaiting the presence of a priest to receive the nuptial benediction, and regenerating in the holy waters of baptism a great number of children and several adults. The captain and his first officer (father and son), the two pilots and others of the principal employees, were all good Catholics. I had my little chapel on board and I had every day the consolation of offering the holy sacrifice of the mass. The officers and the Catholic passengers took advantage of this to approach the holy table of the Lord from time to time, especially on the solemn feast days. After thirty-three days of constant struggle with the current, sandbars and snags, I thanked and bade farewell to the worthy captain and all my old and new acquaintances

and was put ashore at Fort Rice,<sup>3</sup> in the midst of a great number of Indians, who were waiting for me and overwhelmed me with friendship. They had come thither to be present at the great Peace Council. I reached Fort Rice on the morning of May 24th, the Feast of the Holy Virgin, "*Auxilium Christianorum*," a most propitious day to obtain from heaven favors for the poor Indian tribes, "seated for so many ages in the shadow of death." For a great number of years they have been asking urgently for Catholic missionaries, Black-gowns, as they call them. This is the only region of the United States destitute of any spiritual aid. Will it some day be furnished with pastors, to lead these stray sheep, so favorably disposed, to the true fold of the Lord?

Upon arriving at Rice, I had first to pass through a numerous file of Indians, ranged along the shore. In all their fantastic accoutrements, they made a truly picturesque and, for the kind, admirable spectacle; their heads were adorned with feathers and silk ribbons, in which red and blue predominated, and their faces were daubed with the most varied colors. I received a good grip from each one, according to their etiquette and usage; I noticed that those who knew me squeezed my hand much harder than the others. My little baggage was then taken to the lodging that had been prepared for me beforehand, and all the great chiefs of the different tribes were waiting for me there to hear the important news of the Government's intentions toward them.

You will readily perceive that I had my hands full at Rice. The first four days after my arrival were employed in the instruction of the Indians and in conferring the holy sacrament of baptism upon all their little children, to the number of six or seven hundred. The 29th, 30th and 31st of May

<sup>3</sup> A military post, located on the right bank of the Missouri river, six miles above the mouth of the Cannonball river. It was established in 1864.





FATHER DE SMET RIDING WITH THE INDIANS.

were devoted to the Catholic soldiers, (Irish and German). The greater part of them took advantage of the occasion to approach the tribunal of penance and the holy table, on the solemn day of Pentecost.

The 1st and 2d of June were passed in interviews with the Indian chiefs and in making my preparations for departure to go in search of and to meet the hostile bands in the interior country. My plan seemed to astonish them and they hardly concealed from me the dangers that were involved in it, even touching the security of my scalp. I answered them simply, "the little children, in all their innocence, are the little pets, the little angels of the Great Spirit on earth. Before the image of the Holy Virgin Mary, the good Mother and the great protectress of all nations, six lamps are burning night and day, through all the duration of my journey. In St. Louis and in other places, more than a thousand little children are imploring every day, before these burning lamps, the favor and protection of heaven upon all the band who accompany me. I intrust myself with all my fears to the hands of the Lord." All of them then, as by one impulse, raised their hands toward heaven crying out "Oh! that is fine! We will go with you! When shall we start?" "To-morrow, at sunrise!"

June 3d. I said my mass early to recommend the undertaking to heaven. A short account of my travelling companions will not, I trust, be inappropriate. Mr. Galpin, an old Indian trader, who has spent thirty years in the country, a man of honesty and great experience, generously offered to accompany me in the capacity of interpreter, together with his old wife, a Sioux by birth, a convert to our holy religion and who has great influence among all the tribes of her nation. I will add only the names of the principal chiefs of my escort. Two Bears, head chief of the powerful tribe of the Yanktonnais, who is at the head of 700 lodges or families; a very remarkable man, from his great zeal for peace, his valor and his eloquence. He has solemnly

adopted me as a brother. "Running Antelope" is chief of a large tribe of Hunkpapas, renowned for his bravery and his deeds of arms against his enemies, more especially against the whites. For the last year he has accepted all propositions of peace with frankness and ardor, and to-day he is maintaining them devotedly. Besides these I have Bear's Rib, The Log [*le Soliveau*], All Over Black [*le Noir dans tout son entour*], Returning Ghost, Red Cloud, Little Dog and Sitting Crow. These are all remarkable and famous chiefs; they are at the head of my escort, with eighty of their principal braves and warriors. They belong to various bands of the Sioux, as follows: the Yanktonnais, Yanktons, Blackfeet Sioux, Hunkpapas, Minneconjous, Ogallalas, Sissetons and Santees. All of them offered themselves generously and freely in my service, with the sole object of persuading their hostile brethren to lend me an attentive and favorable ear, and if need were to protect me.

We were all assembled; a large circle was formed, in which several officers from the fort and some of the soldiers joined, besides a great number of Indians from all these different tribes. I then offered a solemn prayer to the Great Spirit to put us in his keeping, and made a short address to the numerous friends who surrounded us, recommending us to their pious recollection. Our march began at seven in the morning. We started westward, following the direct course of the sun. We made this day twenty-two miles and encamped on the north bank of Cannonball river.

The country in all the region which we traversed is very rolling and covered with a rich carpet of verdure and, at this season of the year, with a great variety of flowers, always so agreeable to the sight. The starlike blossoms of the cactus, yellow, white and red, were especially prevalent. We had a heavy rain during the day, accompanied by a strong wind, which greatly delayed the progress of our two wagons, carrying our little provisions and the baggage of all my escort. When we reached our camping-place, it did

not take us long to make ourselves at home. All seemed animated and enchanted and went joyously to work. The hunters came in with four fine antelope. It would be difficult to run down an antelope. It is spoken of as an extraordinary achievement, that one young Indian of my escort, pursuing one of these animals, by pushing his horse at top speed succeeded in lodging two arrows in the animal's body. The hunter makes use of a stratagem; he imitates the cry of distress of the young ones, and when the antelope stops to look, he gets in his shot.

While some busied themselves about the arrangement of their beds, composed of the small branches of willows and cottonwoods, others hastened to kindle fires, fill the kettles and coffee-pots and arrange rows of roasts on sharpened sticks, to content the inner man, or rather our famished stomachs, to use a more vulgar expression. Every Indian is the owner of an excellent stomach, and, according to my observation, a large capacity; the four antelope, together with a quantity of etceteras brought from Fort Rice, disappeared rapidly at the first supper. Then, for their digestion's sake, they dance around a few times, with the most active movements of arms and legs, accompanied with joyful songs at the top of their voices, suited to the circumstances in which they find themselves at the moment. Then they sit down, and while the inseparable calumet goes its slow rounds from mouth to mouth, they talk and argue upon the affairs of the day, tell stories, give their experiences in the chase or their exploits in war, laugh and joke until sleep overcomes them, when they go to bed. I took occasion to give them various lectures, instructing them in the good custom of offering their prayers of devotion to the Great Spirit, every morning on arising and before going to bed at night.

June 4th. After passing a good and tranquil night, we rose early for the second day's travel. We quickly light the fires again, prepare the kettles and hot water, say the morning prayers, take in haste our cup of coffee, our slice of meat

and our biscuit; all this takes about three-quarters of an hour. By five o'clock we were on the road.

There is not room in this letter to give you, day by day, the details of our march and of the country we traversed. To spare you wearisome repetitions, I will mention here that the country through which we rode for about 250 miles, is a succession of smiling undulating plains and of immense high plateaus, entirely without timber. The soil, or vegetable earth, is very light throughout and in many places impregnated with saltpetre, making the standing water disagreeable to drink, and unwholesome. In summer especially running water is scarce. The Cannonball river has but a small volume of flow throughout its entire course. It takes its source in certain promontories, visible at two days' journey, which the Indians call the Rainy or Cloudy Buttes, being incessantly enveloped in a bluish fog. All its tributaries consist of springs, and water-holes which in summer contribute their quota to the mother stream only in the frequent momentary showers, except in rainy seasons. It abounds in little fish, muskrats and beaver. Here and there on the banks of these little streams one finds the elder, the elm and the wild cherry, which has a pretty and fragrant flower and a very agreeable fruit, which the Indians gather with care. When wood fails, dry buffalo dung is used for fuel; it burns like peat. The plains are covered with a short but very nutritious grass called buffalo grass, which will some day serve to support and fatten numberless domestic herds.<sup>4</sup> Everywhere the *pomme blanche* is found in abundance — a kind of wild potato, which Providence has sown here in profusion for the maintenance of its poor children of the desert. When an Indian is pressed by hunger, he has only to dismount from his horse, and armed with a little pointed stick of hard wood, which he always carries when traveling, he will pull out roots enough in ten minutes to satisfy him for the moment. This potato is farinaceous,

<sup>4</sup> This prophecy has long since been fulfilled in the immense stock-grazing business of the plains.



and is eaten raw or boiled, or cooked with meat; it is a great remedy for scurvy, a malady by which the Indians are hardly ever attacked. Beds of beautiful variegated flowers are seen especially in spots where the soil is very light and sandy.

All through this region there are very high promontories or "buttes," which contain the springs where the little streams take their rise, and which tell the traveler the route he is to follow. I will mention here the most remarkable, as given me by my traveling companions. The Three Buttes, the Dog-tooth Butte, White Butte, Sand Butte, *les buttes qui se regardent*, and the Blue Stone Butte. These are the principal ones that we passed. The summit of the elevated plateaus that separate the waters of the Missouri from those of its great tributary, the Yellowstone, must have an elevation of 4,000 to 5,000 feet above sea-level. The surface of the country is covered with scoria, fragments of lava and petrified and crystallized wood. Evidently there have been violent convulsions here, changing the order of nature completely. There are still to be seen in great numbers those mysterious remains of past ages, trunks of petrified trees, of enormous circumference and four to eight feet in height. At this day there is not a vestige of wood there remaining. I have made a little collection of petrifications in those parts, which is the wonder and admiration of our amateurs and professors of geology. The portion of the valley of the Yellowstone and its tributaries, which we traversed, is more sandy and sterile than the eastern part, on the Missouri slope; it is the country *par excellence*, where the cactus, the Adam's Needle (*Yucca*), the absinth, artemisia and all the plants peculiar to sterile lands, mature in perfection. Here too thick beds of lignite are noticed; wherever they have been on fire, high reddish hills and mounds bear the marks of it.

The large animals that belong to the region we covered (700 miles going and coming) are the buffalo, antelope, deer, elk, bighorn and bear. In the twenty-eight days that we

were on the road, our hunters killed five buffalo, more than 300 antelope, and some deer, bighorn and elk. Our rustic tables were abundantly supplied each day, and our good savages never ceased to do honor to the fare.

As we went, we passed by the tombs of two braves, killed in the war and placed on scaffolds. My band halted an instant to pay them homage, smoke the calumet and sing in memory of their illustrious companions. To fight like a brave and die covered with wounds is to them the *Ne plus ultra* of glory. Here are their words: "Thou hast preceded us to the land of souls. To-day at thy tomb we admire thy lofty deeds. Thy death has been avenged by thy brothers in arms. Repose in peace, illustrious warrior!" Women's melodious voices, mingling with the lugubrious tones of the men, rendered the funeral chant really imposing. If time permits, I will speak later in detail of their manners and customs when traveling. I have taken pleasure in making notes upon this subject during my long horseback ride.

June 9th. After six days' journey, having found no trace of the hostile camps, we sent out four scouts from our escort — Le Soliveau, Red Cloud, Little Dog and Sitting Crow — to beat up the country in search of the enemy. We had agreed upon a direction to be followed and upon camping places for several days in advance. Each of them was bearer of a small charge of tobacco. I should mention that sending tobacco is the same thing as a formal invitation, or the announcement of a desire to meet to confer upon important affairs. If the tobacco is accepted, it is a sure sign that you will be admitted among them; if on the contrary it is refused, you may understand that all communication is forbidden, and govern yourself accordingly.

June 16th. We were camped at the sources of the Beaver river, a tributary of the Little Missouri<sup>5</sup> of the Grosventres.

<sup>5</sup> Now the only stream called by this name. In Father De Smet's time the Teton or Bad river, which enters the Missouri at Fort Pierre, was also called Little Missouri.

It comes down from the mountainous hills which separate the waters of the Missouri from those of the Yellowstone. Late in the afternoon we perceived afar off the approach of a band of Indians. With a field glass we made out that it was our scouts returning, and before long they came in, at the head of a deputation of eighteen warriors, announcing their arrival by sounding shouts and joyful songs. All came and shook hands with me with especial eagerness, and after we had smoked the pipe of peace together — a first proof of their good will toward me — they announced, in the name of the head chiefs of their camp, that “my tobacco had been favorably received; that entry into their camp was open to the Black-robe alone; that no other white man would get out of it with his scalp; that all the chiefs and warriors were awaiting me with impatience, wishing to hear me and learn the motives of my visit.”

Afterward we exchanged news. I learned that the big camp was three days' march away, in the Yellowstone valley, a few miles above the mouth of Powder river. The night was spent in feasts between the Indians of my escort and the newcomers, mingled with joyful songs and fraternal rounds of the calumet. They were uproarious reunions, *à la sauvage*, but harmony and cordiality prevailed.

June 17th. After more or less of a night's sleep, we broke camp early in the morning. It took us several hours to reach the divide. From this elevation the eye covers a most arid and desolate region; it seemed to us to be impenetrable or impassable to our two wagons. It was our defile of Thermopylæ. After careful examination, it was decided to go ahead, and by sheer strength of arms, and by doubling and tripling the number of animals for a distance of six miles, all the ascents and descents were accomplished. In that place there is little vegetation or verdure, or none at all. Thence we passed into the valley of the Poplar, level but very sandy for a great distance; we camped near a pool of green and stagnant water. Here for the first time we found abundance of wood. All the following day

was occupied in crossing high rolling plains, in which cactus and absinth predominated for a distance of twenty-five miles, and we encamped on the Big Sandy, a tributary of Poplar river.

Finally on the 19th, after crossing a fine plateau about a dozen miles wide, we came to the beautiful hills which line Powder river. I will say but a word of the lovely landscape which was presented to our sight. Powder river lay before us; its bed is wide and sandy, not deep; at a short distance on our right it pays its tribute to the Yellowstone and mingles its waters with those of a great cataract or rapid above its mouth, the dull sound of which is heard from afar, resembling the distant roll of thunder. At this point, the mountainous hills of the Yellowstone, though entirely sterile, are very picturesque and remarkable.

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Some four miles off in the Powder river bottoms, we saw a strong force of horsemen, composed of 400 to 500 warriors, coming to meet me; I at once had my standard of peace hoisted, with the holy name of Jesus on one side and on the other the image of the holy Virgin Mary, surrounded with gilt stars. They took it at first sight for the hated flag of the United States. At this signal, all the cavalcade halted and appeared to enter into consultation. Immediately afterward, the four head chiefs came toward us at full speed, and seemed as it were to flit around the banner. They considered it, and upon perceiving its meaning and high importance, they came up and shook my hand and made signals to all their warriors to advance. They then formed into a single long line or phalanx; we did the same, and with the flag at our head we went to meet them. At the same time the air resounded with shouts and songs of joy on both sides. I was touched even to tears at sight of the reception which these sons of the desert, still in paganism, had prepared for the poor Black-robe. It was the fairest spectacle in which I have ever had the happiness of taking part, and, against all expectation, it was filled with manifestations of the profoundest respect. Everything was



MEETING WITH THE HOSTILE SIOUX ON THE POWDER RIVER.



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wild and noisy, but at the same time everything was carried out in admirable order. Upon arriving at a distance of 200 to 300 yards, the two columns halted face to face. All the chiefs came and shook hands with me in sign of friendship, and bade me welcome to their country. Then, surrounded by the chiefs, I shook hands with all the warlike cohort. Exchanges of horses, weapons and garments took place at the same time between the two columns.

This first ceremony ended, the four head chiefs acted as an escort to me, as a guard of honor and to prevent any perfidious attack by secret traitors who might be determined to take vengeance on the pale-face.<sup>6</sup> Preceded by the banner of the holy Virgin, we next took the direction of the main camp, which was ten or twelve miles away and consisted of nearly 600 lodges. Once across Powder river, a close column was formed, and strict military order was observed. The accoutrements were wholly savage. Plumes of eagles and other birds adorned their long hair, and even their steeds had them in their manes and tails, mingled with silk ribbons of various colors and scalps captured from the enemy. Each one had his visage daubed according to his own ideas, with black, yellow or blue, streaked and spotted in every imaginable shade. I took part in this real and unique masquerade, which is seen but seldom here and which I had in no wise expected. Nevertheless, my heart was as tranquil and my mind as calm as if I had been in the midst of you, and I ceased not to form very sincere vows for their conversion. We made our entry into the camp in the midst of 4,000 to 5,000 Indians, big and little, who received us with every sign of lively and sincere joy. Soon afterward, I took possession of a large lodge, pitched in the centre of the camp, which had been prepared for me

<sup>6</sup> By the penal code in force among the savages, every Indian who has lost a member of his family at the hands of the whites is obliged to avenge himself on the first white man he meets. Well, there were a good many of them in this position at the time of my arrival among them.— *Author's Note.*

by order of the generalissimo of the warriors, Sitting Bull, and which was guarded night and day by a band of his most faithful soldiers. Hunger and weariness had taken possession of me; a mouthful of food was prepared for me in haste, and I took a little nap without delay.

When I awoke, I found Sitting Bull beside me, together with Four Horns, head chief of the camp, Black Moon, his great orator, and No Neck. Sitting Bull presently addressed me, saying: "Black-robe, I hardly sustain myself beneath the weight of white men's blood that I have shed. The whites provoked the war; their injustices, their indignities to our families, the cruel, unheard of and wholly unprovoked massacre at Fort Lyon (where Chivington commanded)<sup>7</sup> of 600 or 700 women, children and old men, shook all the veins which bind and support me. I rose, tomahawk in hand, and I have done all the hurt to the whites that I could. To-day thou art amongst us, and in thy presence my arms stretch to the ground as if dead. I will listen to thy good words, and as bad as I have been to the whites, just so good am I ready to become toward them." After this the chiefs talked with me of preparations to be made for the Great Council to be held on the morrow.

The remainder of the day, until a very late hour, was spent in visits and in conversation with the principal warriors and representative men of the camp. One incident that was both consoling and worth reporting took place in my lodge. A venerable old man, of remarkable stature but bowed beneath the weight of age, supporting himself on a staff tipped with an old bayonet, came to offer me his hand and express his happiness at seeing me again. He wore upon his breast a copper cross, old and worn. This was the only religious token that I had observed in all the camp; it filled me with joy and emotion. I questioned him

<sup>7</sup> Sand Creek, Colorado, forty miles below Fort Lyon. Colonel Chivington, of the First Colorado Cavalry, organized the massacre; Major Anthony commanded at Fort Lyon and aided Chivington in person and with troops.



eagerly and with interest, to know from whom he had received this cross. After a moment's thought, and counting on his fingers, he answered, "It was you, Black-robe, who gave me this cross. I have never laid it aside for twenty-six snows. The cross has raised me to the clouds among my people" (meaning that it had made him great and respectable). "If I still walk on earth, it is to the cross that I owe it, and the Great Spirit has blessed my numerous family."

I begged him to explain further, and he continued: "When I was younger, I loved whisky to madness, and at every chance I would get drunk and commit excesses. It is now twenty-six snows since my last turbulent orgy. I was stupid and sick from it; just then I had the good fortune to meet you, and you made known to me that my behavior was against the will of the Master of Life and offended him grievously. Since then, I have often had opportunities; my friends have sometimes sought to induce me to join them in their illicit enjoyments, and often my old evil inclination would combat my good will, which desired to resist the temptation. Every time the cross has come to my help. I would take it between my hands, imploring the Great Spirit to give me strength, and your words, Black-robe, would come to my mind. Ever since we first met, I have renounced drink, and have never tasted a drop."

Armed with the grace of God, the good old man's strength of soul and his good will to resist temptation were really admirable. This good, simple-hearted savage, living among his pagan brothers, in the most hostile camp in the desert, had little trouble in comprehending the most lofty things; he received the light of intelligence from on high and drew strength from the humble little cross. As Thomas à Kempis so well says (book II, chap. XII), the poor savage "found in the cross a refuge against his evil nature, an infusion of heaven's sweetness, strength to his soul and gladness to his mind." He had always retained a

hope of seeing me again; (something very essential was still lacking). I encouraged him to persevere in his good intentions. I spoke to him of the high importance of the Holy Sacrament of Regeneration, which would render him worthy to enter after death into the heavenly fatherland, to live eternally among the happy children of the Great Spirit. Padanegricka, or "Yellow Rickaree," was the old man's name. When I left the camp after the council, he followed me for 350 miles. Every evening, when we encamped, he received an instruction, and on the 28th of last June he was solemnly baptized under the name of Peter. He evinced the most lively gratitude, and returned joyfully to the camp he had left.

June 21st, day of the Great Council. From an early hour, men and women were busy preparing the spot where the council was to be held; this spot covered nearly a half acre of ground, or 2,420 square yards. The whole place was surrounded by a series of tepees or Indian lodges, composed of twenty to twenty-four buffalo-skins each, which were suspended on long pine poles. The banner of the holy Virgin occupied the centre, and on one side a seat was prepared for me of fine buffalo-robos. When all the Indians, 4,000 to 5,000 in number, had taken their places, I was solemnly introduced into this *salon champêtre*, which was improvised for the occasion by the two head chiefs, Four Horns and Black Moon. I took my seat. The council was opened with songs and dances, noisy, joyful and very wild, in which the warriors alone took part. Then Four Horns lighted his calumet of peace; he presented it first solemnly to the Great Spirit, imploring his light and favor, and then offered it to the four cardinal points, to the sun and the earth, as witnesses to the action of the council. Then he himself passed the calumet from mouth to mouth. I was the first to receive it, with my interpreter, and every chief was placed according to the rank that he held in the tribe. Each one took a few puffs. When the ceremony of the calumet was finished, the head chief addressed me, saying,

“Speak, Black-robe, my ears are open to hear your words.” All this was done with the greatest gravity and amid a profound silence.

I will close this letter by giving you an abridged account of the transactions and speeches that took place at the council. Although it lasted three or four hours, everything passed off in perfect order and decorum.

Rising to my feet and raising my hands to heaven, I made a prayer to the Great Spirit, imploring light and blessing from him and his help in this great meeting. Then, for almost an hour, I laid before them the disinterested motives that had brought me among them, which could only tend to their happiness, if my words were well understood. Especially I spoke to them of the dangers with which they were surrounded, and of their weakness beside the great strength of the whites, if the “Great Father” were forced to use it against them. The harm done by the war had been terrible, and the crimes committed on both sides had been atrocious. The Great Father desired that all should be forgotten and buried. Today his hand was ready to aid them, to give them agricultural implements, domestic animals, men to teach them field-work and teachers of both sexes to instruct their children, and all this offered them without the least remuneration or cession of lands on their part.

All these points were discussed, and it was resolved to send a deputation to the peace commissioners, at my request. Four chiefs spoke; all took practically the same line of argument. It will be enough to give you the speech of Black Moon, together with the ceremonies accompanying it. He rose, calumet in hand, and addressing his people, said “Lend an ear to my words.” Then he raised the calumet solemnly to heaven and lowered it to earth; thus invoking, by the Indian interpretation, heaven and earth as his witnesses. At his request, I touched the calumet with my lips, putting my right hand on the stem. I smoked a few puffs; he did the same; and the pipe passed on to others. Then he said, in a loud voice: “The Black-robe has made a long

journey to come to us; his presence among us makes me very glad, and with all my heart I wish him welcome to my country. I can understand all the words that the Black-robe has just said to us; they are good and filled with truth. I shall lay them up in my memory. Still, our hearts are sore, they have received deep wounds. These wounds have yet to be healed. A cruel war has desolated and impoverished our country; the desolating torch of war was not kindled by us; it was the Sioux east of us and the Cheyennes south of us who raised the war first, to revenge themselves for the white man's cruelties and injustice. We have been forced to take part, for we too have been victims of their rapacity and wrongdoing. To-day, when we ride over our plains, we find them spotted here and there with blood; these are not the blood-stains of buffalo and deer killed in the chase, but those of our own comrades or of white men, sacrificed to vengeance. The buffalo, the elk, the antelope, the bighorn and the deer have quitted our immense plains; we hardly find them any more, except at intervals, and always less numerous. May it not be the odor of human blood that puts them to flight? I will say further — against our will, the whites are interlacing our country with their highways of transportation and emigration; they build forts at various points and mount thunders upon them. They kill our animals, and more than they need. They are cruel to our people, maltreat and massacre them without reason, or for the slightest cause, even when they are searching for food, for animals and roots to nourish their wives and children. They cut down our forests in spite of us, and without paying us their value. They are ruining our land. We are opposed to having these big roads which drive the buffalo away from our country. This soil is ours, and we are determined not to yield an inch of it. Here our fathers were born and are buried. We desire, like them, to live here, and to be buried in this same soil. We have been forced to hate the whites; let them treat us like brothers and the war will cease. Let them stay at home; we will

never go to trouble them. To see them come in to build their cabins revolts us, and we are determined to resist or die. Thou, Messenger of Peace, thou hast given us a glimpse of a better future. Very well; so be it; let us hope. Let us throw a veil over the past, and let it be forgotten. I have only a word more to say; in the presence of all my people, I express to you here my thanks for the good news that you have announced and for all your good counsel and advice. We accept your tobacco. Some of our warriors will go with you to Fort Rice to hear the words and the propositions of the Great Father's commissioners. If their words are acceptable, peace shall be made." Then he took his seat.

Black Moon was followed by Sitting Bull, Two Bears and Running Antelope. They all touched on the same matters as Black Moon and pronounced in favor of peace. It is useless to report the different speeches, the first will suffice.

At the close of the council, at the moment of breaking up, the chiefs begged me most earnestly to leave my great banner of Peace with them as a souvenir of the great day of the council. I gladly acceded to their wish. I presented the banner to them in sign of gratitude for the confidence with which they had inspired me in all their behavior toward me and the speeches that they had just uttered. At the same time, I conceived a sincere hope that the banner, bearing the sweet name of Jesus and the lovely image of the Virgin, Mother of all nations and Queen of Heaven, might be a gage of future happiness and welfare to all the tribe. I recommended them very specially to the protection of the holy and good Mother, the "*auxilium et refugium Indianorum*," as anciently in Paraguay, in Canada, everywhere and forevermore.

Afterward there was a singing that roused the echoes of the hills and a dance that made the ground tremble. This was the end of the council; it closed tranquilly, in good order and harmony. Every man then went his way. I

betook myself to my lodge, and the principal Indians followed me thither. Then a large number of little Indians appeared, led by their mothers, who had also their papooses or young babies in their arms. I at once came forth to them, and they crowded around, with a rare trustfulness, very unusual among Indian children, to offer me their little hands. The mothers were not satisfied until I had laid my hands upon the heads of all the babies and little ones around me, when they withdrew contented and happy.

A standard-bearer was chosen from among the most distinguished warrior, named Gall [*le Fiel*]. He is a very remarkable man, by reason of his sufferings and a wonderful escape from the bayonets of the American soldiers. He told me the story of his troubles, and I touched with my fingers the scars he bears. He had been arrested on a charge of stealing horses. It was in the dead of winter, and the ground was covered with snow. On the road to the prison at the fort, the soldiers thought or feared that he intended to escape, and they ran him through the body twice with bayonets. He fell, bathed in blood, but being still conscious, he counterfeited death. They trampled him and kicked him, covering him with bruises. To finish their cowardly and cruel work upon their prisoner, they thrust a third bayonet through his neck, and at last threw him into a deep ravine. Here he lay unconscious for quite a while, entirely naked, on the drifted snow. When he came to himself, it was already far into the night. He got up, and walked about twenty miles. When he reached the timber, on the bank of the Missouri, he found a fire, at which he warmed his limbs, stiffened by the cold. The hope of life returned to him then, and he implored the Great Spirit to "take pity on him and preserve him." He then quenched his burning and feverish thirst and washed off from his body the clotted blood that covered it. In the hope of meeting some one, he continued to drag himself on, and after traveling some miles farther he discovered an Indian lodge. It was that of old Peter, Padanegricka, who treated him like

a veritable Samaritan. When it was daylight, his host conveyed him on a stretcher to the main camp, where he was received with all the honors of a great warrior. Upon hearing his tale of the soldiers' cruelty and seeing his wounds, the rage of the warriors knew no bounds, and a great number of unhappy whites fell victims to it. In less than a year Gall himself set out on his war of vengeance, and returned to camp amid acclamations, with seven white scalps on the end of his lance. Gall was one of the Hunkpapa deputies who accompanied me to Fort Rice. He was well received there by the generals of the commission and the officers of the post; he took part in the Great Council, made the first speech and signed the treaty of peace. He was loaded with presents, and returned satisfied to his people.

June 21st, Feast of St. Louis of Gonzagus. I said my mass at an early hour, and before sunrise we commenced our return to Fort Rice, where the Government commissioners were awaiting me. My escort of eighty-four men was on the spot. The eight Hunkpapa deputies were also on hand, and some thirty families of the hostile camp (numbering 160) chose to accompany me. As at my arrival, the four head chiefs and the principal warriors acted as my escort, and only left me after seeing me across Powder river, showing me esteem and respect to the last.

We traveled thirty-five to forty-five miles every day;<sup>8</sup> the weather was fine and favorable and wild animals (buffalo

<sup>8</sup> While on the way back the following correspondence passed between Father De Smet and the commissioners:

Box Elder Camp, June 25, 1868.

Honorable Peace Commissioners:

On the 21st instant, we left the united camp of Uncpapos, Blackfeet Sioux, Minnicanjous, some Sans Arcs, etc., consisting of over 500 lodges. They were encamped on the Yellowstone River, about four miles above the mouth of the Powder river. This day we start the bearer "All Over Black" with these few lines to give you some idea of our success at the camp, which from all appearance has been most favorable. The full details of our reception and of the great council held on the next day, I shall omit for the present and reserve for our arrival

and antelope) were abundant. As we journeyed, I conferred the holy sacrament of baptism on some sixty small children and five adults of advanced age, among whom was the good old man, Peter. On the 30th of June we made our solemn entry into Fort Rice, where we were received with demonstrations of the liveliest joy by the peace commissioners, the army officers and thousands of Indians who were there assembled.

at Fort Rice. The other day I held a council with the principal men who accompanied us to the hostile camp—they are all unanimous in testifying that the object of our mission has been accomplished. The camp has sent several of their principal men, who are now with us, to make the final arrangements at Fort Rice. The reception the Indians gave us (over 400 in number, who had come in advance to meet us) was one of the grandest I ever witnessed. They were headed by the Black Moon, Sitting Bull, the Gall, No Neck, White Gut, and many other of the principal chiefs and braves.

We hope to meet the Honorable Commissioners in about five days.

With sentiments of profound respect and esteem, I have the honor to be

Your obedient servant,

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

Honorable Peace Commissioners, Fort Rice.

Fort Rice, June 28, 1868.

Rev. P. J. DE SMET, S. J.:

Dear Sir.—Messengers bringing your letter of the twenty-fifth inst. arrived this morning. We are delighted to learn that your expedition has been so successful, and we feel that not only ourselves but the nation owes you a debt of gratitude for the extremely valuable service which you have rendered to it. Generals Harney and Sanborn arrived here on the twenty-first and they will remain until a treaty can be consummated. I very much regret to learn from a letter to La Framboise from Major Galpin, that you are quite unwell. I sincerely trust that you are suffering from only temporary illness and that the rest and quiet which will follow your return will speedily restore you to health.

With sentiments of the highest respect, I am, dear sir,

Your most obedient servant,

ALFRED H. TERRY,

Bvt. Major-General.



The Great Peace Council took place on the 2d of July. Fifty thousand Indians were there represented. It was the greatest council that had been held on the Missouri in fifty years. Everything passed off favorably, and the treaty of peace was signed by all the chiefs and principal warriors. On the 3d and 4th of July, the distribution of presents was made, in good order and to the great satisfaction of the savages.

I left the same day to visit several tribes encamped near Fort Sully, where I gave baptism to all the young children. Afterward I gave a mission for the Catholic soldiers, and on the 11th of the same month I started down the river for Fort Leavenworth, going thence to St. Mary's Mission.

Inasmuch as the testimonial of the peace commissioners has a bearing on my mission among the hostile tribes, although undeserved on my part, you will permit me to close this little narrative by adding it.

P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

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Fort Rice, D. T., July 3, 1868.

Rev. P. J. DE SMET, S. J.:

Dear Sir.— We the undersigned, the members of the Indian Peace Commission who have been present at the council just terminated at this post, desire to express to you our high appreciation of the great value of the services which you have rendered to us and to the country by your devoted and happily successful efforts to induce the hostile bands to meet us and enter into treaty relations to the Government. We are satisfied that but for your long and painful journey into the heart of the hostile country, and but for the influence over even the most hostile of the tribes which your years of labor among them have given to you, the results which we have reached here could not have been accomplished. We are well aware that our thanks can be but of

little worth to you, and that you will find your true reward for your labors and for the dangers and privations which you have encountered in the consciousness that you have done much to promote peace on earth and good will to men; but we should do injustice to our own feelings were we not to render to you our thanks and express our deep sense of the obligations under which you have laid us.<sup>9</sup>

We are, Dear Sir,

With sentiments of the highest respect,

Your Very Obedient Servants,

WM. S. HARNEY,

Bvt. Majr.-Gen. & Indian Peace Comr.

JOHN B. SANBORN, Comr.

ALFRED H. TERRY,

Bvt. Major-General U. S. A. & Comr.

<sup>9</sup> Both the above letters are in General Terry's handwriting.

See also page 1584 for an interesting letter by General Stanley.

## CHAPTER VII.

### LAST JOURNEYS OF FATHER DE SMET.

A fall on board ship — Beautiful weather at sea — Neptune once more — Peaceful crossing — Escorts party of sisters for Montana as far as Omaha — Visits his first neophytes, the Potawatomies, again — Their present status — Still planning for a Sioux mission.

University of St. Louis.<sup>1</sup>

*Very Dear and Worthy Doctor:*

**Y**OU ask me for a fresh letter, or rather for the continuation of the skeleton of my itinerary. For the last twelve years, at each of my returns to St. Louis, you have been placing, joyously, your album upon my table. Each recurring sight of it is to me a fresh pleasure, like a meeting with an old and familiar acquaintance, and immediately I resume my pen with gladness, to lengthen the old skeleton with one more page. Taking them altogether, my last journeys, whether by land or by sea, have been fortunate and tranquil. I have only a single accident to record; it was on my eighteenth crossing of the Atlantic. I was on board the *City of Baltimore*, last December, and two days before I reached Liverpool, a furious storm arose — the rolling of the boat was violent — it is the time for falls! Take care! I made a miss — I took my fall, and had two ribs fractured — lucky, as the Belgians say, in these kinds of misunderstandings, to have come out of the mix-up with head, legs and arms safe. I will give you here my nineteenth crossing of the Atlantic.

On the 12th of June, after taking my farewell of the Reverend Fathers of Notre Dame College at Antwerp and of the friends who had escorted us on board — after receiving

<sup>1</sup> From the Linton Album, p. 148. Written in French.

their good wishes for a fortunate crossing, the *City of Dublin* gave her last signal for departure, at one in the afternoon, and majestically descended the Scheldt. In the evening we issued upon the North Sea, in calm and serene weather — the setting of the sun on such an occasion, always so beautiful and among the great wonders of the Lord, was watched with admiration by all the passengers on board.

Furious winds always create torments on the ocean. On the second day out, Sunday, the *City of Dublin* was tipping and pitching over the surface of the waves — it was the timely moment chosen by Neptune to levy his tax and exact his painful tribute from the passengers on board. The greater number submitted, willing or not, without the least resistance. This is a sorrowfully amusing scene — contagious moreover to the spectator; but it seldom has serious consequences. Our 400 passengers, with few exceptions, had as if by a common agreement and simultaneously adopted a dolorous bearing, accompanied by grimaces and gestures and by efforts to yield up and satisfy the exigencies of the pitiless Neptune. All the deck presented groups of families, standing or lying, pell-mell, fathers, mothers and children, sparing not one another, covered and surrounded with most disagreeable heaps. The comedy lasted until toward evening, when the ocean resumed its calm and the boat ceased its rolling. Pumps and buckets were then brought into use, and all these slutteries deposited on the deck were thrown into the sea, to serve as pasture to the sea-calves and their numerous aquatic comrades — the gulls followed the vessel in flocks, and participated also in the great feast of the Neptunian tax.

On the 16th, with superb weather, the *City of Dublin* entered the beautiful bay of Queenstown, Ireland. The whole day was employed in taking on coal; at eight in the evening of the same day the anchor was raised and the steamer shot forth again toward its destination. The ocean was calm and tranquil, and maintained its serenity thereafter throughout the crossing. The wind, or rather the

breeze, without being strong, was always contrary. I may remark here that westerly winds predominate, ordinarily, in these seas, through three-quarters of the year.

In the neighborhood of the Banks of Newfoundland, for several days in succession, the fogs were so thick that the alarm-whistle had to be kept going, to prevent any meeting or collision with other boats. This piercing whistle is a mournful sound, repeated every five minutes, day and night — it is difficult to accustom one's self to it. At this season of the year, these fogs are caused by the meeting and mingling of the warm water of the Gulf Stream with the cold water of the Arctic Current, which brings down in its course numerous glacial islands, detached from the coasts of the North Pole. These islands often have a depth beneath the surface of thirty to forty yards. From time to time, whales, sharks and other marine monsters came and offered themselves to our view, as if to amuse us with their leaps and plunges, and thus vary the sad monotony of our long voyage.

The passengers on the *City of Dublin* were for the most part Germans and Swiss, with a sprinkling of Belgians, Hollanders, French and Italians. A large number were Catholics, and we had the sweet consolation of being able to be useful to them in a religious way especially. The greater part were artisans or farmers, seeking to find work and better their lot in America. All our crossing was quiet and peaceful; so far as I know, there was no serious call made either on the surgeon or on his stock of drugs, and not the slightest accident occurred to trouble or delay the vessel in her progress. We humbly attributed all these favors to the numerous good prayers offered in behalf of our travelers. Glory to God and to the Immaculate Virgin, *Stella Maris*, for all the kindness of heaven.

On the 29th, in the forenoon, we entered the harbor of New York — the summer was then at the height of its heat — truly, it was very exhausting to me. The change from the moderate calm climate of Belgium was too sud-

den, and I felt it very much. I obtained free entry of all my effects at the custom-house, which I consider a distinguished favor. I had four great trunks and five boxes, containing sacred vessels, pictures and ornaments for our poor Indian churches, and books for our libraries. I had to spend a couple of days in running about New York, to attend to my little affairs and execute my commissions.

Early in the morning of the 2d of July, I left the commercial metropolis of the Union, with its million inhabitants, by the Ohio and Mississippi railroad. This line crosses one of the richest valleys of Pennsylvania and the handsome and picturesque vales of the Alleghany Mountains. It crosses the fertile States of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois from east to west. Everywhere the harvest was abundant and beautiful, and the crop promises to surpass those of any preceding years.

On the 3d, toward four in the afternoon, I reached Cincinnati, some 900 miles distant from New York. There I remained until the 6th, and on the 7th I found myself at the end of my long wanderings, in the midst of my dear brothers in Jesus Christ.

A little resumé of my last sixteen months' travels will doubtless interest you, and I will here add them to my "Itinerary." In the long letter preceding this (1868), that I had the honor to forward to you, and to have copied into the Album, concerning my visits and missions among the hostile tribes of the Great Plains, from the beginning of April, 1868, to my return to St. Louis in the course of the autumn of the same year, the distances traveled amount to 5,200 miles, as may be found recorded in the general catalogue of my travels on page 60 of the Album. There remains to add the following list of mileage for 1868-9 to my itinerary. I include my travels and visits during my last trip abroad, in Belgium, Holland, France and England, as far as to the fair College of Stonyhurst, in Lancashire, which amount to over 2,500 miles.

	Miles.
1868.	
Nov. 21. I went from St. Louis to New York via Cincinnati . . . . .	1,200
25. I embarked at New York for the port of Liverpool . . . . .	3,100
Dec. 11. I left Liverpool, via London, Antwerp and Ghent for Termonde . . . . .	500
1868-9.	
My travels in Belgium, Holland, France and England . . . . .	2,500
1869.	
June 12. I left the port of Antwerp for Queenstown . . . . .	579
16. From Queenstown bay to the port of New York . . . . .	2,900
July 2. From New York, via Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Cincinnati to St. Louis. . .	1,200
Forming a total of miles to be added to my itinerary of . . . . .	11,979

TWO EXCURSIONS IN THE FALL OF 1869.<sup>2</sup>

St. Louis University, March 2, 1870.

I have learned that my letter of July 31st escaped the shipwreck of the *Germania* on the French coast, since the mails were saved. I spoke to you of the excessive heat of our months of July and August; I have suffered a great deal, by reason of the sudden transition from a moderate and cool climate to one warm and exhausting. In autumn, the heat abates and so health and strength have come back to me little by little. I have therefore been allowed to

<sup>2</sup> From the French of the third Belgian edition, volume VI.

make two good excursions, one of 400 leagues, coming and going, and the other of 200. The occasion was as follows:

Our missionaries in the Rocky Mountains had urged me to obtain them some religious ladies for the education of young girls in Montana, and to take care, later, of orphans and the sick. With the design of commencing this first Catholic establishment or boarding-school, the Fathers offered their own house, situated in Helena, the capital of the Territory. With my superiors' consent, I went to work without delay, in view of the approach of winter and the great distance to be traveled. I obtained a colony of Sisters of Charity, chosen among sixty-six nuns. I accompanied them to Omaha, in Nebraska. Well recommended, they took their places upon the Pacific railroad, to go 1,100 miles and then take stage from Corinne, in the Territory of Utah; a six-horse stage, which makes the 500 miles to Helena in thirty-six hours. I have since learned, from private letters and the public prints, that the good sisters reached their destination, amid the acclamations of the citizens without regard to creed. *Deo gratias!* By this time their first establishment is in full activity. It is to be hoped that each year other religious houses may arise, according to the needs of two vast regions of the Rocky Mountains, the Territories of Idaho and Montana.

A short time ago, I tried to undertake a second journey, or a visit among the Potawatomi Indians, in the State of Kansas.

We have two schools there, with about 300 pupils. The boys are under the care of our Fathers and the girls in charge of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart. These two establishments are self-supporting and prosperous. The pupils are giving entire satisfaction to their teachers, and their zeal, piety and application are exemplary.

I felt a strong desire to see the Potawatomies once more, especially at a moment very critical and important to them. It was among them that I commenced my missionary career.



They are my first children in Jesus Christ, and everything that concerns them interests me greatly. I have baptized several hundreds of these dear neophytes. At present the Indians are menaced by great dangers. I will tell you all about this, without the least concealment, that you may see the difficulties in which these good savages are involved at this time.

The State of Kansas was admitted to the Union January 29, 1861. Its fertile lands and its central position, between the east and the west of America, attracted a great number of immigrants. It has already more than 400,000 inhabitants, and over 400 towns and villages are in active construction and on the highway to prosperity. The Missions of St. Francis Hieronymo and St. Mary among the Potawatomies have become two cities; one bears the name of the mission, the other is called St. Marysville. Houses spring up as if by enchantment, and everybody exclaims "How lovely! how wonderful!" But here is the sad reverse of the medal.

I will speak only of the Potawatomies, whom I have lately visited, and who are divided into two classes, those who are civilized and those who are not.

The civilized Potawatomies, that is, those of the Indians who are in submission to the American Government, form the majority of this people. They are at the present moment passing through a most critical, but not unforeseen, trial. They have recently received from the Government, with the full ownership of their allotments of land or their farms, a sum of \$500 *per capita*, something over 2,500 francs. This was the signal for the arrival of a horde of white men, who swooped down like vultures on these savages, and made unheard-of-efforts to ruin and destroy those innocent creatures, once so happy. Drink, the abominable *whisky*, was brought in abundance to St. Mary's and among all the neighboring peoples, who had also received money payments from the Government. A great many sad sud-

den deaths took place, mournful consequences of the excesses occasioned by debauches. The missionaries succeeded, not without great trouble, in arresting the terrible scourge, destroyer of all civilization, which was being introduced in a satanic manner among their neophytes.

Despite all the efforts made by those tools of hell, the whites, to brutalize the Indians, the missionaries have not been without consolation. The greater number of the Potawatomes remained faithful during the trial, and edified the priests by their piety and love of work. Those who momentarily abandoned themselves to the sad excesses of drink were not shaken in the faith, and arose directly from their fall. They have all escaped the abyss into which our *civilizers* sought to cast them. Besides, experience is there, to teach the savages that their purses become swiftly empty in these orgies; and as their money disappears, reason gradually resumes its empire in the heart of the duped Indian. Our missionaries therefore hold their ground and are not discouraged; they even redouble their zeal and ardor to arrest the evil and the offenses which divine goodness receives from its children. The Indians are always dear to our good priests' hearts, and their apostolic labors continue to bear consoling fruits of salvation.

Still we must own that the missionary's position among the Potawatomes is more difficult to-day than formerly. He must struggle against all sorts of obstacles: against whisky, with which the whites wish to slay his neophytes; against erroneous doctrines, which false pastors sow with both hands; against race prejudices, the more revolting that they come from our brethren in the faith, weak Catholics, who are Catholics in name only and who are coming over from Europe by shiploads. The priest who takes to heart the interests of the wretch who is groaning under the oppression of the vices which the Author of our salvation condemns, is often opposed in his action by the very ones who ought to recognize and support his zeal and charity.

The noncivilized Potawatomes, or those of the independent Indians who have not divided their lands, and who have shut their ears to the missionaries' advice, are far from being in a flourishing condition. There are about 500 of them. They are called the Prairie Indians. They live in common on a small reservation, surrounded by bad white men, who molest them without ceasing in every way and apply every art to pervert them. What is there for them to do? They ought to be taken south; but they absolutely refuse to emigrate, fearing that they could not endure the hot weather. If they were to try to go to the great plains of the northwest, the Sioux, Cheyennes, and other warlike tribes would dispute their passage. The future of these unhappy creatures is therefore very gloomy.

I speak of the Potawatomes. The same thing is true of a great number of other tribes, which inhabit or have formerly inhabited Kansas. One may well ask, what will become of these poor people? Alas! they are going, by small bands, by families; they are losing their nationality, disappearing insensibly, and finally they are blotted off the map.

Our Indian missions, namely, St. Francis Hieronymo among the Osages, St. Marysville among the Potawatomes, St. Mary's among the Flatheads, St. Ignatius among the Pend d'Oreilles and Kootenais, the Sacred Heart of Jesus among the Cœur d'Alènes and Spokans, and St. Anne at Colville, among the Skoyelpis and scattered tribes of the Columbia river, as well as the numerous stations which our missionaries visit, are at present very much invaded by the whites. Everywhere these sorry adventurers make use of all iniquitous means to get rid of the Indians or force them to move.

If the missionaries are to effect real good among the savages, under the present circumstances, they will need a profound humility, a truly disinterested zeal, and above all a sovereign scorn for the judgments of men.

1870.

September 14, 1870.

*Dear Doctor:*

A short notice of my visit and missionary excursion among the Indian tribes of the upper Missouri river, in the course of last summer (June, July and August) may be acceptable to you. Notwithstanding the excessive heat and the fatigues of our long journey, we have had the consolation of gathering some spiritual fruit. On this occasion I had for companion the Reverend Father Pauken, a fervent and zealous laborer, filled with the spirit of his holy vocation. In every locality the Indians received us with marked tokens of joy and kindness and paid great attention to our religious instructions and advices, in regard to their actual position with Government. They occupy extensive "reservations" of land, they are clothed and fed and receive their weekly allowances, consisting of sugar, coffee, flour, corn, pork and fresh meat, and with this timely assistance they are kept from misery and starvation, for the buffalo, heretofore their daily bread, and other great animals are fast disappearing from their hunting grounds.

The Indians, everywhere, asked earnestly for missionaries. It is to be hoped that this ardent desire on their part may be accomplished and that early next spring, a permanent mission may be opened in their midst.

The nation of the Dacotahs or Sioux is divided in a great number of tribes with distinctive names who form a total number variously estimated at from 50,000 to 80,000 souls, roving over a far-extended wilderness. It is the most numerous nation in the United States. In our last<sup>3</sup> missionary excursion, we have visited from 15,000 to 20,000 Sioux Indians. The number of baptisms of adults and children amount to 434.

<sup>3</sup> This word has a significance here which Father De Smet did not intend. The expedition of 1870 was the last of his many journeys into the Indian country.

## PART VII.

### THE INDIANS.

Their manners and customs, traditions, religious notions, and relations to the whites. Except where otherwise noted the letters have not been published.

### CHAPTER I.

#### RELIGIOUS OPINIONS OF THE ASSINIBOINS.<sup>1</sup>

Need of more missionaries — Letter from Crazy Bear — The Great Spirit — Sacrifices — The spring Medicine Lodge — Dances — The Sun — Bears — Ghosts and the dead — Future existence — Murder and revenge — Theft — Adultery — Oaths — Thunder birds.

Cincinnati, College of St. Xavier, July 16, 1854.

*Reverend and Dear Father:*

**V**OCATIONS, alas! are still extremely rare; we must have ecclesiastics from Europe to go to the aid of the benighted Indians, who are without guide or pastor, and always desirous and anxious for them. I annually receive letters and most pressing invitations from the chiefs of the Indian tribes on the Upper Missouri and among the Rocky Mountains.

The following is a faithful translation of a letter I received from a great chief of the Assiniboins. They occupy the plains of the Yellowstone and of the Missouri: they number about 1,500 lodges and speak the Sioux language. My correspondent and petitioner is the great chief, "Crazy Bear." He was one of the deputation of chiefs who accompanied me to the Great Council in 1851:

<sup>1</sup> Letters IX and X, Second Series, *Western Missions and Missionaries*. Addressed to the editor of the *Précis Historiques*. Letters IX and X, *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres*. The English text is followed.

*“ To the Medicine Man of the White Nation.*

*“ Black-robe, Father and Friend:*

“ I was so happy as to become acquainted with you at Fort Union, in the summer of 1851; but I was then ignorant, in a great degree, of the motives of your visit among us, and hence I could not discover to you my inmost feelings and explain to you my thoughts. At Fort Union you preached to us — telling us of the Great Spirit and his law. You said you would like to come and teach us, so as to ameliorate the mental and moral condition of our tribes. I think, also, that you gave us reason to expect that after two or three winters some Black-gowns would come and establish themselves among us, in order to show us how to live well and how to train up our children. Afterward we traveled together as far as the Platte. During that journey and since my return from Fort Laramie I have learned and heard much of the beautiful word of the Great Spirit, which you first made known to us. Now I am persuaded that this word would change our state and render us happy. At the Great Council, our great Father (Colonel Mitchell, superintendent of Indian Territory) told us that some Black-gowns would come and live among us in the course of four or five years. Black-gown, five years are long to wait! In this long interval I and many of my children may have entered the land of spirits. Take pity on us! The Black-gowns ought not to delay their coming so long. I am growing old: before I die I should like to begin the work, and then I could depart satisfied. My country is tranquil, we are at peace with all the surrounding tribes — our ancient enemies, the Blackfeet, are the only ones we have to fear; but we can protect you. All my nation call aloud for the Black-gown, and invite him to come with all speed: I sincerely hope that our expectation may not be deceived. We know that the Black-gowns devote themselves to the happiness and well-being of the Indians. If to hasten the project pecuniary aid be wanting, I will cheerfully give a portion of the annuities of my tribe to meet this deficiency.

“ I see the buffaloes decrease every year. What will become of us without help? If our children are not instructed in time, they will disappear like the game.

“ I have learned that the ‘ Long Knives ’ (the Americans) have bought the lands of the Chipeways, Sioux and Winnebagoes, as far as Red river, and of the Pawnees, Omahas and Otoes on the Missouri. The whites are approaching us on the north and on the west, which is a new motive for hastening the arrival of the Black-robe among us.

“ I hope my words will reach you, and that you will think of us and our destitute situation. Do this, Black-robe, at the request of your friend,

“ THE BEAR,<sup>2</sup> *Chief of the Assiniboins.*”

At this time thousands of whites are settling in the Indian Territory from the Kansas to the Niobrara, and two large Territories have been erected by Congress, called Kansas and Nebraska. It is not yet known what arrangements will be taken for the protection of the different aboriginal nations that are found in them; it is much feared that they will be exiled farther into the western wilds. You can see what I said in my second letter, in January, 1852.

The sect of Mormons is making extraordinary progress in the United States. I will endeavor to send you some new and original details on them, which I am now preparing.

The agitation and prejudices against our holy religion are so great here just now that Catholic papers from Europe can scarcely reach us. We are on the eve of great difficulties. The anti-Catholic spirit increases daily. All the enemies of our holy religion are leagued against her. As in all persecutions, they seek to excite the masses by atrocious lies and calumnies. Within the last few days three Catholic churches have been destroyed, and every paper speaks of some new exhibition in some part or other. European demagogues labor with all their might to establish on the American soil their maxims of intolerance and persecution. Of all tyrants, they are the most terrible and fearful.

<sup>2</sup> See note, p. 510.

Cincinnati, College of St. Francis Xavier,  
July 28, 1854.

*Reverend and Dear Father:*

In my last letter, dated the 16th of this month, when sending you the translation of the address of Crazy Bear, the great Assiniboin chief, I promised you a sketch of the religious and superstitious opinions of that nation. I will now fulfill my promise.

I here propose acquainting you with the religious worship and moral code of the Assiniboins: it may be considered as the type of the superstitious creed of the greater portion of the barbarous tribes which roam over the forests and prairies of the upper Missouri.

Shrouded in idolatrous darkness, these people have no clear idea of their origin or end. Upon the momentous questions, "Whence came I?" and "What is my future destiny?" there are various conjectures, even among those nations who have received even a feeble light concerning the eternal verities of the gospel. All the Indians admit the existence of the Great Spirit, viz., of a Supreme Being who governs all the important affairs of life, and who manifests his action in the most ordinary events. They have no correct notion of the immutability of God. They think they can obtain his favors in the accomplishment of their projects, whatever be their nature, by presents, corporeal macerations, penances, fasts, etc. Thus every spring, at the first peal of thunder, which they call the *voice of the Great Spirit, speaking from the clouds*, the Assiniboins offer it sacrifices;—some burn tobacco, and present to the Great Spirit the most exquisite pieces of buffalo meat, by casting them into the fire; while others make deep incisions in the fleshy parts of their bodies, and even cut off the first joints of their fingers, to offer them in sacrifice. Thunder, next to the sun, is their Great Wah-kon. They hear it, and after a storm they sometimes perceive the effects of the lightning on the trees, on their horses and on man; hence it is an object of dread, and they endeavor to appease it.



It is rare that, during the course of a year, a family is not visited by some calamity; — disease; death, either natural or at the hands of their foes; the loss of their horses, their richest treasure, by robbery; finally, the scarcity of game, which condemns them to rigorous fasts and sometimes even to famine. At the least misfortune the father of a family presents the calumet to the Great Spirit, and, in prayer, implores him to take pity on him, his wives and children. He promises to give him a part of all he possesses at the first peal of thunder in the spring. When it is practicable, the various camps collect as soon as winter is over, to offer their gifts and sacrifices in union. This is the religious ceremony *par excellence*. The Assiniboins attach the highest importance to it. They often speak of it in the course of the year, and look forward to its immediate arrival with joy, respect and veneration. Sometimes three or four hundred lodges or families assemble in one locality. One sole individual is named the high priest, and directs all the ceremonies of the festival. A species of hall is constructed, with about thirty lodges, of skins of the buffalo. Each lodge is composed of twenty or twenty-four skins, stretched over a number of posts, seven or eight feet high. On the top of these posts several hundred poles are fastened, and on these each family hangs the articles that it intends to offer in sacrifice. These consist of skins of animals, richly embroidered with porcelain or glass beads, adorned with feathers of every hue; many-colored collars, clothes and ornaments of all kinds, making a rich and varied great Indian exhibition. Opposite to this hall, which is called the Great Medicine Lodge, they raise a high pole, to which all the chiefs and braves hang their medicine bags, containing the idols, their arrows, quivers, trophies won from their enemies, especially scalps. This pole is a tree, stripped of its bark and thirty or forty feet high. Men, women and children, in a spirit of religion, join in raising and planting it, amid the acclamations of the tribe.

After these preliminaries, the ceremony begins with a

harangue and a prayer to the Great Spirit by the high priest. He implores him to accept their gifts, to take pity on them, protect them against sickness, accidents and misfortunes of all kinds, and to give them a plenteous hunt, plenty of bison, stag, deer, bighorns, wild-goat, etc., and to aid them in their wars and excursions against their enemies. Then he offers the calumet to the Great Spirit, to the sun, to each of the four cardinal points, to the water and the land, with words analogous to the benefits which they obtain from each. The sacred calumet is then passed to all the chiefs and warriors, who draw two or three whiffs of smoke, which each puffs out toward heaven, at the same time elevating the pipe. The day finishes with the great "medicine dance," and a variety of dances in honor of the animals which I have named. In these last they try to imitate, as much as possible, the cries and movements of those animals. Men alone perform this dance.

The second day is devoted to representations; that is, the jugglers, or medicine men, perform their tricks. Some of these men succeed in imposing on these simple and credulous souls, who discover the supernatural in everything that they do not understand: this is *great or little Wah-kon*, as it is more or less incomprehensible. Most of these representations are mere feats of legerdemain, which would scarcely excite a smile of mirth or the least astonishment in a circle of civilized persons. During their execution the men and women accompany the jugglers in a kind of chant, which consists of words analogous to the feast, but it is difficult to define what they say, amid their modulations of tone.

The third day is consumed in dances and banquets, in which all can participate. It is highly amusing to witness this spectacle. Among the meats, dogs are particularly numerous — little and big, roasted and boiled, whole or *en appalas*; these form the principal viands of the great religious banquet. Dishes of other meats, with roots, corn, wheat, sugar, etc., are added. All the pots and kettles of the whole tribe, of every form and dimension, are placed

over a long row of fires. The braves distribute these meats with admirable order, giving to each one his share. These portions disappear with truly wonderful celerity.

The Assiniboina have two kinds of dances for this feast. Most of them dance some rounds for amusement, and leave the circle when they choose; but a band of young men form the great religious dance, and make a vow to the thunder, or voice of the Great Spirit. Then they perform various dances, which last three whole days and nights, with only slight intervals, without their taking the least nourishment or refreshment. I have this from a credible eye-witness. This extraordinary act is penitential, or rather propitiatory, to obtain from the Great Spirit success in war. All the garments and articles prepared during the winter, from the embroidered leggin and moccasin to the eagle-plumed head-piece, adorn their bodies for the first time, and the whole assembly appears quite brilliant; the camp acquires a new life. Those who are not at the moment occupied in the religious observances spend their time in games and often very spirited conversation. The feast lasts about ten days. Before separating, each person tears or cuts the article which he sacrificed, so that no one can be tempted to take possession of it. This last act performed, the different companies separate to their own hunting grounds.

They have some other religious practices and ceremonies, which I observed on my visit, and which are curious enough to be noticed here.

The sun is honored and worshipped by the greater number of the Indian tribes as the author of light and heat. The Assiniboina consider it likewise to be the favorite residence of the Master of Life. They evidence a great respect and veneration for the sun, but rarely address it. On great occasions they offer it their prayers and supplications, but only in a low tone. Whenever they light the calumet, they offer the sun the first whiffs of its smoke.

The Indians regard a solar eclipse as the forerunner of some great disaster; and if a juggler can ascertain from a

white man the period of the arrival of an eclipse, he is sure to make use of it to display his Wah-kon, or supernatural knowledge. At the moment of the eclipse the Indians rush out of their lodges, armed in full. They fire their guns, discharge their arrows in the air, and shout and howl, in order to frighten and put to flight the enemy of the Master of Life. Their pretended success is followed by great rejoicings.

The bear is the terror of all American Indians, for he causes the most serious accidents, and is excessively dangerous, if he be encountered in a thick forest. Every year some savage is killed or crippled in a fight with a bear. They address it prayers and invocations; they offer it sacrifices of tobacco, belts and other esteemed objects; they celebrate feasts in its honor, to obtain its favors and live without accident. A bear's head is often preserved in the camp for several days, mounted in some suitable position, and adorned with scraps of scarlet cloth and trimmed with a variety of necklaces, collars and colored feathers. Then they offer it the calumet, and ask that they may be able to kill every bear they meet, without accident to themselves, in order to anoint themselves with his fine grease and make a banquet of his tender flesh.

The wolf is also more or less honored among the Indians. Most of the women refuse to dress its skin, at any price. The only reason that I could discover for this freak is that the wolves sometimes get mad, bite those they meet and give them the hydrophobia. It is, doubtless, to escape this terrible disease and to avoid the destruction of their game, that the Indians make him presents and offer him supplications and prayers. In other cases he is little feared. He seldom injures men, but is formidable to the animals, and makes great ravages among them, especially among bison calves, kids, deer, antelopes, hares, etc.

The "little medicine-wolf" [coyote] is in great veneration among the Assiniboins. He ordinarily approaches the camp during the night. As soon as an Indian hears his

barks, he counts the number with care; he remarks whether his voice is feeble or strong, and from what point of the compass it comes. These observations then become the subject of discussion to the jugglers. What are the prognostics? Why, the "little medicine-wolf" announces to them that on the morrow they may expect a visit from a friend or from an enemy, or perhaps a herd of buffalo. The Indians frequently regulate their movements or marches by these indications; and if, as occasionally happens, they result according to the explanation of the barks, the little wolf is favored with the ceremony of a grand feast!

The belief in ghosts is very profound, and common in all these tribes. Indians have often told me, seriously, that they had met, seen and conversed with them, and that they may be heard almost every night in the places where the dead are interred. They say they speak in a kind of whistling tone. Sometimes they contract the face like a person in an epileptic fit. Nothing but the hope of gain could ever induce an Indian to go alone in a burying-ground at night. In such a case, love of gain might triumph over the fear of ghosts; but an Indian woman would never be induced, on any condition, to enter one.

The Assiniboin esteem greatly a religious custom of assembling once or twice in the year around the tombs of their immediate relatives. These sepulchres are raised on a species of scaffold, about seven or eight feet above the surface of the soil. The Indians call the dead by their names, and offer them meats carefully dressed, which they place beside them. They take care, however, to consume the best pieces themselves,—after the custom of the priests of the idols of old, who offered their false gods the heart, blood, entrails and indigestible parts, reserving to themselves the most delicate portions of the victim. The ceremony of burying the dead, among the Indians, is terminated by the tears, wailings, howlings and macerations of all present. They tear the hair, gash their legs, and at last the calumet is lighted, for this is the Alpha and Omega of every rite. They offer

it to the shades of the departed and entreat them not to injure the living. During their ceremonious repasts, in their excursions, and even at a great distance from their tombs, they send to the dead puffs of tobacco-smoke and burn little pieces of meat as a sacrifice in their memory.

The religious worship of the Assiniboins embraces a great variety of practices too lengthy to recount — they all bear the same characteristics. I will add, however, one remarkable point. Each savage who considers himself a chief or warrior, possesses what he calls his Wah-kon, in which he appears to place all his confidence. This consists of a stuffed bird, a weasel's skin, or some little bone or the tooth of an animal; sometimes it is a little stone, or a fantastical figure, represented by little beads or by a coarsely painted picture. These charms or talismans accompany them on all their expeditions, for war or hunting—they never lay them aside. In every difficulty or peril they invoke the protection and assistance of their Wah-kon, as though these idols could really preserve them from all misfortunes. If any accident befalls an idol or charm, if it is broken or lost, it is enough to arrest the most intrepid chief or warrior in his expedition, and make him abandon the most important enterprise in which he may be engaged. It is true that they have a conviction that all assistance should come from the Great Spirit; but as they can neither see nor touch him, they invoke him through their favorite tutelary idols. If it happen (though the case is very rare) that an individual should profess not to believe in any kind of Wah-kon, he is regarded among the Indians very much as an infidel or an atheist would be in a Catholic country. They point at him and avoid him. In regard to the future state, they believe that the souls of the dead migrate toward the south, where the climate is mild, the game abundant and the rivers well stocked with fish. Their hell is the reverse of this picture; its unfortunate inmates dwell in perpetual snow and ice, and in the complete deprivation of all things. There are, however, many among them who think death is the cessation of life and action, and

that there is naught beyond it. As they feel uncertain which is true, they seem to attach no great importance to either. They seldom speak of it; they manifest their views to those whites who inquire of them, and in whom they feel confidence.

The moral principles of the Assiniboins are few in number. Their opinions concerning good and evil have little precision. Social position is respected among them to a certain degree. Fear, on almost every occasion, governs and determines the conduct of the Indian. If he has any ground to suspect that another intends to take his life, he seizes the earliest opportunity of killing that person, provided he can do so without endangering his own life. This case is not looked upon as murder, but as a justifiable self-defense. The crime of murder, properly so called, is not known among them. They never kill, except in quarrels, to avenge or to defend themselves, and custom with them justifies the act. To behave otherwise, according to their received views, would be regarded as an act of folly.

Theft, among the Assiniboins, is only considered disgraceful when it is discovered; then shame and infamy are attached rather to the awkwardness of the thief for having taken his measures so ill. The old women are acknowledged the most adroit thieves in the country; nevertheless, it is only just to add that the men seldom omit stealing any object, if it can prove useful to them.

Adultery is punished with death in almost every case. The seducer seldom escapes, if the husband and his family have the power and the courage to execute this law. Hence this crime is rather uncommon. The woman is sometimes killed, but always severely punished. The husband causes her head to be closely shaved, and her person painted over with a heavy coat of vermilion mixed with bear's grease; she is then mounted on a horse, the mane and tail of which have been cut off, and the whole body also daubed with vermilion; an old man conducts her all around the camp and proclaims aloud her infidelity; at last he commits her to the

hands of her own relatives, who receive the culprit with a good beating. A woman cannot be subjected to a more degrading punishment.

An Assiniboin has no scruple in lying, when he can obtain any advantage from it: he rarely tells falsehoods in jest. In regard to theft, falsehood and adultery, the Assiniboins differ from the Indians near the Rocky Mountains, especially the Flatheads and the Pend d'Oreilles, who detest these vices. It may be observed that the Assiniboins have been in relations with the whites for many years.

False oaths are very rare among the Indians, when their promises are assumed with any solemnity. The objects by which the Assiniboin swears are his gun, the skin of the rattlesnake, a bear's claw, and the Wah-kon of the Indian interrogated. These various articles are placed before him, and he says, "In case my declaration prove false, may my gun fire and kill me, may the serpent bite me, may the bears tear and devour my flesh, may my Wah-kon overwhelm me with misery." A circumstance in which perjury could save his life, is the only one in which a savage would be tempted to commit it. In extraordinary and very important affairs, which demand formal promises, they call upon the thunder to witness their resolution of accomplishing the articles proposed and accepted. The whole vocabulary of the Assiniboin and Sioux language contains but one single word which can be considered insulting or as blasphemous. This word expresses the wish that the person or thing in question may become ugly, as we would say in French "Le Monstre," or in Flemish "Gy leelyke beest." The name of the Great Spirit is never pronounced in vain, but always with highest marks of veneration. In this respect the language of the poor Indian is more noble than the more polished tongues of many civilized nations, where there are ever on the swearer's lips curses and blasphemies, and where men mingle in all their conversation the name of the Almighty! Such an individual would not only excite horror in the Indian, but would even excite his terror.



The Sioux, or Dakotas, of whom the Assiniboins are a branch, pretend that thunder is an enormous bird, and that the muffled sound of the distant thunder is caused by a countless number of young birds! The great bird, they say, gives the first sound, and the young ones repeat it: this is the cause of the reverberations. The Sioux declare that the young thunders do all the mischief, like giddy youth, who will not listen to good advice; but the old thunder, or big bird, is wise and excellent, he never kills or injures any one!

The Assiniboins dread vampires and bats. Should these fly near a man, it is an omen of evil. The Will-with-a-wisp is also a great terror to them. The man who sees one during the night is certain that death is about to carry away some cherished member of his family.

They believe in dreams. According to them, good dreams come from a spirit that loves them and desires to give them good advice; bad dreams, in particular the nightmare, render them sad and melancholy, and lead them to dread the arrival of painful events.

Not a day passes in an Indian family without some one having seen or heard something that augurs evil. This always excites an anxiety; hence their superstitions become a kind of torment.

I have the honor to be, etc.

P. S.— I hope to send you in a few days some account of Indian hunts and especially of a great bison hunt made by the Assiniboins in a kind of inclosure or park. If possible, I will add a sketch to enable you to understand what I try to describe.

The thermometer stands here at 96° and even 102°. I am afraid my style shows it. The heat is so excessive that several persons have fallen dead in the streets.

I hope you have received my itinerary, my letter on our shipwreck on the *Humboldt*, and the address sent me by Crazy Bear, the Assiniboin chief. Please acknowledge receipt of my letters.

## CHAPTER II.

### NOTES ON THE BLACKFEET.

Religion in the wilderness — Savagery of the Blackfeet — Hopes for them — Dismal outlook for the buffalo tribes — Subdivisions of the Blackfeet — Piegans learning their prayers — Inequality of sexes — Superstitions in regard to Black-ropes — Horse-stealing — Improvement in baptized wives.

Fort Lewis, Sept. 27, 1846.

*Reverend and very dear Father in Jesus Christ.*<sup>1</sup>

¶ I HAVE been at Fort Lewis three days, and am resting a little from my long and roundabout horseback ride from St. Francis Xavier of the Willamette to this place; in the course of which I had to visit our three mountain Réductions and the Flathead camp on the Yellowstone. If my stay here is very helpful to me, it is not less so to the occupants of the fort, who are for the most part Catholics. I have so arranged my time as to be able to talk with them all successively of the truths of our holy religion; to urge and encourage them to discharge the duties that it prescribes. These poor Canadians and French Creoles often remain ten, twelve or fifteen years in the desert, without priest, without instruction, exposed to the greatest dangers of body and soul. A great number of those whom I have known have found a tragic end there.

To-day, Sunday, I have offered the holy sacrifice of the mass, followed by an instruction upon the end of man. All the white men of the fort and a large number of Blackfeet were present. Tears of joy and of compunction flowed from the eyes of the Canadian, the Creole and the Spaniard,

<sup>1</sup> Letter XXV, *Missions de l'Orégon* here translated for the first time.

at the recollection no doubt of the innocent and happy days of their childhood, when the pious hand of a mother led them to the foot of the altar, and when later they practiced regularly their religious duties.

They made good and pious resolutions on this occasion, and the emotion that they showed during the divine service gave evidence that the germ of faith, so long sterile at the bottom of their hearts, would blossom and bring forth fruits of salvation there by the practice of the Christian virtues. Toward evening, I baptized thirty children with all the ceremonies of the ritual.

From all that I have seen and heard of the Blackfeet, during the five weeks I have spent among them, I am firmly convinced that a mission to this tribe would produce results very fortunate and very consoling for the religion. It is assuredly a task full of difficulties and obstacles, requiring the zeal and courage of an apostle; one must be prepared for a life of crosses, privation and patience; they are savages in the full meaning of the word, accustomed to wreak vengeance on their enemies and wallow in blood and carnage. They are plunged in coarse superstitions which brutalize their souls; they worship the sun and moon and offer them sacrifices of propitiation and thanksgiving. Now they cut deep gashes in their bodies and catch the blood; now they strike off joints of their fingers and present them to their divinities, crying: "I do thee this favor, Apistotokio (God, Spirit), I give thee my blood; do me also a favor on the war-path, and when I come again I will worship thee with scalps that I take from my enemies."

Despite their cruelties and abominable superstitions, a bright light is beginning, it would seem, to dispel the shadows under which these poor pagans have lived for so many ages.<sup>2</sup> \* \* \* During the five weeks that I stayed among them, they were as assiduous and attentive as possible to the instructions I gave them, and seemed to listen with pleasure to the consoling truths of the gospel.

<sup>2</sup> Omitted portion is a letter of Father Point's.

Permit me, Reverend Father, to express to you my uneasiness as to the probable future lot of these unhappy tribes; it is becoming more alarming day by day. What future awaits them? The plains where the buffalo graze are becoming more and more of a desert, and at every season's hunt the different Indian tribes find themselves closer together. It is probable that the plains of the Yellowstone and Missouri and as far as the forks of the Saskatchewan, occupied to-day by the Blackfeet, will be within the next dozen years the last retreat of the buffalo. Will there be enough of these wild animals to feed the hundred thousand Indians of this region? The Crees, the Assiniboins, the Snakes, the Bannocks, the Crows, the Blackfeet, the Aricaras and the Sioux are drawing nearer to these plains each year; whenever they meet, it is war to the death. These meetings must naturally become more frequent, and it is to be feared that the last of the buffalo may be disputed in a last fight between the unfortunate remnants of these unhappy tribes. What can be done to prevent such great misfortunes? A sincere and effective protection on the part of the United States Government against everything that could be harmful to the natives, would be required. Very severe laws have been enacted against those who supply the Indians with liquor; it is to be hoped that they may be firmly executed; it is a great step in favor of the savages. Let those who have the power and the means look to it in time. Let some efforts be made to rescue them from the threatened destruction, lest, by guilty negligence, the last drop of aboriginal blood indelibly stain the fair fame of the Government under whose protecting wing they are said to live. Justice makes the appeal. Oh! it would be the height of spiritual and temporal good fortune for these tribes, to grant them some zealous, fervent, courageous missionaries; they would teach them to know and to serve God, while at the same time they would initiate them into the labors and the arts which would procure them necessary, useful and agreeable things. And their mortal hatred of

the race which has never ceased thrusting them farther back and despoiling them, would change to feelings of gratitude and good will.

In closing this letter, permit me, Reverend Father, to recommend to you in an especial manner the salvation of the Indians in your holy sacrifices, and believe me, with the profoundest respect and most sincere esteem,

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University of St. Louis, Oct. 28, 1855.

*Reverend and Dear Father:*<sup>3</sup>

In some of my letters of 1846, I spoke of my visit to the Blackfeet. I sojourned among the four tribes, the Grosventres, Piegans,<sup>4</sup> Bloods, and Blackfeet<sup>5</sup> proper, about six weeks, and had the happiness of regenerating in the holy waters of baptism several hundred children and some adults. In the month of October, after having bid adieu to Father Point, who proposed passing the winter in the Indian

<sup>3</sup> Letter to F. Terwecoren, Editor *Précis Historiques*, published as Letter of the *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres* and translated thence as Letter XVIII, *Western Missions and Missionaries*. The latter text is here followed.

<sup>4</sup> The tribe of the Piegans forms a portion of the six tribes known by the generic name of Blackfeet. The other five are the Blackfeet, properly so called, the Men of Blood, the Sarcees, the Little Robes, and the Grosventres.— *Note by Father De Smet*.

<sup>5</sup> The Blackfeet are divided into five principal tribes (about 16,000 souls) — the Piegans, the Bloods, the Blackfeet Direct, the Sarcees and the Grosventres of the Plains. The Sarcees and Grosventres speak a distinct language, entirely different from that of the other three Blackfoot tribes. The Sarcees tell that their ancestors only came to the plains after having wandered for a long time upon an immense lake, at the mercy of the winds and floods. The Grosventres speak the same language as the Arapahos, who live on the south fork of the Platte and of [?] the Arkansas river, 1,200 miles from the plains where they dwell to-day, and whither their ancestors withdrew in consequence of a quarrel.— *Note by Father Point*.

camps, in order to sound further their dispositions in a religious point of view, I left the country of the Blackfeet in order to repair to St. Louis, where the affairs of the missions were awaiting me. During the residence of Father Point among those Indian populations, he collected many interesting traits concerning the character and manners of the savages; he had the kindness to communicate them to me. I sent a copy of his relation to our superiors in Europe; but I do not think it has ever been published. In the hope that it will afford you pleasure, and that it will prove worthy of your attention, I transmit to you some of the principal extracts. In 1847, Father Point wrote me:

“ I think I can say, to the glory of the only Author of all Good, that with his grace I have not lost my time among the Blackfeet. I have performed 667 baptisms, the records of which are in due form; I have taken notes of whatsoever appeared to me suitable for interesting the curious or edifying the pious. During the winter I was accustomed, daily, to give three instructions, or catechetical lessons, proportioned to the three very different classes of my auditors. It is unnecessary for me to say that the prayers have all been translated into Blackfoot, and learned in Fort Lewis and in the camp of the Piegans, and there is scarcely any camp among the Blackfeet in which the sign of the cross is not held in veneration, and even practiced, at least among those individuals who have had any intercourse with the missionary.

“ Of the twenty-five or thirty camp-leaders, or chiefs, who visited me or whom I have visited, there is not one who has not given me ideas of his people or tribe less disadvantageous than those generally entertained, and of course among the whites who inhabit the Indian Territory as elsewhere. Among the different camps, there is a species of emulation as to which shall have the Black-robe, or rather the mission, on its lands. Concerning this article I have decided nothing. I have only said that in case a Réduction were formed, it would be built in the position or local-

ity which would afford the greatest advantages to all the tribes, taken collectively. All found this idea reasonable, and have promised that they would exert their utmost endeavors to satisfy the Black-robbers.

“ The Grosventres of the Plains appear to me to have the advantage over the others, in being more adroit, docile and courageous; but they are more strongly attached to their old superstitions, and are terrible *demandeurs*, as the Canadian employees here call shameless beggars: happily, they are not offended when refused. The Piegans are the most civilized, but the most noted thieves. The Gens du Sang are well made, of fine blood, and generally less dirty. It is said that the Blackfeet proper are the most hospitable.

“ Such are the most striking traits of these four nations, so long at war with almost all their neighbors, and sometimes among themselves, at least partially. Since they have had the proof that the true prayer renders man more valiant, happier, and generally tends to make him live longer (three advantages which they exalt above all others, and which they believe they perceive united in the Flatheads), the medicine-sack, or idolatry, with many, is falling into discredit.

“ Several traits of divine justice, against those who have shown themselves less docile in following our counsels, and, on the contrary, several striking evidences of protection, in favor of those who followed them, have contributed greatly to work an admirable change in their ideas. By that, I do not mean to pronounce them saints: no; theft and assassination are not yet, in the eyes of the young particularly, destitute of attractions. For this reason, notwithstanding the peace concluded with the Flatheads, and the inclination of the great men to maintain it, there were many depredations committed during the winter, to the detriment of the latter. But let it be said to the praise of the chiefs, the whole was disapproved by them. Nine or ten thieves have received their deserts from the Pend d’Oreilles. This pacification, so desirable, under the double relation of humanity

and social commerce, is the condition, *sine qua non*, of the conversion of the greater part of those poor Indians, unless God is pleased to work a miracle, which rarely has happened, except among the Flatheads.

“I have been on a six weeks’ hunt with the fifty lodges of the Piegans, which are under the command of the chief, Amakzikinne, or ‘Big Lake.’ This camp is one of the seven or eight fractions of the Piegan tribe, amounting in all to about 300 lodges. This tribe forms a part of the four, known under the generic title of Blackfeet. I have spoken of them already. The Piegans are the most civilized, on account of the relations of a portion of their people with the Flatheads. If the Grosventres were less unfortunate, I would willingly entitle them the Flatheads of the Missouri. They have something of their simplicity and their bravery. They are improperly ranked among the Blackfeet: besides that they did not originate in the country, they do not speak their language, and are different in many respects.

“However this may be, these four tribes may contain about 1,000 lodges or 10,000 souls. This is not half what they were, before the contagion of smallpox introduced among them by the whites. I believe that women constitute more than two-thirds of them, if not even three-quarters. This inequality, so baneful to morals, is the result of war. In the visit that I paid to the Grosventres, divided into two camps, I counted 230 lodges. I visited, or received visits from, several fractions or detachments of Blackfeet, and further, an entire camp of Gens du Sang; and all were in such dispositions, that only a word on my part would have been necessary to enable me to baptize, with their consent, all the children from the largest down to those of only a day old, which the mothers brought me of their own free will. I could have baptized a great number of adults; they even seemed to desire it ardently; but these desires were not yet sufficiently imbued with the true principles of religion. I could not content myself with the persuasion generally ex-



isting among the savages, that when they have received baptism they can conquer any enemy whatsoever. The courage and the happiness of the Flatheads have inspired them with this belief. This explains why some wretches, who seek only to kill their neighbors, were the first to petition for baptism.

“All say that they would be glad to have black-gowns; but why do the greater part desire them? Because they think that all other imaginable blessings will come with them; not only courage to fight, but also every species of remedy to enable them to enjoy corporeal health. The Grosventres conducted to me a hump-backed person and a near-sighted person that I might heal them. I said that this kind of cures surpassed my abilities; which did not, however, hinder them from making other similar requests. But at last, by continually repeating to them, that the Black-robcs can heal souls, but not always the body, some at last believe me. They believe also that we can excite diseases and cause the thunder to roll when we are not satisfied. Quite recently, there was an earthquake in the land of the Grosventres, and directly the report was spread abroad that I was the cause of the earth's trembling; and that this shock was an indication that the smallpox was about to return into the country, etc., and all this happened because the Indians did not give attention sufficient to the discourse of the Black-robe. There is at present a malady raging among the Piegans, said to be mortal, and which indeed has proved fatal to a few persons. As this disease begins in the ear, they consider themselves more justified than the Grosventres, in saying ‘that this punishment arrived to them on account of their hardness of heart,’ in listening to the words of the Great Spirit. For myself, what appeared most striking was the sudden death of a dozen of persons, stricken down either in their lodges or in war, but at the moment that they were straying most widely from the right path. One of these, belonging to the Blackfeet, had robbed me of three mules; he died on the morrow after his arrival

home, and after finding himself divested of his capture, which were conducted back to me. This death was certain to provoke the saying: 'Woe to him who robs the Black-robbers!' Thus in one way or another Almighty God is preparing the way for the conversion of these poor idolaters.

"To return to the Piegans, with whom I have lived about six weeks, I will observe that those who, among the savages, call themselves 'Great Men,' would be disposed to listen wholly to us, could we but make terms with them on the article of plurality of wives; that the youth, in their turn, would as cheerfully, if we could immediately make 'Great Men' of them; but this being scarcely possible, all the reasonings of the wise can with difficulty induce them to refrain from robbery. If they can rob adroitly and in large value from the enemies of their nation, they never fail to do it; but if the theatre of their legitimate thefts is too remote, it is not rare to find them seeking among friendly tribes (for example, the Pend d'Oreilles or the Flatheads) what would prove too troublesome to seek elsewhere. A few days since, the three brothers of Big Lake, to one of whom the Flatheads have three times granted life, came with two good and handsome horses taken from the Pend d'Oreilles, who had just spared the lives of two of their youth. Already twice before, after similar misdeeds, Big Lake, notwithstanding my strong remonstrances, had not the courage to blame them. Among the Blackfeet, the rich people, who undertake to rebuke the wicked who possess nothing, have naught to gain and all to lose. As there is neither lawful authority on one side nor conscience on the other, a second theft, or a musket-shot, is not rare.

"In these thefts, however, there is one thing which excuses, to a certain degree, the silence of the chief of whom I have just spoken; it is the robbery of two horses to his detriment committed by a young Flathead; but this precedent cannot certainly justify the reprisals; for, besides restitution having been promised to him, he knew well that the thief in question was an outcast from his tribe; that he

ought not to imitate him; that he was only to follow the example of the good, who were all desirous of dwelling in peace with the Blackfeet, etc. But in vain we instruct them and refresh their memories, we discover that these reasons enter their minds with difficulty, and still less their hearts, which have neither the uprightness nor the generosity of their allies. Aside from these miseries, and some false maxims derived from the whites, the remainder, and even the very efforts of hell to resume a prey which is escaping her, all that is accomplishing at this moment in this country announces that the day of its regeneration is not remote. What most consoles us is that this regeneration, if things continue, will be due, in great measure, to the present exemplary conduct at the fort.

“Every day after mass, I teach the children their prayers; every evening the men recall them to memory mutually; at six o'clock in the evening these recite their prayers in common in my own room, after which I give them an instruction; then comes the turn of the women. Now, these women, baptized and lawfully married, or preparing for baptism and marriage, oblige their husbands to say (the latter having almost all approached the sacraments): ‘What a change! what a difference!’ In fact, this difference is so sensible, that it is obvious to all the savages who come in throngs to the fort, and do not return without coming to assure me, ‘that they also wish to learn and follow the way to heaven, since it is only in that path and in heaven that real happiness is found.’ What are their narrations when they return to their families? New visitors, better disposed than ever in regard to the fort and on the subject of prayer, easily make known.

“I have yet one consoling piece of news to announce. On my route, traveling with the Piegan camp, I baptized fourteen little infants of the Crow nation, so well did I find them disposed — these were on their way to visit the Gros-ventres. They desire to see you among them again. Indulging this hope, they will go to meet you in the spring.

At a distance, as when present, Reverend Father, I shall never cease to offer devout and heartfelt petitions for the success of an enterprise, to which it has pleased divine Providence to associate me from its commencement. It will always be allowable for me to do by prayers, what I cannot effect by my works.

“ I am, etc.,

“ N. POINT, S. J.”

The project of going to these poor Indians has never been abandoned. Every returning spring they send pressing invitations to the Black-robcs to come and establish themselves among them, in order to be taught the way of the Lord. During the current year, we have received invitations from the Blackfeet, the Crows, the Assiniboins, the Sioux, Poncas, and Omahas, with many other tribes; the number of these Indians surpasses 70,000. A great number of infants and adults have received baptism. The vast wilderness that they occupy boasts not a single priest at this moment! For fifteen years they have been begging for pastors!

Allow me, Reverend Father, to request the aid of your prayer and holy sacrifices, and deign to commend the poor Indians to the kind remembrance of the pious souls of your acquaintance, that the Lord may condescend to hear these unhappy men, and send good pastors into this widespread vineyard, so long neglected, but which promises such a glorious harvest.

In union with your devout petitions and holy sacrifices, I have the honor to be, with the most profound respect and highest esteem,

Your very devoted servant, etc.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE OREGON INDIANS.

Fidelity and zeal of the Skalzi — Their territory — Agriculture — Loss of tools by burning of boat — Ideal Indians — Building a church — Father Menetrey — Chief Michael — Unregenerate dogs — A presbytery — How Father De Smet brought the fighting chiefs down to Fort Vancouver — The winter's work — Prejudices removed — Feeds and shelters the chiefs — Kamiakin's statement — His poverty — Gerry, Schloom and Telgawax — Sketch of Eastern Washington — Opinion as to reservations — Some other recommendations.

St. Louis University, Dec. 1, 1861.

*Dear Sir:*<sup>1</sup>

**I**N my letter of November 10, 1859, I alluded to the Skalzi Indians. Allow me to add fuller details concerning that tribe.

I visited these good savages for the first time in the summer of 1845, on which occasion I had the happiness to regenerate all their little children in the holy waters of baptism, as well as a large number of adults. I saw these dear children again in 1859; and the visit filled me with inexpressible joy, because they had remained faithful, true to the faith, and fervent and zealous Christians. They were the consolation of their missionaries, and shone conspicuous by their virtues among the tribes of the Rocky Mountains. They were especially distinguished by an admirable simplicity, a great charity, and a rare honesty in all their dealings with their neighbors, and an innocence of manners worthy of the primitive Christians. A short account of this interesting tribe and the country which they inhabit, will doubtless please you.

The two tribes of the Kootenais and the Flat-bows number over 1,000 souls. They are principally divided

<sup>1</sup> Unaddressed letter, published in *New Indian Sketches*, pp. 104-117.

into two camps, and are known in their country under the name of Skalzi. One of these camps, numbering about 300, inhabits sometimes the neighborhood of the great Flathead lake, and sometimes the great Tobacco Plain, which is watered by the Kootenai river; the distance is seventy miles. The Tobacco Plain is a remarkable spot, situated between the forty-ninth and fiftieth degrees of north latitude, and is the only great plain possessed by this camp. It is about fifty or sixty miles long by fifteen or twenty miles in width. It resembles a large basin, surrounded by lofty mountains, which form a vast and beautiful amphitheatre and present a picturesque sight. The plain has all the appearance of the dry bed of a vast lake. Toward the south the valley is gravelly, undulating and covered with little hillocks, and patches here and there are susceptible of cultivation; the northern portion, on the contrary, has a uniform surface and a considerable extent of excellent arable land.

Though the land is very elevated, and far toward the north, the temperature is remarkably mild, severe cold being a rare occurrence, and the snow is seldom deep; it falls frequently during the season, but disappears almost as it falls, absorbed, perhaps, by the rarefaction of the atmosphere at this elevation, or perhaps driven off by the southern breeze, which blows almost uninterruptedly in the valley and drives the snow off as it falls. Horses and horned cattle find abundant pasture during the whole year.

The large river, called indifferently the Kootenai, the McGillivray, and the Flat-bow river, flows through the entire valley. It rises to the northwest of this region, and its course is toward the southeast for a considerable distance. The waters of this great river are increased by a large number of brooks and beautiful rivulets, which have their source, for the most part, in the lovely lakes or numerous basins of these beautiful mountains. Many of these streams present to the eye the most charming scenes in their course. The noise of their waters and the sweet murmur

of their falls are heard at some distance, and the eye is charmed by their descent from height after height, and their succession of cascades, from which they escape to the plain, covered with foam, and, as it were, exhausted by the struggles of the way. These mountain torrents will some day be the sites of mills of every description. Coal exists in many portions of the country, lead is found in abundance, and I venture to say that more precious minerals repose in the bosom of the mountains, and will one day be brought to light there.

The Indians have devoted themselves to agriculture for some years past. They cultivate little fields of maize, barley, oats and potatoes, all of which ripen. It is rare that the frost injures the crops before the season of harvest. Their small fields cannot be extended, owing to the want of instruments of agriculture. They are compelled to turn the earth with instruments of the most primitive construction, such as Adam may have used in his day. The pointed stick made of a very hard wood is what they have used from ages immemorial to dig up the *camas*, the bitter-root, the *wappatoo* (*sagittifolia*), the *caious*, or biscuit-root, and other vegetables of the same description. These Indians are very industrious. They are rarely unemployed. Their time is fully occupied in making bows and arrows, lines and hooks, or in hunting and fishing, or seeking roots or wild fruits for their numerous families. They extend their hunt often to the great plains of the Blackfeet and the Crows, to the east of the Rocky Mountains, on the upper waters of the Missouri and the Saskatchewan. Deprived as they are of agricultural instruments and fire-arms, they are always in want, and they may be said to keep a perpetual Lent.

The missionaries furnished them with a few plows and spades. Last year I forwarded to them, by the steamer of the Missouri Fur Company at St. Louis, some necessary agricultural implements, such as plows, etc.; but the boat was burned with all her cargo above the Yellowstone river.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The *Chippewa*, May, 1861, near the mouth of Poplar river.

It is much to be regretted that no more can be done for these good Indians, for, of all the mountain tribes, they are at once the best disposed and the most necessitous. The beau-ideal of the Indian character, uncontaminated by contact with the whites, is found among them. What is most pleasing to the stranger, is to see their simplicity, united with sweetness and innocence, keep step with the most perfect dignity and modesty of deportment. The gross vices which dishonor the red man on the frontiers, are utterly unknown among them. They are honest to scrupulosity. The Hudson Bay Company, during the forty years that it has been trading in furs with them, has never been able to perceive that the smallest object had been stolen from them. The agent of the Company takes his furs down to Colville every spring, and does not return before autumn. During his absence, the store is confided to the care of an Indian, who trades in the name of the Company, and on the return of the agent, renders him a most exact account of his trust. I repeat here what I stated in a preceding letter, that the store often remains without any one to watch it, the door unlocked and unbolted, and the goods are never stolen. The Indians go in and out, help themselves to what they want, and always scrupulously leave in place of whatever article they take its exact value.

The following anecdote will serve to give an idea of the delicacy of conscience of these good Indians.

An old chief, poor and blind, came from a great distance, guided by his son, to consult the priest; his only object being to receive baptism, if he should be considered worthy of the privilege. He stated to the missionary that, in spite of his ardent desire to be baptized, he had not dared to approach the priest for that purpose, owing to a small debt of two beaver skins (say ten dollars) which he had contracted. "My poverty," said he, "has always prevented me from fulfilling this obligation; and until I had done so, I dared not gratify the dearest wish of my heart. At last I had a thought. I begged my friends to be charitable to me. I



am now in possession of a fine buffalo robe: I wish to make myself worthy of baptism." The missionary, accompanied by the old man, went to the clerk of the Company to learn the particulars of the debt. The clerk examined the books, but said that no such debt existed. The chief still insisted on paying, but the clerk refused to take the robe. "Have pity on me," at last exclaimed the worthy old man, "this debt has rendered me wretched long enough; for years it has weighed on my conscience. I wish to belong to the blameless and pure prayer (religion), and to make myself worthy of the name of a child of God. This buffalo robe covers my debt," and he spread it on the ground at the feet of the clerk. He received baptism, and returned home contented and happy.

A young Kootenai who had been baptized in infancy, during my first visit in 1845, had emigrated with his parents to the Shooswaps in the mountainous regions near Fraser river. His parents desired to marry him to a young woman who was as yet unbaptized; he had a sister in the same condition. It was resolved that the three should make the long journey of many weeks' travel, to reach the Mission, in order that both sacraments might be received. On their arrival, their ardent faith and praiseworthy earnestness were the admiration of the whole village. The fervent missionary, Father Menetrey,<sup>3</sup> instructed these zealous neophytes and prepared them for holy baptism. The young man, who had not seen a priest since 1845, had prepared himself to approach the tribunal of penance, for the first time, in order to make his first communion, and to receive the nuptial benediction with the proper dispositions. On the day appointed for the administration of all these sacra-

<sup>3</sup> Father Joseph Menetrey was born in Friburg, Switzerland, in 1812; came to America (Oregon by way of Cape Horn) in 1847; was occupied at various missions in the northwest at different times; he was Father Adrien Hoeken's colaborer in establishing the second (present) mission of St. Ignatius in 1854; succeeded him as local superior, and died there April 27, 1891.

ments, the young Kootenai presented himself with an humble and modest air at the confessional. He held in his hands some bundles of cedar chips, about the size of ordinary matches, and divided into small bunches of different sizes. After kneeling in the confessional and saying the Confiteor, he handed the little bundles to the priest. "These, my father," said he, "are the result of my examination of conscience. This bundle is such a sin: count the chips and you will know how many times I have committed it; the second bundle is such a sin," and so he continued his confession. His confession was accompanied with such sincere signs of grief, that his confessor was affected to tears. It is impossible not to be struck with admiration for the simplicity of heart which led our young savage, in his desire to perform this duty with the utmost exactitude, to this new method of making a confession; but still more admirable is the adorable grace of the Holy Ghost, who thus sheds his gifts upon these, his poor children of the desert, and, if I may dare to say so, adapts himself to their capacity.

In their zeal and fervor the Kootenais have built a little church of round logs on the great Tobacco Prairie. They carried the logs — which averaged from twenty to twenty-five feet in length — in their arms a distance of more than a quarter of a mile, and raised the walls of the new church, as it were, by main force. The exterior is covered with straw and sods. In this humble house of the Lord they meet morning and evening, to offer to the Great Spirit their fervent prayers — the first fruits of the day. How striking is the contrast between this little church of the desert and the magnificent temples of civilization, especially in Europe. The majesty of these churches; their fine pictures, the sculpture which adorns their walls, and their imposing proportions, inspire the beholder with admiration and awe: yet, on entering this little cabin, consecrated to the Great Spirit in the desert, erected by poor Indians — on contemplating the profound recollection, the sincere piety depicted

on their features — on hearing them recite their prayers, which seem to rise from the bottom of their heart, it is difficult to refrain from tears, and the spectator exclaims: “ Indeed, this poor and humble church is the abode of the Lord and the house of prayer; its whole beauty lies in the piety, zeal and fervor of those who enter there! ”

In this humble church are now performed all the religious ceremonies of baptism and marriage. The Indians defer them until the appointed season for the arrival of the missionaries; they then come in from all parts of the country. “ How beautiful are the feet of those who announce the gospel of peace.” The priest of this mission finds the truth of the words, “ *Jugum meum suave*: my yoke is sweet.” No sooner has he arrived than all crowd round him, as beloved children to greet, after a long absence, a father whom they tenderly venerate. Even the hands of infants are placed in those of the missionary by their mothers. A long conference then follows. The priest gives and receives all news of important events which have happened since the last meeting, and regulates with the chiefs the exercises to be followed during his present visit. He gives two instructions a day to adults, and catechises the children; he helps them to examine well their consciences, and to make a good confession: he prepares them to approach worthily the holy table, instructs the catechumens and admits them to baptism, together with the children born during his absence; he renews and blesses all new marriages; and, like a father, settles any difficulties which may have arisen. Some he encourages and strengthens in the faith, and removes the doubts and soothes the inquietudes of others. In a word, he encourages all these good neophytes to know the Lord, to serve him faithfully, and love him with all their hearts.

If the days of the missionary are thus filled with labor and fatigue, he has his full recompense of merit and consolation. He counts them among the happiest days of his life. The Reverend Father Menetrey, their missionary, during his visit in 1858, baptized fifty children and thirty

adults, blessed forty marriages, and heard over 500 confessions.

The great chief of the Kootenais, named Michael, recalls in the midst of his tribe the life and virtues of the ancient patriarchs. His life is that of a good and tender father, surrounded by a numerous family of docile and affectionate children. His camp numbers 400 souls. They are all baptized, and they walk in the footsteps of their worthy chief. It is truly a delightful spectacle to find in the bosom of these isolated mountains of the Columbia river, a tribe of poor Indians living in the greatest purity of manners, and leading a life of evangelic simplicity. They are almost deprived of the succors of religion, and receive the visit of a priest but once or twice in the course of a year.

The sleep of a missionary among the Indians is always deep. His entire day, and a great part of the night, is spent in instructing them and arranging the affairs of their conscience. When his work is done, his slumber is profound, and it is not surprising that he hears nothing that passes around him. I wish to add, at this point, a little chapter on the subject of Indian dogs. "*Experto crede Roberto.*"

Having had much experience in this matter myself, I give ready and implicit faith to the statement made to me by Father Menetrey, as to the conduct of the dogs of the Kootenais. It is the reverse side of his beautiful description of life among this tribe. All is not beauty and pleasure in this charming wilderness. It is well that travelers at a distance should be forewarned of what they may expect, that they may provide themselves for the occasion. If the traveler has only one tent, he must be careful before he retires to barricade the entrance well, and surround it with brush; he must stop every crack and cranny and carefully hang out of reach not only all his provisions, but anything made of leather, or that has once had connection with flesh, otherwise he will find on waking that himself and his cattle are deprived of provender. The Indian dogs are as bad

as their masters are good. Their masters abhor theft, but these dogs make it their business, and subsist entirely by pilfering. The dogs are found to the number of six or seven in each family: each member owns one or two; they live on bones and the crumbs which fall from the frugal table of their poor masters, and I can assure you that very little is left from the meal of an Indian, who considers it a duty to eat all that is set before him, and is by no means nice at table. The dogs therefore are left to provide for themselves as best they can. For the most part, they work by night, and become very cunning and expert: hunger sharpens their rapacious instincts. Father Menetrey assures us that he has very often awoke in the morning as poor as Job, everything having been carried off during the night. It was in vain that he had taken every precaution which prudence suggested before going to bed, the industry of these nocturnal marauders got the better of all his care. Sleeping like a log after the fatigues of the day, he never heard the noise made by the thieves during their stay, though they often fought with one another in his tent over their spoils. The more vigilant savages were frequently aroused by the racket made in his tent, and were in the habit of coming to his rescue. Sometimes a good old Indian dame, armed with a big stick, would present herself suddenly upon the field of battle, dealing her blows right and left upon the combatants; again a stalwart young savage would venture into the Father's tent to disperse these midnight marauders and restore peace. Occasionally the good Father himself would be aroused by the noise of the howling of the dogs and the cries of those who had come to protect him. They would then set to work to repair, though rather too late, the breaches made in his fortifications, stopping up every hole and barricading the entry afresh. He would then lie down again, at the risk of another attack from these indefatigable robbers.

At last a council of chiefs was held on the subject, in which it was resolved to put an end to these scenes, so

annoying to the missionary. They therefore surrounded his tent with an inclosure impenetrable to dogs. They went further even, and set to work in good earnest to build a presbytery with two apartments, attached to the church. One room was made to serve for a sleeping-room, and the other to meet in and for private conference with the priest. The good savages replaced, each time, the provisions and other objects stolen by their dogs. Taking the food, as it were, from their own mouths and from those of their children, that the Father might not suffer from hunger; for fear that the want of necessaries might shorten his stay among them.

It appears from these little details, that charity, the eldest daughter of religion, flourishes in the soul of the simple savage, as well as in that of the children of civilization. Though poorer and more humble among them, charity is not less industrious, not less beautiful: it is more simple and candid with them, and therefore more attractive.

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Fort Vancouver, May 25, 1859.<sup>4</sup>

*Dear Captain:*

Toward the end of last March, owing to the deep snows and the impracticableness of the mountain passes, I received your kind favor of the 1st of January of the present year. I am happy to learn that my request to the general, about bringing down to Vancouver a deputation of the various chiefs of the upper tribes, met with his approval. I have no doubt, from the happy dispositions in which I left them at Walla Walla, the general's advice and counsel will be cheerfully and punctually followed out by them, and will prove highly beneficial to their respective tribes, and consolidate the peace established last fall by Colonel Wright.

<sup>4</sup> Addressed to Alfred Pleasonton, Captain Second Dragoons, Assistant Adjutant-General, U. S. A. Published in *New Indian Sketches*, pp. 130-135 and 141-146.

During my stay among the Rocky Mountain Indians, in the long and dreary winter, from the 21st of November last until the end of April, I have carried out, as far as lay in my power, the instructions of the general. I succeeded, I think, in removing many doubts and prejudices against the intentions of the Government, and against the whites generally, which were lurking in the minds of a great number of the most influential Indians. I held frequent conversations with the chieftains of the Cœur d'Alènes, the Spokans, several of the Skoyelpies, or Kettlefalls, and the lower Kalispels, who had chiefly aided, particularly the two first-mentioned tribes, in their lawless and savage attacks on Colonel Steptoe, and their war with Colonel Wright.

These various tribes, with the exception, perhaps, of a small portion of lawless Kettlefalls, and lower Kalispels, are well disposed, and will faithfully adhere to the conditions prescribed by Colonel Wright, and to any future requests and proposals of treaties coming from Government. The upper Pend d'Oreilles, the Kootenais and Flatheads, I found, as years ago, strong friends and adherents to the whites, and I have every reason to think that they will remain faithful; they ever glory, and truly, that not a drop of a white man's blood has ever been spilled by any one of their respective tribes. When I proposed to them that from each tribe a chief should accompany me down to Fort Vancouver, to pay their respects to the general, and to listen to his advice, all eagerly consented, and they kept in readiness for the long journey as soon as the snow would have sufficiently disappeared.

Meanwhile, Major Owen, agent among the Flatheads, arrived at St. Ignatius' Mission, and made known to me that he had received orders from the Superintendent of Indian Affairs and from Commissioner Mix, to bring down to Salem a chief of each tribe of the upper country. Upon this declaration I persuaded the Indians that as Major Owen had received orders from the highest authority he superseded me, and they should look upon him as their leader in this

expedition, while I would follow on with them as far as practicable and I would be allowed. The major having brought no provisions for them, I lodged the chiefs in my own tent, and provided them with all necessary supplies from the 16th of April until the 13th instant, the day on which we reached Walla Walla, and where the chiefs were liberally provided for by Captain Dent, in command of the fort. The deputation of chiefs was stopped at Walla Walla by Major Owen, to await an express he had sent on from Spokane Prairie, with instructions to the superintendent at Salem.

My own instructions from the general, according to your letter of the 1st of January, "To return to Fort Vancouver as early in the spring as practicable, for some contingency might arise requiring the general's presence elsewhere," hurried me down in compliance with said order. With regard to Kamiakin, and his brother Schloom, I held several talks with them in February, March and April, and acquainted them with the general's order, wish and desire in their regard, namely, that they should follow me and surrender into his hands, assuring them, in the general's own words, that "the Government is always generous to a fallen foe, though it is at the same time determined to protect its citizens in every part of its territory," etc.

They invariably listened with attention and respect. Kamiakin made an open avowal of all he had done in his wars against the Government of the country, particularly in the attack on Colonel Steptoe, and in the war with Colonel Wright. Kamiakin stated that he strongly advised his people to the contrary, but was at last drawn into the contest by the most opprobrious language the deceitful Telgawax upbraided him with in full council, in presence of the various chiefs of the Cœur d'Alènes, Spokans and Palooses. Kamiakin repeatedly declared to me, and with the greatest apparent earnestness, that he never was a murderer, and, whenever he could, he restrained his people against all violent attacks on whites passing through the country.



On my way down to Vancouver from St. Ignatius' Mission, I met him again, near Thompson's Prairie, on Clark's Fork. Kamiakin declared he would go down and follow me if he had a horse to ride, his own not being in a condition to undertake a long journey. I had none to lend at that moment. At my arrival in the Spokan Prairie, meeting with Gerry, one of the Spokan chiefs, I acquainted him with the circumstance, and entreated him, for the sake of Kamiakin and his poor children, to send him a horse and an invitation to come on and to accompany the other chiefs to Walla Walla, and hence to Vancouver; it being his best opportunity to present himself before the general and superintendent, in order to expose his case to them and obtain rest and peace. Gerry complied with my request, and Kamiakin soon presented himself and joined the other chiefs. I had daily conversations with him until he reached Walla Walla: he places implicit confidence in the generosity of the general. I believe him sincere in his repeated declarations that henceforth nothing shall ever be able to withdraw him again from the path of peace, or, in his own words, "to unbury and raise the tomahawk against the whites." My candid impression is, should Kamiakin be allowed to return soon, pardoned and free, to his country, it will have the happiest and most salutary effect among the upper Indian tribes, and facilitate greatly all future transactions and views of Government in their regard. The Indians are anxiously awaiting the result; I pray that it may terminate favorably with Kamiakin. The sight of Kamiakin's children, the poverty and misery in which I found them plunged, drew abundant tears from my eyes. Kamiakin, the once powerful chieftain, who possessed thousands of horses and a large number of cattle, has lost all, and is now reduced to the most abject poverty. His brother Schloom, if he lives, will come in in the course of the summer. I left him at Clark's Fork sickly and almost blind: he could only travel by small journeys. Telgawax, a Paloos, I think, is among the Buffalo Nez Percés; from all I can learn, he has been

the prime mover in all the late wars against Colonel Steptoe and Colonel Wright. His influence is not great, but he remains unceasing in his endeavors to create bitter feelings against the whites, whenever he can meet with an opportunity.

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Fort Vancouver, W. T., May 28, 1859.

In compliance with the request of our worthy brigadier-general, I herewith give you a short narrative of the upper Washington Territory, as yet occupied by various Indian tribes, as far as my views and observations may have extended during several years' residence in that region, and particularly during the last winter trip I performed under the special directions of the general.

The distance from Fort Walla Walla to the great Spokan Prairie, through which the Spokan river flows, is about 150 miles. This whole region is undulating and hilly, and though generally of a light soil, it is covered with a rich and nutritious grass, forming grazing fields where thousands of cattle might be easily raised. It is almost destitute of timber until you are within thirty miles of the Spokan Prairie, where you find open woods and clusters of trees scattered far and wide; this portion, particularly, contains a great number of lakes and ponds with ranges of long walls of large basaltic columns and beds of basalt. The country abounds in nutritious roots (bitter-root, camas, etc.), on which principally the Indians subsist for a great portion of the year. The Spokan Prairie is about thirty miles from north to south and from east to west, bounded all around by well-wooded hills and mountains of easy access. The soil is generally light, though covered with abundance of grass.

Along the base of the hills and the mountains patches of several acres of rich arable land may be found. The Spokan Prairie is claimed by the Cœur d'Alène Indians. Taking Cœur d'Alène lake as a central point, their country may

extend fifty miles to every point of the compass. The lake is a beautiful sheet of clear water, embedded amid lofty and high mountain bluffs, and shaded with a variety of pines, firs and cedars; in its whole circumference, to my knowledge, there is no arable land. The low bottoms in several of its many bays are subject to frequent and long inundations in the spring. The lake is about thirty miles in extent from south to north, its width throughout is from one to two or three miles. It receives its waters principally from two beautiful rivers, the St. Joseph and the Cœur d'Alène, running parallel from east to west; each is from sixty to eighty yards broad, with a depth of from twenty to thirty feet. After the spring freshet their currents are smooth and even, and are hardly perceptible for about thirty miles from their mouths, and until they penetrate into the high mountain region which separates their waters from those of Clark's Fork and of the St. Mary's or Bitter Root river; their respective valleys are from one to three miles broad, and are much subject to inundations in the spring; the narrow strips of land which border the two rivers are of the richest mould.

The deep snows in winter, the ice and water, keep these valleys literally blocked up during several months (last winter it continued for about five months). Small lakes, from one to three miles in circumference, are numerous in the two valleys. Camas, and other nutritious roots and berries abound in them. Beautiful forests of pine, etc., are found all along. The mountains bordering the two valleys are generally of an oval shape, and well wooded; a few only are snow-topped during the greatest portion of the year. All the rivers and rivulets in the Cœur d'Alène country abound wonderfully in mountain trout and other fish. The forests are well stocked with deer, with black and brown bears, and with a variety of fur-bearing animals. The long winters and deep snows must retard the settlement of this country.

Clark's Fork, at its crossing below the great Kalispel lake, is about forty miles distant from Spokan Prairie. Clark's

Fork is one of the principal tributaries of the upper Columbia. From its entrance into the lake to the Niyoutzamin, or Vermilion river, a distance of about seventy miles, I counted thirty-eight rapids. You meet with a succession of rapids and falls to its very head. Before it joins the Columbia, for a distance of about thirty miles, its rapids and falls are insuperable. In its whole length Clark's river has few spots of good and arable soil, with ranges of dense and thick forests. The upper portion of the river, and its upper tributaries, have a succession of large prairies of light soil filled with water-worn pebbles, indicating bottoms or beds of ancient lakes. All these prairies are covered with a luxuriant and nutritious grass, and owing, probably, to the position of the high mountains by which they are surrounded, they are little or not covered with snows in the winter season. Such are Thompson's Prairie, Horse Prairie, Camas Prairie, Jaco [Jocko] Prairie, Flathead Lake Prairie, with several other minor grazing fields. Far and wide apart, spots of less or more acres of good arable land are found; but too few, indeed, to make it for years to come a thickly-settled portion for the whites.

The country of the upper Clark's Fork, the St. Mary's or Bitter Root valley, the valley of Hell's Gate Fork, the upper valleys on the Beaver headwaters, the Kootenai country within the forty-ninth degree, and under the jurisdiction of the United States, appear to be laid out and designed by Providence to serve as reserves for the remnants of the various scattered tribes of Oregon and Washington Territory, at least for some years to come. This region, I should think, might contain all the Indians, and afford them the means of subsistence. The rivers could supply them with fish, the prairies with domestic cattle; deer and elk are still abundant, the buffalo grounds are not far off; wild edible roots and fruits are plenty; while in each section a sufficient portion of arable land might be found and reclaimed for their sustenance. Should all the remnants of Indians be gathered in this upper region, one single military post

would suffice to protect them against all encroachments and infringements of evil-disposed whites on Indians, and of Indians on the rights of the whites.

As the reserves are now laid out in Washington and Oregon Territories, far and wide apart, surrounded and accessible on all sides by whites, experience teaches that it must lead to the speedy destruction of the poor Indians. Liquor and its concomitants, sickness and vice, will soon accomplish the work. Providence has intrusted and placed these weak tribes under the care and protection of a powerful Government, whose noble end has always been to protect and advance them. If aided and assisted, in a proper situation, with agricultural implements, with schools, mills, blacksmiths, etc., I have no doubt but thousands of the aborigines might be reclaimed, and live to bless their benefactors. In the topographical memoir of Colonel Wright's campaign, recently published (page 75), I read to this effect: "The Government, in its wisdom and prudence, should make some timely provision for these many Indians by selecting for and placing them upon proper reservations, in order that they may not be caused to disappear by the fast-approaching waves of civilization and settlement, that must overtake and eventually destroy them." I have labored for several years among the upper tribes in the capacity of missionary. My companions have carried on the work to the present time, and will, I hope, continue their labors. The want of adequate means has greatly retarded one of the principal objects we had in view,—their civilization. We can all, and do, cheerfully testify to the good dispositions of these upper tribes. Should they be supplied with the necessary implements of agriculture, with oxen, etc., they would all work, and would soon place themselves above want and in comfortable circumstances. As for schools, all are anxious to have their children taught. These are a few points I desire to be allowed to present to the consideration of the general, if they can in anywise tend to the amelioration of the lot of the Indians.

## CHAPTER IV.

### NOTES ON THE PAWNEES.

Tribes of the Pawnees — Dwellings — Abandonment of the aged — Morning star worship — Human sacrifice — Particulars of sacrifice of a Sioux captive.

Philadelphia, April 6, 1847.

*Mr. J. D. Bryant.*<sup>1</sup>

**D**EAR SIR.— The nation of the Pawnees is divided into four great tribes, which act in concert as one people. They have their villages upon the river Platte, or Nebraska, and its tributaries, about 150 miles west of the Missouri river. They are the same true children of the desert as they have been these many ages. They dress in the skins of animals killed in the chase. They cultivate maize and squashes, using the shoulder-blade of the buffalo as a substitute for the plow and hoe. In the season of the chase, a whole village, men, women and children, abandon their settlements and go in pursuit of the animals whose flesh supplies them with food. Their huts, which they call *akkaros*, are circular, and about 140 feet in circumference. They are ingeniously formed by planting young trees at suitable distances apart, then bending and joining their tops to a number of pillars or posts fixed circularly in the centre of the inclosure. The trees are then covered with bark, over which is thrown a layer of earth nearly a foot in thickness, and finally a solid mass of green turf completes the structure.

<sup>1</sup> The account of human sacrifice among the Pawnees was published as Letters XXVI, *Oregon Missions*, XXVIII, *Missions de l'Orégon*. It is dated as above in both, but addressed in French to a Father. The English, which seems to be a translation from the French, is here followed.

These dwellings, thus completed, resemble hillocks. A large aperture in the top serves to admit the light and also to emit the smoke. They are very warm in winter, and cool, but oftentimes very damp, in summer. They are large enough to contain ten or a dozen families.

If, on the long journeys which they undertake in search of game, any should be impeded, either by age or sickness, their children or relations make a small hut of dried grass to shelter them from the heat of the sun or from the weather, leaving as much provision as they are able to spare, and thus abandon them to their destiny. Nothing is more touching than this constrained separation, caused by absolute necessity — the tears and cries of the children on the one hand, and the calm resignation of the aged father or mother on the other. They often encourage their children not to expose their own lives in order to prolong their short remnant of time. They are anxious to depart on their long journey and to join their ancestors in the hunting grounds of the Great Spirit. If, some days after, they are successful in the chase, they return as quickly as possible to render assistance and consolation. These practices are common to all the nomadic tribes of the mountains.

The Pawnees have nearly the same ideas concerning the universal deluge as those which I have given of the Potatomies. In relation to the soul, they say that there is a resemblance in the body which does not die, but detaches itself when the body expires. If a man has been good during this life, kind to his parents, a good hunter, a good warrior, his soul (*sa ressemblance*) is transported into a land of delights, abundance and pleasures. If, on the contrary, a man has been wicked, hard-hearted, cruel and indolent, his soul passes through narrow straits, difficult and dangerous, into a country where all is confusion, contrariety and unhappiness.

In their religious ceremonies they dance, sing and pray before a bird stuffed with all kinds of roots and herbs used in their superstition. They have a fabulous tradition, which

teaches them that the morning star sent this bird to their ancestors, as its representative, with orders to invoke it on all important occasions and to exhibit it in times of sacrifice. Before the invocation, they fill the calumet with the sacred herb contained in the bird. They then puff out the smoke toward the star, offer the prayers and make their demands, dancing and singing, and celebrating in verses the great power of the bird. They implore its assistance and its favor, whether to obtain success in hunting or in war, or to demand snow in order to make the buffalo descend from the mountains, or to appease the Great Spirit when a public calamity befalls the nation, or a family, or even a single person. The Pawnees are one of the few aboriginal tribes, which, descending from the ancient Mexicans, are guilty of offering human sacrifices. In order to justify this barbarous practice, they say that the morning star taught them by means of the bird, that such sacrifices were agreeable to it, and would bring down upon the nation the favor of Tirawa, the great Deliberator<sup>2</sup> of the universe. They are firmly persuaded that human sacrifices are most agreeable to the Great Spirit. Hence, when the Pawnee takes a prisoner and wishes to render himself acceptable to heaven, he devotes it to the morning star. At the time of sacrifice, he delivers the prisoner over into the hands of the jugglers; soon after which commence the ceremonies preparatory to the offering. I was in the neighborhood when one of these bloody sacrifices took place, and the particulars, which I am about to relate, were reported to me by worthy eye-witnesses.<sup>3</sup>

The victim in this horrid transaction was a young Sioux or Dakota girl, aged fifteen years, who had been taken prisoner by the Pawnees about six months previous to her immolation. During the months of her captivity, she received from the Pawnees every mark of regard which savages are capable of bestowing. She was an honored guest at all the

<sup>2</sup> A name which they give to the Great Spirit.—*Author's Note.*

<sup>3</sup> In his *Letters and Sketches*, p. 73, written 1841, Father De Smet places this occurrence in 1837.



*fêtes* and festivities of the village; and everywhere was treated, in appearance at least, rather as a fond friend than as a prisoner. It is the custom thus to prepare the victim, in order to conceal their infernal design.

The month of April, being the season for planting, is on that account selected for the offering of their abominable sacrifices. To this end, four of the principal savages of the tribe assemble in the largest and most beautiful *akkaro* or hut, to deliberate with Tirawa concerning the sacrifice of the victim. According to their belief, a human offering is rewarded by him with an abundant harvest, he fills the hunting grounds convenient to their villages with immense herds of buffaloes, deer and antelopes, thus enabling them to kill their prey with more facility and with less risk of coming in contact with other warlike and hostile nations.

The oldest savage of the tribe presides at the feast given on the occasion. Ten of the best singers and musicians, each with his peculiar instrument, squat in the middle of the *akkaro*. Four of them have dried calabashes in their hands, from which the seeds have been extracted and small pebbles placed in their stead, which, being shaken by the muscular arms of these gigantic savages, produce a sound like falling hail. Four others beat their *tekapiroutche* — this is a kind of drum of a most mournful and deafening [Fr. sourd] sound; it is made from the trunk of a tree and is about three feet long and one-and-a-half broad, covered at both ends with deer skin. The remaining two have a kind of flute made of reeds, about two feet long and one inch in diameter, instruments such as were used by the ancient shepherds, and which give forth sounds that may be heard at the distance of half a mile. They fasten to each instrument a little *tewaara*, or medicine bag, filled with roots and other materials, to which, in their superstitious rites, they attach a supernatural power that renders their offering more agreeable to the Author of Life. Four sentinels, each armed with a lance, take their position at the four cardinal points of the lodge, to maintain order among the spectators and to prevent the entrance of the

women, young girls and children. The guests are seated upon the ground or upon mats on the right and left of the presiding juggler, turning around from time to time in the most grotesque and ridiculous dances. Imagine thirty swarthy savages, with their bodies tattooed; their faces besmeared with paint — white, black, made of soot and the scrapings of the kettles, yellow, green and vermilion; and their long and disheveled hair clotted with mud or clay. Placing themselves in a circle, they shriek, they leap, and give to their bodies, their arms, their legs and their heads a thousand hideous contortions; while streams of perspiration, pouring down their bodies, render the horrors of their appearance still more dreadful by the confused commingling of the colors with which they are smeared — now they crowd together pell-mell, then separate, some to the right, some to the left, one upon one foot, another upon two, while others go on all-fours without order, and although without the appearance of measure, yet in perfect harmony with their drums, their calabashes and their flutes.

Near the centre of the hut, at about four feet from the fire-place, are placed four large buffalo heads, dissected, in order that they may take the augury. The presiding juggler, the musicians and the dancers have their heads covered with the down of the swan, which sticks to them by means of honey, with which they smear their hair — a practice common to all the tribes of North America in their superstitious rites. The president or presiding juggler alone is painted with red, the musicians, one-half red and the other half black,<sup>4</sup> while all the others are daubed with all colors, and in the most fantastic figures.

Each time that the music, the songs and the dances are performed, the spectators observe the most profound silence, and during the space of thirty minutes that the extraordinary charivari continues, nothing is heard but the chants, the cries, the howlings and the music. When all have figured in the dance, the presiding juggler gives the signal

<sup>4</sup> Fr. white.

to stop, crying out with all the force of his lungs. Immediately all cease, each one takes his place, and the auditory responds: "Néva! Néva! Néva!" it is well, it is well, it is well! The dancers then fill the ancient *nawishkaro*, or religious calumet, which is used only upon occasions the most important. They offer it to the president, who, striking with both his hands the long pipe, adorned with pearls and worked with different figures, goes and squats himself down by the fire-place. One of the guards places a coal upon the mysterious calumet. Having lighted it, he rises and gives a puff to each of the musicians without once slacking his hold from the pipe. He then turns toward the centre, and raising his eyes toward heaven, he offers the calumet to the Master of Life, resting for a moment in majestic silence: then, offering three puffs to heaven, he speaks these words: "O Tirawa! Thou who beholdest all things, smoke with thy children, and take pity on us." He then offers the calumet to the buffalo heads, their great manitous, salutes each of them with two puffs, and then goes to empty the bowl of the pipe in a wooden dish, prepared for that purpose, that the sacred ashes may be afterward gathered and preserved in a deer-skin pouch.<sup>5</sup>

After the dance, the master of ceremonies serves up the repast to the guests, seated in a circle. The food consists of dried buffalo meat and boiled maize, served in wooden plates filled to the brim. Each one is bound to empty his plate, even should he expose himself to the danger of death from indigestion. The president offers a portion of the meat and maize to the Great Spirit, and places it accordingly upon the ground, and he then makes a similar offering to one of the buffalo heads, which is supposed to be a party to the feast. At length, while each one occupies himself

<sup>5</sup> This method of smoking is in great repute among all the savages of the West. It is of the same importance and equally as binding as an oath among civilized nations. If two savages, ready to kill each other, can be induced to accept the calumet, the dispute ceases, and the bond of their friendship becomes stronger than ever.—*Author's Note.*

with doing honor to his plate, one of the chiefs of the band rises up and announces to all the guests that the Master of Life dances with him, and that he accepts the calumet and the feasting. All the band reply: "Néva! Néva! Néva!" This is the first condemnation.

The repast ended, they again dance, after which the calumet is lighted the second time; and as in the former instance, is offered to the Master of Life and to the buffalo heads, upon which the lodge again resounds with the triple cry, "Néva!" This last dance condemns without appeal the unfortunate victim whose immolation is invoked.

After all their grotesque dances, their cries, their chants and their vociferations, the savages, preceded by the musicians, go out of the lodge to present the sacred calumet to the buffalo heads placed on the tops of the lodges of the village, each of which is ornamented with from two to eight heads, preserved as the trophies of their skill in the chase. At each puff the multitude raise a furious cry, for now the whole village joins in the extraordinary procession. They stop before the lodge of the Sioux girl, and make the air resound with horrible imprecations against their enemies and against the unfortunate and innocent victim, who represents them on the present occasion. From this moment she is guarded by two old satellites, whose office it is to beguile her from the least suspicion that she is the victim for the coming sacrifice; and whose duty it also is to entertain her upon the great feast they prepare on the occasion in her honor, and that she may be well fed in order to appear more beautiful and fat, and thereby more agreeable to the Master of Life. This ends the first day of the ceremonies.

On the second day, two old female savages, with disheveled hair, their faces wrinkled and daubed with black<sup>6</sup> and red paint, their naked arms and legs tattooed, barefooted, and with no other dress than a deer-skin petticoat, extend-

<sup>6</sup> Fr. white.

ing down to the knee — in a word, two miserable-looking beldams, capable of striking terror in any beholder,— issue from their huts with pipes<sup>7</sup> in their hands, ornamented with the scalps which their husbands have taken from their unhappy enemies. Passing through the village, they dance around each *akkaro*, solemnly announcing “ that the Sioux girl has been given to the Master of Life by wise and just men, that the offering is acceptable to him, and that each one should prepare to celebrate the day with festivity and mirth.” At this announcement the idlers and children of the village move about and shout with joy. They then, still dancing, re-conduct the two old squaws to their huts, before which they place their pikes as trophies, and enter. All then return to their own lodge, to partake of the feasts of their relatives.

About ten o'clock in the morning of the third day, all the young women and girls of the village, armed with hatchets, repair to the lodge of their young and unhappy captive, and invite her to go into the forest with them to cut wood. The simple-hearted, confiding child accepts their malicious invitation with eagerness and joy, happy to breathe once more the pure air. They then give her a hatchet, and the female troop advance toward the place marked out in the dance, making the forest resound with shouts of joy. Atipaat, an old squaw who conducts them, designates by a blow of the hatchet the tree which is to be cut down. Each then gives it one blow, after which the victim approaches to complete the work. As soon as she commences what seems to her but pastime, the whole crowd of young furies surround her, howling and dancing. Unconscious that the tree is to supply the wood for her own sacrifice, the poor child pursues her work as if a great honor had been reserved for her. Atipaat, the old woman, then fastens to her the *ashki*<sup>8</sup> with which to draw the wood.

<sup>7</sup> Fr. pikes.

<sup>8</sup> The *ashki* is a cord, made of horse hair or of the bark of the elm, which they prepare by boiling it in cold water. It varies from twenty-

The troop then lead the way toward the village, dancing as they pass along, but giving the hapless victim almost no assistance in dragging her load. An innumerable multitude attend them to the place of sacrifice, and receive them with loud acclamations. They there relieve her of her burden and again place her in the hands of the guards, who, with voices harsh and quivering, chant the great deeds of their younger days and re-conduct her to her lodge. In the meantime the whole band assist to arrange the wood between two trees, after which they immediately disperse.

On the morning of the fourth day, before sunrise, a savage visits all the lodges to announce to each family, in the name of the Master of Life, that they must furnish two billets of wood about three feet long for the sacrifice.

Then thirty warriors issue from their lodges, decked in all sorts of accoutrements; their heads adorned with deer and buffalo horns, with the tails of horses and the plumes of the eagle and heron, interwoven with their scalplocks, while the tails of wolves and wild cats stream from various parts behind, as the wings of Mercury are represented, with pendants hanging from their noses and ears, so elongated by the weight of the ornaments suspended to them that they float about and strike against their shoulders. Glass beads, or necklaces of brass<sup>9</sup> or steel, adorn their necks, while highly-ornamented deer-skin leggins and curiously-painted-buffalo skins, negligently thrown over their shoulders, complete their grotesque habiliments. Thus accoutred they present themselves at the hut of their captive, who is already adorned with the most beautiful dress their fancy can devise, or the materials at their command produce. Her head-dress is composed of the feathers of the eagle and

five to sixty feet in length, and, although it is but about one inch in thickness, it is strong enough to bind the most powerful man. This they adorn with the quills of the porcupine and with little bells. The bells, besides for the sake of ornament, are intended to give notice in case the victim makes any efforts to escape.—*Author's Note.*

<sup>9</sup> Fr. pearls.

swan, and descends behind in gracefully waving curves, even to the ground. Her person is properly painted with red and black lines. A frock of deer skin descends to the knee, while a beautiful pair of leggins extend from thence to the ankle. A pair of moccasins garnished with porcupine quills, pearl and glass beads, are on her feet. Pendants hang from her ears and nose, a necklace ornaments her neck, and bracelets her arms; nothing was spared that could add to her beauty.

Tranquility and joy distinguish her as she approaches the grand feast, which she has been made to believe her kind guardians have prepared to honor her. At the first cry of the warriors, the poor child comes out of the hut and walks at the head of her executioners, who follow in single file. As they pass along they enter into all the huts, where the most profound silence and the utmost propriety reign. The Sioux girl walks round the fire-place, her followers do the same, and, just as she leaves the lodge, the principal squaw gives her two billets of wood, which the unconscious victim gives in her turn to each of the savages. In this manner, when she has been made to collect all the wood to serve for her immolation, she takes her place in the rear of the band, joyous and content that she has had the happiness to contribute to the pleasure of her executioners; after which they again restore her to her two guards, to be presented with her last repast, which consists of a large plate of maize.

All now wait in anxious expectation to witness the last scene of the bloody drama. The whole village is in commotion. Everywhere the warriors, old and young, may be seen preparing their murderous arrow, as upon the eve of a battle. Some practice shooting at a mark; the more barbarous, thirsting for the blood of their enemies, encourage and instruct their children in the use of the bow and arrow, and what part of the body they ought to strike. The young women and girls devote themselves to clearing away the bushes and preparing the place of sacrifice, after the accomplishment of which they employ themselves dur-

ing the rest of that day and night in polishing their necklaces, pendants and bracelets, and all the other ornaments in which they wish to appear at the great feast.

On the fifth day, an aide-de-camp of Lecharoutétéwarouchte, or the chief of sacrifice, ran through the village to announce, in the name of his master, the necessity of preparing the red and black paint, which is to serve for the grand ceremony. It is vain to attempt to give you, my dear sir, an adequate description of this personage, either as regards his costume, his figure, or his manner; it is everything that a savage can invent of the fantastic, the ridiculous and the frightful, united in one person. The collector of colors himself scarcely yields to his comrade in monstrosity. He has the appearance of one, truly, just escaped from the infernal regions. His body is painted black, which, contrasted with the whiteness of his teeth and of his huge eyes, and with his hair besmeared with white clay and bristling like the mane of a lion, gives him an aspect terrible and ferocious in the extreme. At each heel is fastened the tail of a wolf, and on his feet a pair of moccasins made of buffalo skin, with the long shaggy hair on the outside. He passes through the whole village with a measured step, holding a wooden plate in each hand. He enters the huts successively, and as he approaches the fire-place he cries aloud: "The Master of Life sends me here." Immediately a woman comes and empties into one of his plates either some red or some black paint, which she had prepared. Upon the reception of which, he raises his eyes to heaven, and with a loud voice says: "Regard the love of thy children, O Tirawa! However poor, all that they possess is thine, and they give it to thee. Grant us an abundant harvest. Fill our hunting grounds with buffalo, deer, stags and antelope. Make us powerful against our enemies, so that we may again renew this great sacrifice." Each one replies by the usual exclamation: "Néva! Néva! Néva!"



After the return of the collector of colors, and before sunrise, the last scene commences. Men and women, boys and girls, daub themselves in all the colors and forms imaginable. They deck themselves in whatever they possess which in their estimation is either beautiful or precious — pearls, beads, porcelain collars, the claws of the white [grizzly] bear, (this is in their view the most costly and valuable decoration) bracelets and pendants; nothing is forgotten on this occasion. They ornament their hair with the feathers of the heron, and of the gray eagle, a bird superstitiously venerated by them. Thus equipped for their sortie, they listen attentively for the first signal to the sacrifice.

While these preparations are in progress, the Tewaarouchte, a religious band of distinguished warriors, known in the procession by the down of swans upon their hair or upon the tops of their heads, and by their naked bodies painted in red and black lines, follow the braves of the nation armed with their bows and arrows, which are sedulously concealed beneath their buffalo robes. Thus they approach the lodge where the unconscious victim awaits, as she thinks, the happy moment for the festivities given in her honor to commence. She is now delivered into the hands of her executioners, dressed in the beautiful costume of the previous day, with the addition of cords tied to her wrists and ankles. The poor child is all interest and in a kind of impatience to participate in the grand festivities. She smiles as she looks round upon the most cruel and the most revengeful enemies of her race. Not the slightest agitation, fear or suspicion is visible in her manner. She walks with joy and confidence in the midst of her executioners. Arrived at the fatal spot, a frightful presentiment flashes across her mind. There is no one of her own sex present. In vain do her eyes wander from place to place, in order to find the evidences of a feast. Why that solitary fire? And those three posts, which she herself drew from the forest, and which she saw fastened

between two trees, and those swarthy figures of the warriors, what can they mean? All, all indicate some dreadful project. They order her to mount the three posts. She hesitates, she trembles as an innocent lamb prepared for the slaughter. She weeps most bitterly and with a voice the most touching, such as must have broken any other hearts than those of these savage men, she implores them not to kill her.

With a persuasive tone they endeavor to convince her that their intention is not to injure her, but that the ceremonies in which she participates are indispensable before the grand feast. One of the most active of the savages unrolls the cords tied to her wrists and assists her to mount the post. He passes the cords over the branches of the two trees, between which the sacrifice is to be made. These are rendered firm by the powerful arms of the other savages, and her feet immediately fastened to the topmost of the three posts, which she had unconsciously cut and drawn to the fatal spot. On the instant all doubt of their intentions vanishes from her mind. The savages no longer conceal from her their frightful project. She cries aloud, she weeps, she prays; but her supplications, her tears and her prayers are alike drowned in the *melée* and cry of their horrible imprecations against her nation.

Upon her innocent and devoted head they concentrate the full measure of their vengeance, of all the cruelties, of all the crimes, of all the injustice and cruelty of the Sioux, which may have taken place in their most cruel and protracted wars, and which from time immemorial had been transmitted from father to son as a precious heritage of vengeance and resentment. In a manner the most furious and most triumphant they exult with leaping and howling, like wild beasts, around their trembling victim. They then despoil her of all her ornaments and of her dress, when the chief of the sacrifice approaches and paints one-half of her body black and the other half red, the colors of their victims. He then scorches her armpits and sides

with a pine-knot torch. After these preparatory rites, he gives the signal to the whole tribe, who make the air resound with the terrible war-cry, the *Sassaskwi*. At this piercing cry, which freezes the heart with terror, which paralyzes the timid and rouses the ardor of the brave, which confounds the buffalo in his course, and fills the bear with such fear as to take from him all the power of resisting or fleeing from his enemies, the savages, impatient and greedy for blood, issue from their dark lodges. Like a terrific hurricane they rush headlong to the fatal spot. Their cries, mingled with the noise of their feet, resemble the roar of thunder, increasing as the storm approaches. As a swarm of bees surround their queen, these Pawnee savages encompass the Sioux child — their trembling victim. In the twinkling of an eye, their bows are bent and their arrows adjusted to the cords. The arrow of *Lecharou-tétéwarouchte*, or chief of the sacrifice, is the only one which is barbed with iron. With this it is his province to pierce the heart of the innocent Dakota. A profound silence reigns for an instant among the ferocious band. No sound breaks the awful stillness save the sobs and piteous moans of the victim, who hangs trembling in the air, while the chief of the sacrifice makes a last offering of her to the Master of the Universe. At that moment he transfixes her through the heart — upon the instant a thousand murderous arrows quiver in the body of the poor child. Her whole body is one shapeless mass, riddled with arrows as numerous as are the quills upon the back of the porcupine.

While the howling and the dancing continue, the great chief of the nation, mounting the three posts in triumph, plucks the arrows from the dead body and casts them into the fire. The iron-barbed arrow is the only one preserved for future sacrifices. He then squeezes the blood from the mangled flesh upon the maize and other seeds, which stand around in baskets ready to be planted; and then, as the last act of this cruel and bloody sacrifice, he plucks the still palpitating heart from the body, and, heaping the

fiercest imprecations upon the enemies of his race, devours it amidst the shouts and screams of his people. The rite is finished. The haughty and satisfied savages move away from the scene of their awful tragedy; they pass the remainder of the day in feasts and merriment. The murdered and deformed body hangs where it was immolated, a prey to wolves and carnivorous birds. I will end this painful tragedy, by giving you an extract of a former letter.

“Such horrid cruelties could not but bring down the wrath of heaven upon their nation. As soon as the report of the sacrifice reached the Sioux, they burned with the desire to avenge their honor, and bound themselves by oaths that they would not rest until they had killed as many Pawnees as their innocent victim had bones or joints in her body. More than 100 Pawnees have at length fallen under their tomahawks, and their oaths have since been still more amply fulfilled in the massacre of their wives and children.

“In view of so much cruelty, who could mistake the agency of the arch enemy of mankind, and who would refuse to exert himself to bring these benighted nations to the knowledge of the One only true Mediator between God and man, and of the only true sacrifice without which it is impossible to appease the Divine justice?”

With sentiments of respect and esteem, etc.

## CHAPTER V.

### NOTES ON CERTAIN WESTERN TRIBES.<sup>1</sup>

The Snakes and Utes — Poverty and degradation — Enslavement of children by Spanish — Cannibalism — The wealthy Nez Percés — The decent Cayuses and the Camas root — The interesting Flatheads — Other tribes — Further account of the Flatheads and their country — Neighboring tribes.

**T**HE Utes, a tribe of the Snakes, burn their relatives' bodies, with the best horses that the dead man owned. The body is placed, with the horses, after cutting their throats, upon a big pile of dry wood. When the smoke rises in eddies, they think the soul of the Indian takes its flight to the land of spirits, borne by his faithful steeds; and to excite them to soar more swiftly, they all together give utterance to frightful howls.

The Sampeetches, Pah-Utes and Yam-pah-Utes are the nearest neighbors to the Snakes. There is not, very likely, in all the universe, a more miserable, more degraded and poorer people. The French commonly call them *les Dignes-de-pitié*, or those who deserve to be pitied, and the name suits them admirably. The land they inhabit is a veritable waste. They lodge in crevices of the rocks, or in holes dug in the earth; they have no clothing; their only weapons are a bow, arrows and a pointed stick; they range the barren plains in search of ants and grasshoppers, on which they feed, and they think it a feast when they come upon a few tasteless roots or nauseous grains.

Respectable and credible persons have assured me that they eat the corpses of their kindred, and sometimes even their own children. Their number is unknown, for they are seldom seen more than two, three or four together.

<sup>1</sup> From Father De Smet's account of his journey to the Flatheads in 1840. Translated from *Voyages aux Montagnes Rocheuses*, pp. 31-35.

They are so timid that a stranger would have a good deal of trouble to approach them. As soon as they espy one, whether white man or Indian, they give the alarm by lighting a *boucan* or wood-smoke; the next moment, the signal is repeated wherever one of them may be. More than 400 have been counted at once, running at this signal to hide in the inaccessible rocks: whence it is presumed that they are very numerous. When they go out to hunt for roots and ants, they hide their young ones in the brush or in holes in the rocks. Now and then some of them will venture to leave their hiding-places and come to find the whites, to sell them their children for trifles. Sometimes the Spanish of California make incursions into their country to carry off their children. I have been assured that they treat them with humanity, give them religious instruction, and grant them their liberty as soon as they reach a certain age, or else keep them in a sort of slavery, intrusting to them the care of their horses or making them work on their farms. I have had the consolation of baptizing several of these wretched creatures; they too have given me the same account. It would be easy to find guides among these new converts, and by this means one could introduce himself among those poor forsaken creatures, teach them the consoling news of the gospel and render their lot, if not happier on earth, better at least for the hope of a future of eternal happiness. If God grants me the grace to return to the mountains, and my superiors permit me, I shall gladly devote myself to the conversion of these miserable and truly pitiable men.

The country of the Utahs is situated east and southeast from that of the Shoshones, upon the sources of the Rio Colorado [Green river]; there are about 4,000 of them. They seem gentle and affable, very polite and hospitable to strangers, and charitable among themselves. They live by hunting and fishing and on fruits and roots, spontaneous products of their territory. There is nothing extraordinary

about their raiment; their manners are of great simplicity. It is a warm land, the climate is favorable, and the soil very well suited to cultivation.

Proceeding toward the north, one comes to the Nez Percés. There are places in their country very fertile and well adapted to agriculture; also vast and rich grazing lands. These Indians own a great number of horses; some have as many as 500 or 600. The nation of the Nez Percés contains near 2,500 inhabitants. Though there are Protestant ministers among them, from reports which they themselves have made, as well as conversations I have had with several of the chiefs, it is clear that they would be charmed to have Catholic missionaries.

On the west of the Nez Percés are the Cayuses, decent, peaceable and hospitable. There are upward of 2,000 of them. Their wealth, like that of the Nez Percés, consists in horses, but of the best stock in the mountains. A great part of their territory is very fertile, and produces in great abundance a certain root called *Kammache*,<sup>2</sup> whereof they make bread, and which, with fish and game, forms their habitual fare.

The Walla Wallas dwell upon the river of the same name, one of the tributaries of the Columbia, and their country also extends along that river. They number about 500. Their character, customs and habits differ in no respect from those of the savages just named.

The Paloos tribe belongs to the nation of the Nez Percés and resembles them in all respects. It inhabits the borders of the Nez Percés and Pavilion rivers. There are scarce 300 of them.

The four nations that I have just named speak the same tongue, with slight differences of dialect.

Northwest of the Palooses is found the nation of the Spokans. They are nearly 800 persons. Several small tribes, who may be considered as belonging to the same

<sup>2</sup> Camas (*camassia esculenta*).

nation, stay in that neighborhood. Their country is diversified by mountains and valleys, some portions of which are very fertile. They call themselves Children of the Sun, which in their language is *Spokani*. Their main subsistence is fishing and hunting, roots and fruits. East of them are the Cœur d'Alènes, about 700 souls. They are distinguished by their civility, decency and kindness. Their land is more open than that of the Spokans and better suited to cultivation.

The land of my dear Flatheads is still farther east and southeast and reaches to the Rocky Mountains. This tribe is unquestionably the most interesting in all Oregon. Frank, noble and generous in their dispositions, they have always shown great good will toward the whites, and a great desire for a knowledge of the Christian religion. They are about 800 in number; they lead a nomadic life; they hunt the buffalo upon the Clark and Salmon rivers; and every spring they cross the mountains and come as far down as the junction of the three forks of the Missouri. This nation has been greatly reduced by the continual attacks of the Blackfeet. Though they are of great bravery, they are very peaceable in their dispositions, and to avoid their enemies, they desire to settle permanently upon their lands. They are awaiting the return of our missionaries to execute this praiseworthy design. "To cultivate the soil and live as good and fervent Christians, such," they say, "is the object of our desires." Their country is mountainous, but interspersed with smiling and fertile valleys, very rich in grazing lands. The mountains are cold, covered with snow during a great part of the year; but in the valleys the climate is mild.

The Pondéras, commonly called the Pend d'Oreilles, are like the Flatheads in body, character, disposition, manners, customs and language; at present they form with them only one and the same people. Their number amounts to more than 1,200. They dwell north of Clark's Fork and upon the shores of a lake that bears their name. Their country includes some very fertile spots. They are awaiting our re-



turn with impatience, to begin cultivating them and to continue living together with the Flatheads, beneath the holy law of the gospel, which I have had the happiness of preaching to them for three months, and to which they have all submitted with the greatest eagerness and docility.

I think you will not read without interest a short account of my stay among them and of my excursions in their company. Do not be surprised at my having led the wandering life of a savage from the month of April to December, living by hunting and on roots, without bread, sugar or coffee, my only bed a buffalo robe and a woolen blanket, passing my nights under the stars when the weather was good and braving the storms and tempests under a little tent. I have mentioned a fever that I had, which seemed determined not to leave me; well, by leading this hard life, I rid myself of it entirely; I have been in wonderful health since September.

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*Honorable and Dear Sir:*<sup>3</sup>

To comply with your kind request of giving you an outline of the upper Indians on the waters of the Columbia with whom we have become acquainted, I have the honor to state:

1st. With regard to the Flatheads. Their number amounts to about 550. Since the regulation of marriages no Christian principles have been introduced among them. They are visibly on the increase. The Flatheads may be called a grave, modest and decent people. The gross vices so common among many other nations are unknown among them. Adultery is of the rarest occurrence and their honesty has been ever acknowledged by all travelers and strangers who have visited their country. Any object found is immediately restored to the owner, if known; if not, it is deposited with the chief or Black-robe.

<sup>3</sup> Uncertain to whom this letter was addressed. About 1845.

Their piety is truly moving. They listen with the greatest attention to the word of God. The chiefs are held in great esteem and their counsels are generally followed. Their charity toward the old and infirm is very great. The name of orphan is unknown among them. Immediately after the death of their parents they are adopted by relations and friends and they take their place and share among the children of the family. They love and esteem the whites highly, and glory and take pride that they never spilt a drop of the white man's blood. Frequently have they been seen to expose their own existence to save the life of their beloved Boston (American).

Though not habituated, they may be said to love labor and may easily be brought over to learn to till the soil. The climate is very healthy. Among them epidemics, bilious complaints and fevers of all descriptions are almost entirely unknown.

The long summer droughts are an obstacle to agriculture, however. The numerous mountain rivulets and springs may remedy this inconvenience in the immediate neighborhood of the different water-courses. The soil is good and fertile and St. Mary's valley (or *Racine Amère*) which extends for about 200 miles, from northwest to southeast, might by irrigation become very productive. The mountains are almost entirely covered with red and white pine and cedar; the poplar is found in great and dense clusters along the main streams. In 1844 forty bushels of potatoes produced upward of 900 bushels. I have seen several potatoes of the size of a man's head. The astonishment of the good Indians was raised to the highest pitch when the monstrous roots were taken out of the ground. All thanked God and promised to work, and all assisted with delight at the first great potato feast in the heart of the Rocky Mountains. Carrots, beets, parsnips, turnips, all sorts of vegetable roots grow here in abundance and of an excellent quality.

Owing to the great want of tools and to the difficulties of procuring them, the Indians have been till now in the necessity of making a summer and winter hunt to procure provisions and clothing by means of the buffalo chase and of other animals, such as the elk, the moose, the mountain sheep, the red fox and black-tailed deer, the antelope and the bear.

Buffalo and beaver are becoming every year more scarce and will soon fail them altogether. We hope the providence of God will come to their relief and that means will be found to procure them implements and tools to settle them permanently at St. Mary's, the village and spot they have chosen for their abode.

A school has been commenced at which all the children attend during their stay at the village. One of the missionaries having found excellent dispositions for music among the Flathead youth, has formed a musical band who play with great ease and harmony passages from the best composers.

2d. The upper Kalispels or Pend d'Oreilles. The country of these Indians consists principally in forests and plains. The upper valley above the great Flathead lake appears to be very rich in soil and very productive and contains a great number of beautiful plains, among which the Camas and Horse plains are the most conspicuous. From below the latter to the head of the Kalispel lake, a distance of about 100 miles, Clark's river is lined with almost impenetrable forests, inaccessible rocks and mountains, and runs on over many ledges of rocks, forming falls and rapids, rendering its navigation very dangerous even to small skiffs and canoes, and impossible to larger crafts. At the head of the above lake cedars are found in abundance, measuring from thirty to fifty feet in circumference.

The Kalispels speak the same language as the Flatheads; their dispositions and customs are the same; they are equally as honest and as docile. An establishment is im-

mediately to be commenced among them, and we have the assurance that their aptitude for agriculture will even surpass that of their neighbors. Their number amounts to about 600 souls. They have hitherto subsisted by the buffalo chase and other small animals.

3d. The lower Kalispels. Probity, generosity, docility, the love of labor, great courage and piety are among the characteristics of this tribe and in as eminent a degree as their brethren from the upper country. They live on roots, by fishing and by the chase of the small animals such as deer, with herds of which their native mountains are crowded. By means of a few hoes and spades we procured them, they raised last year upward of 400 bags of potatoes, to which, however, they would have no recourse in winter. They kept the whole for seed for the next season. By means of plows and more hoes all were planted last spring and the harvest appears to be very promising. A few open prairies of rather limited extent appear to be very rich in soil and procure beautiful grazing. The winter is here very disagreeable; it snows almost constantly. Last winter there was never less than from two to four feet of snow in the lower prairies. On this account the raising of cattle will here be more difficult.

The Kalispels of the lower country number as many souls as their brethren from above.

The Kalispels and Flatheads have the Blackfeet for neighbors and enemies. However great the perfidy and treachery of the latter, they allow them to pass unmolested, but resist manfully every attack or aggression coming from the Blackfeet. It is a common saying in the mountains that in battle one Flathead or Kalispel is worth five of his enemies. The Blackfeet know it, for they never hazard a combat unless they are superior in numbers to their foes. Notwithstanding their great wickedness and cruelty, there appears to be a change for the better among them. Many have expressed a longing desire to be visited by the Black-

robes. Till now they have respected the property of the missionaries among the Flatheads. A missionary will soon penetrate into their extensive country.

4th. The Cœur d'Alènes or Pointed Hearts. The Cœur d'Alènes owe their name to their former cruelty and treachery toward the whites; at present they are of a mild and Christian-like disposition and have listened and embraced with great eagerness the word of God. They inhabit the borders of the great lake which bears their name and from whence the Spokane river flows. They extend their wigwams up two beautiful valleys for about seventy miles, interspersed with small ponds and lakes, forests and plains. These valleys are watered by two large and deep forks, nourishing the great lake, and they in their turn receive the waters of innumerable streams and torrents descending from the lofty Cœur d'Alène Mountains. A waterfall a few miles below prevents in a great measure the discharge of the upper waters. If this obstacle could be conquered, and I believe a few kegs of powder would effect it, the two Cœur d'Alène valleys would become the most delightful portions of the mountains. The vegetable soil lies several feet deep and is most productive; winters are mild and grass is plenty. At present the frequent inundations during the spring and fall render it almost altogether useless. The Indians, however, succeeded last year in raising upward of 1,200 bags of potatoes; some families had each upward of 100 bags. We have procured them a great number of hoes, and the result proves that these have not been idle in their hands. They number upward of 500 souls. Until more tools and plows can be procured they have to live as yet for a great part of the year by fishing, hunting, and digging the edible roots which the kind providence of God has so liberally bestowed on the lands of the poor Indians. A church and several houses have already been built on the spot for a village. The language of the Cœur d'Alènes differs greatly from the Kalispels.

5th. Flatbow and Kootenai Indians. The Kootenai language is altogether different from the language of the above-mentioned tribes. It resembles rather the language of the Blackfeet. They are good and docile and show the greatest kindness and hospitality to all whites who happen to visit their country. They have made frequent applications for Black-robos and a mission is about to be opened among them. Their country is very mountainous, and thickly covered with timber; it offers but few suitable spots for agriculture. The great Kootenai lake abounds in fish. A kind of sturgeon of an enormous size, from eight to twelve feet, is frequently caught in it. Moose, elk, the different kinds of deer, the mountain sheep, the beaver and the otter are as yet very numerous in their country.

We have introduced already in our different stations of the upper Oregon upward of sixty head of cattle, a number of hogs and poultry. All are thriving well and are taken good care of by the Indians.

## CHAPTER VI.

### MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF THE INDIANS.

What the savages wore — A brilliant princess — Love of ornament — Light attire of boys — Cleanliness not a virtue — Domestic arts — The Great Spirit — Warfare and gambling — Management of babies — Training of boys and girls — The pipe, its significance and uses — Delaware tradition.

#### *Indian Costumes.*<sup>1</sup>

THE costume of the men consists of a colored shirt; a woolen blanket, white, red or blue: a pair of leggins or gaiters, of red or blue cloth, adorned with silk ribbons of various colors; an *azeeun*, or small piece of blue cloth passed between the legs: slippers of tanned deer skin, adorned with beads and silk ribbons: a bead necklace or a silver crescent, or both together, are often worn, with four or five bracelets of silver on each arm. Ear-rings are common to both sexes. They always carry a big knife in a sheath, attached to a belt which at the same time supports the *azeeun* and the leggins. The head is decorated with a band of tanned hide, which holds back the hair and has feathers stuck in it. This piece is often omitted. The hair is worn very long. Every Indian has two braids, one of which hangs over his face and the other down behind; they are generally adorned with little silver trinkets or with silk ribbons or feathers. They use various colors to paint their faces. A young man who is a recognized hunter, capable of supporting himself, carries a calumet or pipe and a *skipetagan* or tobacco-bag. This bag is usually made of the entire skin of some animal, as the otter, beaver or lynx,

<sup>1</sup> A hitherto unpublished fragment dating from the Potawatomi period in 1838-9.

with the hair left on. Besides the tobacco it contains a small piece of steel, a fire-stone and a scrap of punk.

On the occasion of the annuities which are paid every year to the Pawnees, all the chiefs come to Bellevue, near Council Bluffs, to receive them. Here is the costume of their women for 1839. The women dress practically alike among all the different nations around us.

Mademoiselle "Pack-Up-and-Get," (that is her name) eldest daughter of the Prince Big Axe, wore for coiffure, when she made her appearance in the great council lodge, the principal feather of the right wing of a female goose and a *bandeau* of blue beads interlaced with small cords. Her shirt of crimson curtain cloth was fastened at the neck with a deer's foot and pizzle, and adorned with seven silver spangles, which might be worth in Belgium a franc apiece. The draperies of this garment descended gracefully to the loins, covering her blue petticoat, which hung to her knees. Her leggins or gaiters were decorated with figures, worked in porcupine quills and embroidered with sky-blue silk. A blue bed-blanket was thrown negligently over the princess' shoulders.

Her Royal Grandeur's moccasins were adorned with little beads of assorted colors, ingeniously worked in the form of toads (*crapaux*). She had employed a great profusion of vermilion to add to the natural pink of her complexion, while Spanish brown and Venetian red had been mingled to paint her hair where it was parted in front. This long growth, the princess' natural ornament, did not cover her shoulders, but was plaited and tied together on the back of her head, as if to display a real and positive phrenological bump.

The princess had been prodigal in her toilet of that perfume so much admired by the Indians, the essence of the skunk, the odor of which is insupportable to civilized noses, and which announced her approach to the assembly, even before her form appeared. Her pedigree or totem was easily distinguishable by the figure of a tortoise painted



on her blanket. A black and blue spot above the left eyebrow, which the princess had received from the mule of her father, as she was attaching a bundle upon his back, appeared to render her countenance the more interesting.

<sup>2</sup>Let us now say a few words concerning the manners and customs of the Indian nations of the West in general. In all the mountain tribes the costume is nearly the same. The men wear a very long tunic of the skin of the antelope or bighorn; leggins of buckskin or dogskin; shoes of the same material, and a mantle of buffalo skin or a red, blue, green or white flannel blanket. The seams of their garments are adorned with long fringes; they clean them by rubbing them with white earth (it is the soap of the savages). The Indian loves to pile ornament upon ornament; he attaches plumes of every kind to his long hair; the eagle feather always occupies the principal place; it is the great medicine bird, the Manitou or guardian spirit of the savage warrior. They attach besides all sorts of trinkets, ribbons of all colors, rings, shells and ornaments of bone. They wear on their necks collars of pearls interlaced with *apocoins* (an oblong shell that they pick up on the shore of the Pacific ocean). In the morning, all wash themselves; but for lack of a towel they make use of an end of their tunic. Then every one returns to his lodge to make his toilet; that is, to rub his face, hair, arms and chest with bear's grease, over which they spread a thick layer of vermilion, which gives them a wild and hideous aspect; I often thought, when I met them, of those bloated visages that are called in Belgium *vagefuers gezichten* (purgatory faces). Boys of seven to ten years wear a sort of dalmatica of skins, embroidered with porcupine quills and open at both sides, which gives these little fellows an altogether singular appearance, without breeches or shirt. Under the age of seven, they have nothing to cover them during sum-

<sup>2</sup> From Father De Smet's narrative of his journey to the Flatheads in 1840. Translated from *Voyages aux Montagnes Rocheuses*, pp. 49-54.

mer; they pass whole days in playing in the water or the mire; in winter they are lapped in scraps of leather. The women cover themselves with a big cape, ornamented with elk-teeth and rows of pearls of various colors. This attire makes a handsome effect, on a white and clean skin. A savage takes as great pains in decorating his courser as with his own person; the animal's head, chest and flanks are covered with hangings of scarlet cloth, embroidered with pearls and adorned with long fringes, to which they attach little bells.

It may be said in general that cleanliness is not among the virtues of the savage; it took me some time to become used to them; it will very likely take me more to correct them. Excuse me for going here into some rather disgusting details; any one who thinks himself called to these missions ought to know what he is to meet. I have seen the Cheyennes, Snakes, Utes, etc., eat vermin off each other by the fistfull. Often great chiefs, while they talked to me, would pull off their shirt in my presence without ceremony, and while they chatted would amuse themselves with carrying on this branch of the chase in the seams. As fast as they dislodged the game, they crunched it with as much relish as more civilized mouths crack almonds and hazelnuts or the claws of crabs and crawfishes. Their pots, kettles and dishes, unless they fall in the water by accident, never touch that element to be washed. The women wear a sort of rimless hats, made of straw, very close-woven and gummed; in their lodges, these hats serve them as drinking vessels and soup dishes, and, what will seem incredible to you at first sight, they make use of them even to boil meat in; it is by the aid of heated pebbles that water is made to boil in this sort of pot.

The great ambition of the savage and all his wealth consist in having horses, a fine lodge, a good blanket or cloak and a good gun. Beyond these, there is hardly anything that can tempt him. The only advantage that his horses

are to him is that in the chase he can kill as many buffalo as he wishes and bring away a great deal of meat.

The Indians are very skilful in tanning the skins of animals. They remove the flesh with an iron tool with teeth, and the hair with a little pick; then the skin is rubbed with the animal's brains and becomes very soft and workable. They are no less handy in making their bows, of a very elastic wood or of the horn of the deer; their arrows are made of a heavy wood and furnished with iron tips or with a lance-shaped stone; it is astonishing what they will do with these weapons. The horns of the bighorn and buffalo serve them for making cups, dishes and excellent spoons; they soften the horn by cooking it in hot ashes, and thus give it all sorts of forms; as it cools it recovers its first hardness. They make good baskets from willow, bark or straw.

In general, the mountain Indians admit the existence of a Supreme Being, the Great Spirit, Creator of all things, the immortality of the soul and a future life, where man is rewarded or punished according to his deserts. These are the principal points of their belief. Their religious ideas are very limited. They believe that the Great Spirit directs all important events, that he is the author of all good and consequently alone worthy of adoration; that by their evil conduct they draw on themselves his indignation and wrath, and that he sends them calamities to punish them. They say further that the soul enters the other world with the same form that the body bore upon earth. They imagine that their happiness will consist in the enjoyment of abundance of those things which they have most highly prized during life, that the sources of their present happiness will be extended to the point of perfection, and that the punishment of the wicked will consist in a deprivation of all happiness, while the demon will overwhelm them with frightful miseries. This belief in eternal happiness and sorrow varies according to the circumstances of their earthly life.

The savages on the west of the mountains are very peace-

able and rarely make war among themselves; they never fight but in self-defense. It is only with the Blackfeet, who dwell to the east, that they often have bloody encounters. These marauders are always on the march, robbing and killing those whom they meet. When the western Indians espy this enemy, they avoid him if it is possible; but if they are compelled to fight, they show a firm and invincible courage and charge upon their foes with the greatest impetuosity. They rush pell-mell upon them uttering their war-cry, discharge their shots and their arrows, lay about them with lance, sword or club, withdraw to reload, return to the charge and brave death in the most cold-blooded manner. They repeat these attacks until the victory is decided. It is commonly said in the mountains that one Flathead or Pend d'Oreille is worth four Blackfeet; when a party of the latter meets one of the Flatheads, equal or superior in numbers, the Blackfoot at once manifests a desire for peace, displays a flag and presents his calumet. The Flathead chief always accepts, but he does not fail to let his enemy understand that he knows what to think of his peaceful intentions. "Blackfoot," he says, "I accept your calumet; but I know very well that your heart desires war, and that your hand is defiled with murder; but I love peace. Let us smoke, since you offer me the calumet, though I am sure that there will soon be fresh bloodshed."

Horse-racing and gambling are among the dominant passions of the Indians, as I have mentioned above. The Indians of the Columbia have carried gambling to the uttermost. After having lost everything that they have, they stake themselves, first one hand, then the other; if they lose these, they put up their arms and so on with all the members of their bodies; the head follows, and if they lose that they become slaves for life, with their wives and children.

The government of an Indian tribe is in the hands of the chiefs, who attain that office by merit or by exploits. Their power consists solely in their influence; it is great or little in proportion to the wisdom, benevolence and courage

that they have displayed. The chief does not exercise his authority by command but by persuasion. He never levies taxes; on the contrary, he is so much in the habit of giving away his own property, as well to aid a needy individual as to further the public good, that he is ordinarily one of the poorest in the village. His authority is notwithstanding very great; his wishes are carried out as soon as they are known; his advice is generally followed. If any one is unreasonably obstinate, the voice of the nation quickly brings him to order. I know of no government that allows so great personal liberty, and in which there is at the same time so little of anarchy and so much subordination and devotion.

I have still a word to say of some Indian tribes, neighbors of the Flatheads and Pend d'Oreilles. North of these last are found the Kootenais; they live on McGillivray's [Kootenai] river, and are represented to be a very interesting people. Their language is different from that of their neighbors, being very sonorous and open, free from gutturals. They are clean, honest and affable and about 1,000 in number.

There are several other savage tribes upon the northwest fork of the Columbia, which resemble each other in customs, morals, manners and language. The principal ones are as follows: On the north of the Kootenais are the Carriers, about 4,000 souls; south of these, the Lake Indians, 500 in number, dwelling on Arrow lake. Still farther south are the Kettles, about 600. West of these are found the Sinpavelist [?], to the number of 1,000; farther down the Shooswaps, 600 souls; west and northwest, the Okinagans, 1,100; and to the north and west are still different nations, of which I have only been able to obtain vague information.

#### *Education.*

<sup>3</sup> You ask "when you may hope to see me in Belgium again?" I have a very long journey ahead of me, but

<sup>3</sup> From a letter of Father De Smet to his niece in February, 1851, written in French.

toward the antipodes of Belgium — the only answer I can give you is to quote from the old “Malbrouck” — “Dieu sait quand il viendra” — you know the rest. \* \* \* You expect, no doubt, that I will tell you something about the savages of America. Here is how they stand in regard to education, which I know is a matter that interests you. The only school in which the Indian youth learn to form their head and heart, is the example of their elders. They give them no preceptors. In the family, the father has charge of the boys, the mother of the girls, and the old proverb, “like father like son,” applies more strictly among the Indians than anywhere else. In general, great attention is paid to the physical development of the children and they are prepared from their tenderest infancy for the hardest kind of life. As soon as the child is born, in whatever season, regardless of the severest cold or the greatest heat, they at once plunge it several times into water. Then, suitably wrapped up, it is placed and entrusted in the hands of some other nurse than its mother. After the first week the parents take it back, and it is put into the cradle, or *berceau* — a machine that deserves to be patented, and which the little individual does not leave until he is able to walk. This is the simple construction of it — a small hide-covered board, about a foot longer than its little occupant. The child is placed upon it and tied tightly with bandages, beginning with the legs and covering it to the shoulders; they are made tightest about the loins and the pit of the stomach, in order to force out the chest as much as possible. Neatly arranged in this style, the little party occupies a place in the lodge, out of harm’s way. When the weather is fine, he is set in the doorway of the lodge. If the nurse goes away, she hangs the cradle to the branch of a tree, where the baby warms himself tranquilly in the sun, or on hot days is in the shade, and is in no danger from dogs, wolves or snakes, which are often plentiful in the neighborhood. When they travel, the cradle is hung from the sad-

dle-bow, where it is out of the rider's way and offers no danger to the little prisoner.

After he has learned to walk, and up to the time when he can provide for his own subsistence, he remains attached to his parents' lodge, doing no hard work. At about the age of twelve, he begins to take care of his father's band of horses, and to handle the bow or fire-arms in the chase. At sixteen or eighteen he is invested with the honors and responsibilities of the warrior; he shares the labors and takes part in all the amusements of the village elders. The girls enjoy no such liberty as do the boys. They are early made to help their mother in all her labors; they cut and bring in firewood, help prepare the food, which is no small matter among the Indians, who often dine six or eight times a day; mend and make shoes and garments, with a very great number of etceteras, and when a girl is of age, her father sells her for a horse or two and she becomes the slave of a man to whom very likely she may never have spoken.

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*To his Excellency, M. Ed<sup>d</sup>. Blondeel Van Cuelenbroeck,  
Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of  
H. M. the King of the Belgians, Washington, D. C.:*

University of St. Louis, Feb. 26, 1862.

Monsieur le Ministre.— Upon my return to St. Louis, on the 22d of this month, I immediately set about fulfilling the promise which I had the honor to make you. I have just forwarded to you by express four buffalo robes, of which one is destined for Monsieur the Minister of France. Permit me, Monsieur le Ministre, to seize this occasion to express to you my profound gratitude for all your kindnesses toward me on the occasion of my last stay in Washington. The remembrance of having had the honor of din-

ing at your residence with the great ministers of three great powers will ever abide with me.

*The Calumet.*

In addition to the buffalo robes, I have sent you my large Indian calumet,<sup>4</sup> which was presented to me by the chiefs of the numerous tribe of the Sioux or Dacotahs, inhabiting the great plains of the west, together with the pipe-case and tobacco-bag, decorated with porcupine quills in the Indian fashion; which I beg you will accept as a little souvenir on my part. If I add here a few remarks and reflections and the history of the tradition of the Great Indian Calumet, it is with the thought, Monsieur le Ministre, that the little narration will give you pleasure.

When the Indians send the calumet to a stranger, it is always a notable sign of good will on their part, of friendship and peace, of respect and gratitude for benefits received.

On all great occasions, in their religious and political ceremonies, and at the great feasts, the calumet presides; the savages send its first fruits, or its first puffs, to the Great Waconda, or Master of Life, to the Sun, which gives them light, and to the earth and water, by which they are nourished; then they direct a puff to each point of the compass, begging of heaven all the elements and favorable winds.

<sup>4</sup> On two other occasions Father De Smet presented calumets to friends whom he particularly desired to honor. Upon returning from his western journey in 1859, he sent to a "benefactor and friend," Monsieur Massenhove, of Louvain, Belgium, the large and handsomely decorated calumet used by him on that expedition, which was a present to him from the head chief of the Yankton Sioux, Ite-ech-tshe, or Cut Face; and soon after he wrote to the Reverend P. Matthys of that place an account of the use of the instrument, identical with that here given Monsieur Blondeel. Again, on April 20, 1862, he wrote his nephew Charles and his betrothed, bestowing upon them, with appropriate wishes, his large and handsome calumet, then in the possession of Charles' father.



His Hobowakan or Calumet is the object which the American Indian prizes most highly; he who does not own one is in their eyes a very poor wretch. It is very often tastefully and ingeniously decorated and carved. There is nothing in the customs and usages of the Indians so emphatically characteristic as their peculiarities in the matter of smoking. There can be no doubt that it is a very ancient custom, as it seems to be the one that enters most largely into their habits — it is the Alpha and the Omega of all acts to which they attach any importance. Throughout the wilderness, wherever you meet Indians, though they may be suffering from hunger, the first thing they ask for is Sama — tobacco.

There is no allusion in the holy scriptures to the use of tobacco. Herodotus makes no mention of the pipe, nor of the custom of smoking. This may perhaps indicate an occidental origin for them; that they are purely American. It was in fact in 1560, after the discovery of America, that tobacco and the manner of using it were introduced into France, by Nicot; whence the name nicotina.

According to an ancient tradition of the "Lenni-Lennapi," (First People; surnamed Delawares since the arrival of the whites) it is reported that they received the great calumet of peace and brotherhood in the twentieth moon of their existence as a nation. The story told by the elders, or conservators of the national traditions, of the occasion of the calumet being presented to them, is as follows:

Far to the North, there existed a powerful nation. Their warriors were as many as the unnumbered herds of the buffalo upon the vast plains of the West. Their wigwams extended farther than the eye could reach, on the shores of their fair lakes and the banks of their wide and beautiful rivers. The Manitou, whose voice bellows in the clouds and is borne upon the wings of the wind to all parts of the earth, spoke to this great nation and told them that a rival people (the Lenni-Lennapi) held possession of all the coun-

try, all the forests and plains, from the Big Water in the east to the great mountains, behind which every evening the sun goes to rest. At this word all the people rose like one man, and the great council was at once assembled, to deliberate upon the pressing danger which appeared to threaten them. It was resolved to invade the land of the Lenni-Lennapi with a strong party of their best warriors, determined to revel in their enemies' hearts, to adorn themselves with scalps and plunder ravished from them, and to force them into the water, there to perish.

In the midst of their preparations for the great war expedition, a large and very beautiful bird, of a dazzling whiteness, appeared to them for the first time. It came forth from the forest, soared into the air and finally came to rest, with outstretched wings, above the head of the only daughter of the head chief. Then this girl heard a voice speaking from the bottom of her heart, which said to her: "Call all the warriors together; make known to them that the heart of the Great Spirit is sad, is covered with a dark and heavy cloud, because they seek to drink the blood of his first-born children, the Lenni-Lennapi, the eldest of all the tribes on earth. To appease the anger of the Master of Life, and to bring back happiness to his heart, all the warriors must wash their hands in the blood of a young fawn; then, loaded with presents, and the Hobowakan in their hands, they must go all together and present themselves to their elder brothers; they must distribute their gifts, and smoke together the great calumet of peace and brotherhood, which is to make them one forever."

This is the little tradition of the Hobowakan among the Lenni-Lennapi, as given me by the son of the head chief of the tribe.<sup>5</sup> The calumet presides at all their gatherings, in all their councils with their neighbors, at the ratification of all their treaties, their religious festivals and friendly feasts. Any one who refuses to smoke from the calumet is excluded from taking any part and is obliged to withdraw.

<sup>5</sup> No doubt *Watomika* — Reverend Father Beschor, S. J.

To refuse to accept the calumet, as between two different tribes, is equivalent to a declaration of war, and on the other hand, to accept it is always, among the savages, a sign of good harmony, fraternity and mutual charity, ready to aid one another in case of need.

It is quite probable that I shall return, about the beginning of May, among my dear children of the plains.

I have the honor to be, with sentiments of the profoundest respect and the most sincere esteem,

Monsieur le Ministre, etc.

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*Reverend Father:*<sup>6</sup>

I shall here give you the remarks and observations I have made, and the information I have gathered, during this last journey, concerning some customs and practices of the savages.

In speaking of the animals, I inquired of seven Flatheads, who were present, how many buffalo they had killed between them in their last hunt? The number amounted to 189 — one alone had killed fifty-nine. One of the Flatheads told me of three remarkable coups which had distinguished him in that chase. He pursued a cow, armed merely with a stone, and killed her by striking her *while* running, between the horns; he afterward killed a second with his knife; and finished his exploits by spearing and strangling a large bull. The young warriors frequently exercise themselves in this manner, to show their agility, dexterity and strength. He who spoke looked like a Hercules. They then (a rare favor, for they are not boasters) kindly showed me the scars left by the balls and arrows of the Blackfeet in their different encounters. One of them bore

<sup>6</sup> Letter to a Father of the Society of Jesus, dated St. Mary's, December 30, 1841. Published as Letter X, *Voyages aux Montagnes-Rocheuses* and Letter XI, *Letters and Sketches*. The latter text, which is apparently translated from the French, is here followed.

the scars of four balls which had pierced his thigh; the only consequence of which was a little stiffness of the leg, scarcely perceptible. Another had his arm and breast pierced by a ball. A third, beside some wounds from a knife and spear, had an arrow five inches deep in his belly. A fourth had still two balls in his body. One among them, a cripple, had his leg broken by a ball sent by an enemy concealed in a hole; leaping on one leg he fell upon the Black-foot, and the hiding place of the foe became his grave. "These Blackfeet," I remarked, "are terrible people." The Indian who last spoke replied in the sense of the words of Napoleon's grenadier, "Oui, mais ils meurent vite après." I expressed a desire to know the medicines which they used in such cases; they, much surprised at my question, replied, laughing, "we apply nothing to our wounds, they close of themselves." This recalled to me the reply of Captain Bridger in the past year. He had had, within four years, two quivers-full of arrows [*Fr. deux armures de flèches*:—two arrowheads?] in his body. Being asked if the wounds had been long suppurating, he answered humorously, "in the mountains meat never spoils."

The Indians who live on Clark's river are of the middle size. The women are very filthy. Their faces, hands and feet are black and stiff with dirt. They rub them every morning with a composition of red and brown earth mixed up with fish oil. Their hair, always long and disheveled, serves them for a towel to wipe their hands on. Their garment is generally tattered, and stiff and shining with dust and grease. They seem to be less subjected to slavish labor than the squaws that live east of the mountains, still they have to toil hard, and to do whatever is most difficult. They are obliged to carry all the household furniture or to row the canoe when they move from one place to another; at home, they fetch the wood and the water, clean the fish, prepare the meals, gather the roots and fruits of the season, and when any leisure time is left, they spend it in making mats, baskets and hats of bull-rushes. What must appear

rather singular is, that the men more frequently handle the needle than the squaws. Their chief occupations, however, are fishing and hunting. These Indians suffer much from ophthalmic affections. Scarcely a cabin is to be found on Clark's river, in which there is not a blind or one-eyed person, or some one laboring under some disease of the eye. This probably proceeds from two causes — first, because they are frequently on the water and exposed from morning till night to the direct and reflected rays of the sun, and next, because living in low cabins made of bull-rushes, the large fire they make in the centre fills it with smoke, which must gradually injure their eyes.

Conjurers are found here as well as in some parts of Europe. They are a kind of physicians. Whatever may be the complaint of the patient these gentlemen have him stretched out on his back, and his friends and relatives are ordered to stand round him, each one armed with two sticks of unequal length. The doctor or conjurer neither feels the pulse nor looks at the tongue, but with a solemn countenance commences to sing some mournful strain, whilst those present accompany him with their voices and beat time with the sticks. During the singing the doctor operates on the patient, he kneels before him, and placing his closed fists on the stomach, leans on him with all his might. Excessive pain makes the patient roar, but his roarings are lost in the noise, for the doctor and the bystanders raise their voices higher in proportion as the sick man gives utterance to his sufferings. At the end of each stanza the doctor joins his hands, applies them to the patient's lips, and blows with all his strength. This operation is repeated till at last the doctor takes from the patient's mouth, either a little white stone or the claw of some bird or animal, which he exhibits to the bystanders, protesting that he has removed the cause of the disease, and that the patient will soon recover. But whether he recover or die, the quack is here as elsewhere rewarded for his exertions. *Mundus vult decipi*, is the watchword of quacks, jugglers and mountebanks;

and it seems that the Indian conjurers are not unacquainted with it. I received this description of their method of curing diseases from a clerk of the Hudson Bay Company. I shall subjoin another anecdote concerning the religious ideas entertained by the Chinooks. All men, they say, were created by a divinity called *Etalapasse*, but they were created imperfect or unfinished. Their mouths were not cleft, their eyes were closed, and their hands and feet were immovable; so that they were rather living lumps of flesh than men. Another divinity, whom they call *Ecannum* (resembling the *Nanaboojoo* of the Potawatomes), less powerful, but more benevolent than the former, seeing the imperfect state of these men, took a sharp stone and with it opened their mouths and eyes. He also gave motion to their hands and feet. This merciful divinity did not rest satisfied with conferring these first favors on the human race. He taught them to make canoes and paddles, nets and all the implements now used by the Indians. He threw large rocks into the rivers to obstruct their courses, and confine the fish in order that the Indians might catch them in larger quantities.

When I speak of the Indian character, I do not mean to include the Indians that live in the neighborhood of civilized man, and have intercourse with him. It is acknowledged in the United States that the whites who trade with those Indians, not only demoralize them by the sale of spirituous liquors, but communicate to them their own vices, of which some are shocking and revolting to nature. The Indian left to himself is circumspect and discreet in his words and actions. He seldom gives way to passion; except against the hereditary enemies of his nation. When there is question of them, his words breathe hatred and vengeance. He seeks revenge, because he firmly believes that it is the only means by which he can retrieve his honor when he has been insulted or defeated; because he thinks that only low and vulgar minds can forget an injury, and he fosters rancor because he deems it a virtue. With re-

spect to others, the Indian is cool and dispassionate, checking the least violent emotion of his heart. Thus should he know that one of his friends is in danger of being attacked by an enemy lying in wait for him, he will not openly tell him so (for he would deem this an act of fear), but will ask him where he intends to go that day, and after having received an answer, will add with the same indifference, that a wild beast lies hidden on the way. This figurative remark will render his friend as cautious as if he were acquainted with all the designs and movements of the enemy.

Thus again, if an Indian has been hunting without success, he will go to the cabin of one of his friends, taking care not to show the least sign of disappointment or impatience, nor to speak of the hunger which he suffers. He will sit down and smoke the calumet with as much indifference as if he had been successful in the chase. He acts in the same manner when he is among strangers. To give signs of disappointment or impatience, is looked upon by the Indians as a mark of cowardice, and would earn for them the appellation of "old woman," which is the most injurious and degrading epithet that can be applied to an Indian. If an Indian be told that his children have distinguished themselves in battle — that they have taken several scalps, and have carried off many enemies and horses, without giving the least sign of joy, he will answer: "They have done well." If he be informed that they have been killed or made prisoners, he will utter no complaint, but will simply say: "It is unfortunate." He will make no inquiries into the circumstances; several days must elapse before he asks for further information.

The Indian is endowed with extraordinary sagacity, and easily learns whatever demands application. Experience and observation render him conversant with things that are unknown to the civilized man. Thus, he will traverse a plain or forest 100 or 200 miles in extent, and will arrive at a particular place with as much precision as the mariner by the aid of the compass. Unless prevented by

obstacles, he, without any material deviation, always travels in a straight line, regardless of path or road. In the same manner he will point out the exact place of the sun, when it is hidden by mists or clouds. Thus, too, he follows with the greatest accuracy the traces of men or animals, though these should have passed over the leaves or the grass, and nothing be perceptible to the eye of the white man. He acquires this knowledge from a constant application of the intellectual faculties, and much time and experience are required to perfect this perceptive quality. Generally speaking, he has an excellent memory. He recollects all the articles that have been concluded upon in their councils and treaties, and the exact time when such councils were held or such treaties ratified.

Some writers have supposed that the Indians are guided by instinct, and have even ventured to assert that their children would find their way through the forests as well as those further advanced in age. I have consulted some of the most intelligent Indians on this subject, and they have uniformly told me that they acquire this practical knowledge by long and close attention to the growth of plants and trees, and to the sun and stars. It is known that the north side of a tree is covered with a greater quantity of moss than any other, and that the boughs and foliage on the south side are more abundant and luxuriant. Similar observations tend to direct them, and I have more than once found their reflections useful to myself in the excursions I have made through the forests. Parents teach their children to remark such things, and these in their turn sometimes add new discoveries to those of their fathers. They measure distances by a day's journey. When an Indian travels alone, his day's journey will be about fifty or sixty English miles, but only fifteen or twenty when he moves with the camp. They divide their journeys, as we do the hours, into halves and quarters; and when in their councils they decide on war or on distant excursions, they lay off these journeys with astonishing accuracy on a kind of map,



which they trace on bark or skins. Though they have no knowledge of geography, nor of any science that relates to it, yet they form with sufficient accuracy maps of the countries which they know; nothing but the degrees of longitude and latitude are wanting in some to make them exact. To travel by the polestar is the extent of their astronomy.

I remember to have read in Father Charlevoix' journal that the Indians are remarkably superstitious with respect to dreams. This is still the case, though they interpret them in various ways. Some maintain that during sleep the rational part of the soul travels about, whilst the sensitive continues to animate the body. Others say that the good Manitou or familiar spirit gives salutary advice concerning the future, whilst others hold that in sleep the soul visits the objects about which she dreams. But all look upon dreams as sacred, and as the ordinary channels through which the Great Spirit and the Manitous communicate their designs to man. Impressed with this idea, the Indian is at a loss to conceive why we disregard them. As they look upon dreams as representations of the desires of some unearthly genius, or of the commands of the Great Spirit, they deem themselves bound to observe and obey them. Charlevoix tells us somewhere, and I have seen instances of a similar kind, that an Indian who had dreamed that he had cut off his finger, actually cut it, and prepared himself for the act by a fast. Another having dreamed that he was a prisoner among a hostile nation, not knowing how to act, consulted the jugglers, and according to their decision, had himself bound to a stake, and fire applied to several parts of his body. I doubt whether the quotation is correct, as I have not the work of Charlevoix to consult, but I know that I have described a superstitious belief which is generally held by the Indians of the present day. Among the Crows I saw a warrior who, in consequence of a dream, had put on women's clothing and subjected himself to all the labors and duties of that condition, so humiliating to an Indian. On the other hand there is a woman among the

Snakes who once dreamed that she was a man and killed animals in the chase. Upon waking, she assumed her husband's garments, took his gun and went out to test the virtue of her dream; she killed a deer. Since that time she has not left off man's costume; she goes on the hunts and on the war-path; by some fearless actions she has obtained the title of "brave" and the privilege of admittance to the council of the chiefs. Nothing less than another dream could make her return to her gown.

When the Potawatomies or any of the northern nations make or renew a treaty of peace, they present a wampum sash or collar. The wampum is made of a shell called *buccinum*, and shaped into small beads in the form of pearls. When they conclude an alliance, offensive or defensive, with other tribes, they send them a wampum sash and tomahawk dipped in blood, inviting them to come and drink of the blood of their enemies. This figurative expression often becomes a reality. Among the nations of the West the calumet is looked upon with equal reverence, whether in peace or war. They smoke the calumet to confirm their treaties and alliances. This smoking is considered a solemn engagement, and he who should violate it would be deemed unworthy of confidence, infamous and an object of divine vengeance. In time of war the calumet and all its ornaments are red. Sometimes it is partly red and partly of some other color. By the color and the manner of disposing the feathers, a person acquainted with their practices knows at first sight what are the designs or intentions of the nation that presents the calumet.

The smoking of the calumet forms a part of all their religious ceremonies. It is a kind of sacred rite which they perform when they prepare themselves to invoke the Great Spirit, and take the sun and moon, the earth and the water as witnesses of the sincerity of their intentions, and the fidelity with which they promise to comply with their engagements. However ridiculous this custom of smoking may appear to some, it has a good effect among the Indians.

Experience has taught them that the smoke of the calumet dispels the vapors of the brain, aids them to think and judge with greater accuracy and precision, and excites their courage. This seems to be the principal reason why they have introduced it into their councils, where it is looked upon as the seal of their decisions. It is also sent as a pledge of fidelity to those whom they wish to consult, or with whom they desire to form an alliance. I know that the opinions of the Indians concerning the beneficial effects of smoking the calumet will be sanctioned by few persons, because it is demonstrated from experience that the smoke of tobacco acts as a powerful narcotic upon the nervous system, and produces soporific and debilitating effects; but it should be remembered that such effects are not produced when the smoke is inhaled into the lungs, as is the universal practice of the Indians.

The funeral ceremonies of the Calkobins [Talkotins?], who inhabit New Caledonia, west of the mountains, are fantastic and revolting. Mr. Cox, in his journal, tells us that the body of the deceased is exposed in his lodge for nine days, and on the tenth is burned. They choose for this purpose an elevated place, and there erect a funeral pile. In the meanwhile, they invite their neighbors from all sides, entreating them to repair to the ceremony. All the preparations being completed, the corpse is placed on the pile, which they light, while the spectators manifest the greatest joy. All that the deceased possessed is placed around the body; and if he be a person of distinction, his friends purchase for him a cloak, a shirt, and a pair of breeches: these are laid beside him. The medicine man must be present, and, for the last time, has recourse to his enchantments, to recall the departed to life. Not succeeding, he covers the dead body — that is, he makes a present of a piece of cloth, or leather, and thus appeases the anger of the relatives, and escapes the vengeance they have a right to inflict upon him. During the nine days on which the corpse is exposed, the widow is obliged to remain near it from the rising to the

setting of the sun; and, notwithstanding the excessive heats of summer, no relaxation is allowed from this barbarous custom. While the doctor is occupied in his last operation, the widow must lie down beside the corpse, until he orders her to withdraw from the pile; and this order is not given until the unfortunate being is covered with blisters. She then is made to pass and repass her hands through the flames, to collect the fat, which flows from the body: with this she rubs her person. When the friends of the deceased observe that the sinews of the legs and arms begin to contract, they force the miserable widow to return to the pile, and straighten the limbs.

If, during the lifetime of the husband, the woman had been unfaithful to him, or had neglected to provide for his wants, his relations then revenge themselves upon her; they throw her upon the pile, from whence she is dragged by her own relations. She is again cast upon it, and again withdrawn, until she falls into a state of insensibility.

The body being consumed, the widow gathers together the largest bones; these she incloses in a birch box, which she is forced to carry for many years. She is looked upon while in this state as a slave; the hardest and most laborious work falls to her lot; she must obey every order of the women, and even of the children; and the least disobedience or repugnance draws down upon her severe chastisement. The ashes of her husband are deposited in a tomb, and it is her duty to remove from thence the weeds. These unhappy women frequently destroy themselves to avoid so many cruelties. At the end of three or four years the relatives agree to put an end to her mourning. They prepare a great feast for this occasion, and invite all the neighbors. The widow is then introduced, still carrying the bones of the husband; these are taken from her, and shut up in a coffin, which is fastened at the end of a stake about twelve feet long. All the guests extol her painful widowhood; one of whom pours upon her head a vessel of oil, whilst another covers her with down. It is only after this ceremony that

the widow can marry again; but, as may be readily supposed, the number of those who hazard a second marriage is very small.

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*Cœur D'Alène Hunting.*<sup>7</sup>

The Indians watch for the proper time to go all together for a hunt or "surround" of deer. They wait until the mountains are covered with three to five feet of snow and the deer have been driven down to the valleys, where they pass the winter, feeding on moss off the trees, the tenderer branches of the underbrush and shoots of the herbs and plants.

This happened soon after the feasts of Christmas [1858], and all our hunters started out, taking only a few mats made of rushes to shelter them against bad weather and the nocturnal cold, and also blankets or buffalo skins to wrap themselves in.

They choose by preference the neighborhood of some lake or river which is not yet frozen over; and they determine the extent of the surround, according to the number of hunters of which the band is composed. A hunting-chief is chosen, and all his orders are thereafter executed promptly and punctually. On both ends of their line they light fires, some distance apart, which they feed with old garments and worn-out moccasins. The hunters are now formed in a long curved line, something like a half-moon. At a given signal, they utter the hunting-cry and move forward. The frightened deer rush to right and left to escape. As soon as they smell the smoke of the fires, they turn and run back. Having the fires on both sides of them and the hunters in their rear, they dash toward the lake, and soon they are so closely pressed that they jump into the water, as the only refuge left them. Then everything is easy for the hunters: they let the animals get away from the shore, then

<sup>7</sup>From the French of the third Belgian edition, vol. IV. Dated St. Louis, April 3, 1861.

pursue them in their light bark-canoes and kill them without trouble or danger.

When the "surround" is performed in a valley at a distance from water, the hunters form a complete circle, determining the size of it by their own number. Then they practice the same stratagem, burning their old rags in a hundred little fires round about, to prevent the deer from escaping from the circle. Pursued in every direction, the terrified animals flee from one clump of wood or brush to another, until finally, enveloped on all sides and finding no issue, they fall into the hands of the hunters. It is seldom that a deer escapes them. It follows also that the hunters themselves are considerably endangered. In the eagerness and excitement of such a chase, bullets and arrows are liable to fly wild or glance, and do mischief.

When the snow is very deep in the valleys, and has taken on a crust, sufficient to bear the hunter on his snowshoes, then hunting is a veritable joke to him; the whole herd of deer is soon captured, from the least even unto the greatest. The poor beasts soon become exhausted in the snow and have no chance to escape. They are easily killed with clubs, lances and even knives. A young Indian who was at the Sacred Heart Mission assured me that, without weapon of any kind, he simply jumped on the deer's back, grasped his horns and twisted his neck. He killed eight in this way, in the present hunt.

Sometimes as many as 200 to 300 are killed in a single surround. Ordinarily, however, the number is less. After the hunt, the flesh of the deer is divided among all the families by the chief of the tribe, or by him who has managed the expedition. The portions are regulated according to the number of persons constituting the different families. The hunter who kills the animal has sole right to the skin.

In winter, the hunts are generally made in common.

Bears are as numerous in the Cœur d'Alène countries as in the other mountainous districts. Often the Indians come upon their tracks or ravages while looking for their food-

roots: the earth may be trampled, branches of trees broken or the bark scratched by the redoubtable animals.

The bear is hunted in various manners. In winter, it is not very dangerous. The bear is shut up in his den, either alone or, more frequently, with one or two others, remaining several months entirely torpid, only rarely going out to drink; but the trail that they make from their den to the water betrays them, and allows the hunter to discover, pursue and approach them with ease. Bears are generally found in the hollow of some big tree or in a hole in the rocks. The entrance is usually nearly closed. The hunter makes a hole large enough to permit him to make investigations and take the proper measures. In most cases he takes a long stick and feels around until he finds out where the animal lies. If it is a deep hole, he sets fire to a bunch of pitchy twigs on the end of a pole, to reconnoitre the hole and the position of its dangerous occupant. These precautions are necessary to guarantee the success of the shot. Sometimes it even happens that a very bold hunter will go into the cavity, when it is a rock den, and kill his prey at arm's length or with his knife.

There were two Indians at the mission, when I was there, who certainly had earned hunters' diplomas. One assured me that he had killed eleven grizzlies and seventy black or brown bears; the other had killed over 100 bears, and both without running excessive danger. They told me some interesting particulars, as for instance that the skin of the bear is only bad in summer, when the hair has no firmness. In spring, the bear feeds on roots and herbs; he is especially fond of the leaves of a plant that resembles our cabbage. He also eats with avidity the worms that he finds under stumps or rocks, often lifting very large stones in search of them, since his strength is prodigious. In autumn, he subsists principally on berries from the low bushes, and he is so greedy for them that at this time it is easy to approach him. When a hunter finds a bear's track, or the path worn by the animal, he lies in

wait in some suitable place, arranging so as to be certain of his prey.

The Indians I have mentioned may be ranked among the more fortunate hunters. "A great many others," they told me, "have not had the same success, and have come back from the bear-hunt with a broken leg or arm, mutilated, wounded and bruised all over. Many have lost their lives."

Bears are exceedingly dangerous when they have young ones or when they feel themselves wounded. Then they will attack or defend themselves against the aggressor, and they are very ferocious. Aside from these cases, when a bear meets a man and the man lets him alone, he will not be the first to begin an attack; he goes his way and lets the stranger pass in peace. *Experto crede Roberto*; I have tried it frequently myself. It is true, to be sure, that *the fear of man is characteristic of all animals*. It is a prerogative which the Creator bestowed upon him at the beginning.

The *Ursus gulo*, carcajou or wolverine is ordinarily found in the Arctic regions as far as the seventy-fifth degree. He appears in the various sections of the Rocky Mountains, including that in which I was this winter [1858-59]. He may be called the Torment of the mountain traveler, and especially of the beaver-hunter, who considers the wolverine his greatest enemy and has always to keep on his guard against him. The reason is this. When the carcajou discovers a *cache* of provisions or skins, he devours the first with pleasure and destroys the second. He also destroys the steel traps that are set around here and there to take other animals; and I am assured that when he cannot manage this, he carries them off and hides them in the branches or hollow trunk of a tree. His strength is prodigious. Although not large, and with very short legs, he will carry or drag a large deer a long distance. But cunning as he is, man is his superior, and the carcajou falls into his snares like all the others.



I have spoken in other places of the buffalo, elk, moose, bighorn, antelope and the various ways in which they are hunted. I have only a few words more to say concerning other animals which dwell in these parts, and the manner of taking them.

Foxes are very numerous in this country, and there are several kinds of them. The skin of the silver fox is very valuable; those of the otter and beaver are highly prized. Skins of the marten, muskrat and little white ermine are in commercial demand. The rabbit, hare, prairie and wood squirrel, large and small wolf, badger, skunk, ring-tailed badger or *rat des bois* [opossum?] which lives on crawfishes and small fish; all these animals have skins of little value, and the Indians generally use them to make hoods, gloves and collars. All these animals are usually taken either in steel traps or in snares of various fashions with diverse baits.

Man is great wherever he is found. He is the king of nature, according to the Creator's design; but unfortunately he often forgets the grandeur of his origin and destiny; and while he is clearly the master of the beasts, he is, alas! the slave of his own passions.

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### *The Buffalo Chase.*

*Reverend and very dear Father:*<sup>8</sup>

According to promise, I proceed to offer you the description of a hunt. If I succeed in making my narration intelligible, I shall be satisfied, and shall not regret devoting my time to the writing of it.

To be a good hunter and a good warrior are the two quali-

<sup>8</sup> To the editor of the *Précis Historiques*, Brussels. Dated College of St. Xavier, Cincinnati, O., August 3, 1854. Published as Letters XI and XII *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres*, thence translated as Letters XI and XII, Second Series, *Western Missions and Missionaries*. The latter text is here followed.

ties *par excellence* that constitute a great man among all the nomadic tribes of North America. In this communication I shall limit myself to the manner of conducting a hunt.

The chase absorbs the whole attention of the savage. The knowledge that he has acquired, by long experience, of the nature and instinct of animals, is truly marvelous. He is occupied with it from his tender infancy. As soon as a child is capable of managing a little bow, it is the first instrument his father puts into his hands, to teach him how to hunt little birds and small animals. The young Indians are initiated in all their stratagems. They are taught with as much care how to approach and kill the animals, as in civilized society a youth is instructed in reading, writing and arithmetic.

An expert Indian hunter is acquainted minutely with the habits and instincts of all the quadrupeds which form the object of the chase. He knows their favorite haunts. It is essential for him to distinguish what kind of food an animal first seeks, and the most favorable moment of quitting his lair for procuring nourishment. The hunter must be familiar with all the precautions that are necessary to elude the attentive ear and watchful instincts of his intended victims; he must appreciate the footstep that has passed him, the time that has elapsed since it passed, and the direction it has pursued. The atmosphere, the winds, rain, snow, ice, forests and the water are the books which the Indian reads, consults and examines, on leaving his cabin in pursuit of game.

The tribes of the desert find their subsistence in the chase; the flesh of animals affords them food, and the skins clothing. Before the arrival of the whites, the method of killing the different species of animals was very simple, consisting ordinarily of stratagems and snares. They still have recourse to the primitive method in the hunt for large animals, when they have no horses capable of pursuing them, and powder and ball for killing them are wanting.

The trap prepared for the bison is an inclosure or pen,

and is one of the more early ways, and perhaps the most remarkable in its execution; it demands skill, and gives a high idea of the sagacity, activity and boldness of the Indian. As on all other occasions of moment, the jugglers are consulted, and the hunt is preceded by a great variety of superstitious practices. I witnessed one of these hunts at the base of the Rocky Mountains, and of this I will endeavor to give you a faithful detail.

The bisons roam the prairies in herds of several hundreds, and often of several thousands. On many of my travels I have seen with my own eyes, as far as I could discern on these immense plains, thousands and thousands of these noble animals moving slowly, like an interminable troop, in one direction, and browsing the grass as they progress. They have a fearful appearance; their hairy heads inspire with terror those who are ignorant of the pacific habits of this noble quadruped. Indeed, such is their timidity that one man can put to flight the most numerous herd. When alarmed, the tramp of their hoofs, their bellowings and the columns of dust which they raise, resemble the deep murmurs of a tempest mingled with peals of thunder, lessening as they grow more remote. The flesh of the bison is much esteemed and very nourishing; it is deemed the daily bread of all the Indian tribes on the great plains.

A tribe that has few guns, few horses to run down the animals, which needs provisions, and skins for clothing (and such was the condition of our Assiniboins), must employ the old or primitive method of hunting, which has existed from time immemorial.

The Indians whom I saw engaged in it were encamped on a suitable place for the construction of a park or inclosure. The camp of which I speak contained about 300 lodges, which represent 2,000 or 3,000 souls. They had selected the base of a chain of hills, whose gentle slope presented a narrow valley and a prairie, in which all the lodges were ranged. Opposite the hills there was a fine large prairie.

After the construction of the lodges, a great council is

held, at which all the chiefs and all the hunters assist. They first choose a band of warriors to hinder the hunters from leaving camp, either alone or in detached companies, lest the bisons be disturbed, and thus be driven away from the encampment. The law against this is extremely severe; not only all the Indians of the camp must conform to it, but it reaches to all travelers, even when they are ignorant of the encampment or do not know that there is a hunt in contemplation. Should they frighten the animals, they are also punishable; however, those of the camp are more rigorously chastised in case they transgress the regulation. Their guns, their bows and arrows are broken, their lodges cut in pieces, their dogs killed, all their provisions and their hides are taken from them. If they are bold enough to resist the penalty, they are beaten with bows, sticks and clubs, and this torment frequently terminates in the death of the unhappy aggressor. Any one who should set fire to the prairie by accident or imprudence, or in any way frighten off the herd, would be sure to be well beaten.

As soon as the law is promulgated, the construction of the pen is commenced. Everybody labors at it with cheerful ardor, for it is an affair of common interest, on which the subsistence of the entire tribe during several months will depend. The pen has an area of about an acre. To inclose it in a circular form, stakes are firmly fixed in the ground, and the distance between them filled with logs, dry boughs, masses of stone — in short, with whatever they can find that will answer the purpose. The circular palisade has but one opening; before this opening is a slope embracing fifteen or twenty feet between the hills: this inclined plane grows wider as it diverges from the circle; at its two sides they continue the fence to a long distance on the plain.

As soon as these preparations are completed, the Indians elect a grandmaster of ceremonies and of the pen. He is generally an old man, a distinguished personage, belonging to the Wah-kon, or medicine band, and famous in the art of jugglery, which the Indians, as I have remarked, deem a

supernatural science. His office it is to decide the moment for driving the bisons into the inclosure, and give the signal for the commencement of the hunt. He plants the medicine-mast in the centre of the park, and attaches to it the three charms which are to allure the animals in that direction, viz., a streamer of scarlet cloth two or three yards long, a piece of tobacco and a bison's horn. Every morning at the early dawn he beats his drum, intones his hymns of conjuration, consults his own Wah-kon and the manitous or guiding-spirits of the bisons, in order to discover the favorable moment for the chase.

The grandmaster has four runners at his disposal, who go out daily and report to him the true result of their observations; they tell at what distance from the camp the animals are, their probable number, and in what direction the herd is marching. These runners frequently go forty or fifty miles in different directions. In all their courses they take with them a Wah-kon ball, which is intrusted to them by the grandmaster; it is made of buffalo hair and covered with skin. When the runners think that the suitable moment has arrived, they immediately dispatch a man of their number to the grandmaster, with the ball and the good news. So long as the mysterious ball is absent, the master of ceremonies cannot take food; he prolongs this rigorous fast by abstaining from every meat or dish that does not come from some animal killed on the area of the park, until the hunt is over; and as they often remain a month or more awaiting the most favorable moment of beginning, the grandmaster must find himself reduced to very small rations, unless he makes some arrangement with his conscience. It is probable that he eats stealthily at night, for he has no more appearance of fasting than his brethren of the camp.

Let us now suppose all to be in readiness, and the circumstances all favorable to the hunt. The grandmaster of the park beats his drum, to announce that the bisons are in numerous herds at about fifteen or twenty miles distance. The wind is favorable, and comes directly from the point in

which the animals are. Immediately all the horsemen mount their coursers; the foot soldiers, armed with bows, guns and lances, take their positions, forming two long oblique diverging rows, from the extremity of the two barriers which spring from the entrance of the pen and extend into the plain, and thus prolong the lines of the inclosure. When the footmen are placed at distances of ten or fifteen feet, the horsemen continue the same lines, which separate in proportion as they extend, so that the last hunter on horseback is found at about two or three miles distance from the pen, and at very nearly the same distance from the last hunter of the other line, in an opposite direction. When men are wanting, women and even children occupy stations.

After the formation of these two immense lines, one single Indian, unarmed, is sent upon the best courser in the camp in the direction of the buffalo, to meet them. He approaches against the wind and with the greatest precaution. At the distance of about 100 paces he envelops himself in a buffalo hide, the fur turned outside, and also envelops his horse as much as possible in the same manner, and then makes a plaintive cry in imitation of that of a bison calf. As if by enchantment, this cry attracts the attention of the whole herd; after some seconds, several thousands of these quadrupeds, hearing this pitiful plaint, turn toward the pretended calf. At first they move slowly, then advance into a trot, and at last they push forward in full gallop. The horseman continually repeats the cry of the calf, and takes his course toward the pen, ever attentive to keep at the same distance from the animals that are following him. By this stratagem he leads the vast herd of bisons through the whole distance that separates him from his companions, who are on the *qui vive*, full of ardor and impatience to share with him in his sport.

When the buffalo arrive in the space between the extremities of the two lines, the scene changes; all assumes an appearance of eagerness. The hunters on horseback, giving rein to their steeds, rejoin each other behind the animals.

At once the scent of the hunters is communicated among the frightened and routed animals, which attempt to escape in every direction. Then those on foot appear. The bisons, finding themselves surrounded and inclosed on all sides, except the single opening into the circular pen before them, low and bellow in the most frightful manner, and plunge into it with the speed of fear and desperation. The lines of hunters close in gradually; and space becomes less necessary as the mass of bisons and the groups of hunters become more and more compact. Then the Indians commence firing their guns, drawing their arrows and flinging their lances. Many animals fall under the blows before gaining the pen: the greater number, however, enter. They discover, only too late, the snare that has been laid for them. Those in front try to return, but the terrified crowd that follow force them to go forward, and they cast themselves in confusion into the inclosure, amid the hurrahs and joyful shouts of the whole tribe, intermingled with the firing of guns.

As soon as all are penned, the buffalo are killed with arrows, lances and knives. Men, women and children, in an excitement of joy, take part in the general butchery and the flaying and cutting up of the animals. To look at them without disgust in this operation, one must have been a little habituated to their customs and manners. While men cut and slash the flesh, the women, and children in particular, devour the meat still warm with life — the livers, kidneys, brains, etc., seems irresistible attractions: they smear their faces, hair, arms and legs with the blood of the bisons; confused cries, clamorous shouts, and here and there quarrels, fill up the scene. It is a picturesque and savage scene, a very pandemonium — a sight very difficult to depict by words or to recount in minute details. In the hunt which I have just described, and at which I was present, 600 bison were taken.

After the butchery, the skins and the flesh are separated into piles, and these piles are divided among the families, in proportion to the number of which they are composed. The

meat is afterward cut in slices and dried; the bones are bruised and their grease extracted. The dogs also receive their portion of the feast, and devour the remains on the arena of the pen. Two days after the hunt not a vestige of the carnage remained. Before separating, the Indians pass several days in dancing and mirth. One of your Keyzers or Verboeckhovens should assist at one of these spirited, picturesque scenes of the Great Desert; he would find a new subject for a painting.

The old proverb says, "One half of the world knows not how the other half lives." The American Indians, who live on the spontaneous products of the soil, may say as much: the countless herds of bison that roam over the vast plains, serve as daily bread to the numerous tribes of the Great Desert.

The Soshocos are the most degraded of the races of this vast continent. The Americans call them "Poor Devils," and the French and Canadian *voyageurs* denominated them "les dignes de pitié." They roam over the desert and barren districts of Utah and California, and that portion of the Rocky Mountains which branches into Oregon. In my missions and journeys I have sometimes met with families of these wretched Soshocos; they are really worthy of pity. I was so happy as to baptize several of their sick children just before they died.

While the Indians of the plains, who live on the flesh of animals, are tall, robust, active and generally well-clad with skins, the Soshoco, who subsists chiefly on grasshoppers and ants, is miserable, lean, weak and badly clothed; he inspires sentiments of compassion in the minds of those who traverse the unproductive region which he occupies.

After having described to you the inclosure hunt, as practiced by the Assiniboins, I will show you the reverse of the picture, by describing the great grasshopper hunt<sup>9</sup> practiced among the Soshocos. This hunt deserves mention, I think, especially as a contrast to the other.

<sup>9</sup> Fr. la grande chasse aux sauterelles: "the grasshopper surround."



*The Grasshopper Hunt.*

The principal portion of the Soshoco territory is covered with wormwood, and other species of artemisia, in which the grasshoppers swarm by myriads; these parts are consequently most frequented by this tribe. When they are sufficiently numerous, they hunt together. They begin by digging a hole, ten or twelve feet in diameter by four or five deep; then, armed with long branches of artemisia, they surround a field of four or five acres, more or less, according to the number of persons who are engaged in it. They stand about twenty feet apart, and their whole work is to beat the ground, so as to frighten up the grasshoppers and make them bound forward. They chase them toward the centre by degrees — that is, into the hole prepared for their reception. Their number is so considerable that frequently three or four acres furnish grasshoppers sufficient to fill the reservoir or hole.

The Soshocos stay in that place as long as this sort of provision lasts. They, as well as other mortals, have their tastes. Some eat the grasshoppers in soup, or boiled; others crush them, and make a kind of paste from them, which they dry in the sun or before the fire: others eat them *en appalas* — that is, they take pointed rods and string the largest ones on them; afterward these rods are fixed in the ground before the fire, and, as they become roasted, the poor Soshocos regale themselves until the whole are devoured.

As they rove from place to place, they sometimes meet with a few rabbits, and take some grouse, but seldom kill deer or other large animals.

The contrast between the Indian of the plain and the destitute Soshoco is very striking; but poor as he is, like the Hottentot, he loves devotedly his native soil.

I shall soon leave Cincinnati for Louisville, in Kentucky, and then for St. Louis; from thence, in order to comply with your request, I shall continue my Indian memoirs. Among other things, I will give you the description of the

peace expedition sent by the Crows to the Blackfeet. I collected the facts on the spot, in my mission of 1851; for in the superstitious and religious ideas and practices of the savages, in their expeditions of war and hunting, their character and manners are best described. I will give you these curious details with as much fidelity as I can.

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*Wars of the Crows and Blackfeet.*

*Reverend and Dear Father:*<sup>10</sup>

In my last I spoke of the Indian hunting in the Great Desert. I will give you to-day some general observations on their wars, and especially what I could learn of an unhappy *peace expedition*, during my last visit to the Crows.

It may be said that war is the *ne plus ultra* of an Indian's glory. The ambition of becoming a great warrior absorbs all his attention, all his talents, all his bravery; it is often the object of all his voluntary sufferings. His prolonged fasts, his long war-paths, penances and macerations, and his religious observances, have principally this sole end. To wear an eagle's plume, the emblem of an Indian warrior, is in his eyes supreme honor, and the most magnificent of ornaments; for it betokens that he has already distinguished himself in battle. Generally at the age of seventeen or eighteen years, after the first fast, and after having selected his wah-kon, manitou, or tutelary spirit, the youthful savage joins the war-parties, which are composed solely of volunteers.

A chief or partisan who wishes to form a war-party, presents himself in the midst of the camp, tomahawk in hand, and painted with vermilion, the symbol of blood. He intones his war-song: this kind of song is short. The war chief proclaims with emphasis his lofty deeds, his patriotic and martial ardor — the sentiments and motives which

<sup>10</sup> Addressed to the editor of the *Précis Historiques*, Brussels. Dated University of St. Louis, August, 1854.

prompt him to vengeance. His song is accompanied with the drum and the sischiquoin, or gourd filled with little pebbles. He stamps on the ground, as though he could shake the earth to the centre. All the youth listen to him with attention, and any one who rises becomes a volunteer in his party; he, in his turn, intones his war-song, and this ceremony has the force of a solemn pledge, from which a young man cannot honorably withdraw. Each volunteer arms and equips himself with all that will be necessary for him in his expeditions. The whole force of public opinion among the Indians appears to be concentrated on this point. The narration of their adventures and of their valorous deeds, their dances, their religious ceremonies, the speeches of their orators in their public assemblies; whatever, in fine, can serve to inflame ambition in the mind and heart of a barbarian, is referred to the idea of being one day distinguished in war.

I have now to speak of the Crows. Among all the tribes of the northwest portion of North America, this nation is considered as the most warlike and valiant. It counts about 480 lodges, ten individuals to a lodge, and roams over the valley of the Yellowstone, principally in the region of the Wind River Mountains, or Black Hills, and the Rocky Mountains. This race is one of the noblest in the desert; they are tall, robust and well formed, have a piercing eye, aquiline nose, and teeth of ivory whiteness. If they are considered as superior in intelligence to all their neighbors, they also surpass them in their wah-kon, or superstitious ideas and ceremonies, which reign in all their movements and actions. In illustration, I will cite the following trait, of which I was innocently and ignorantly the cause.

In 1840, I first met the Crows, in the valley of the Big Horn, a tributary of the Yellowstone. In my quality of Black-gown, they received me with all possible demonstrations of respect and with a sincere joy. I had with me a stock of lucifer matches, which I used from time to time to light my pipe, and the calumet used in the Great Council.

The effect of these matches surprised them greatly; they had never seen any. They conversed about them in all the lodges, and called them the mysterious fire which the Black-gown carried. I was at once considered the greatest medicine man that had ever visited their tribe. They consequently treated me with distinguished respect and listened to all I said with the greatest attention. Before my departure, the chiefs and principal warriors of the council requested me to leave them a portion of my matches. Unconscious of the superstitious ideas which they attached to them, I readily distributed them, reserving only what was necessary for my journey.

In 1842 I visited them again. The reception they gave me was most solemn. I was lodged in the largest and finest lodges of the camp. All the chiefs and warriors were habited in their embroidered moccasins, leggins and buckskin shirts ornamented with beads and porcupine quills, while eagle's feathers crowned their heads, and they conducted me in grand ceremony from lodge to lodge. That I might participate in a grand banquet, I was provided with my band of eaters, who would do honor to the viands and eat for me. One of the great chiefs testified a special friendship for me. "It is to thee, Black-gown," said he to me, "that I owe all my glory in the victories I have gained over my enemies." His language astonished me greatly, and I begged him to explain. Without delay he took from his neck his Wah-kon, or medicine-bag, wrapped in a bit of kid. He unrolled it, and displayed to my wondering view the remnant of the matches I had given him in 1840! "I use them," said he, "every time I go to battle. If the mysterious fire appears at the first rubbing, I dart upon my enemies, sure of obtaining victory." I had considerable difficulty in disabusing their minds of this singular superstition. As you see, it requires little to acquire a reputation among the Indians: with a few lucifer matches, you may be a great man among the Crows, and receive great honors.

The Crows have been invested during several years, on

the north by the Blackfeet, on the east by the Assiniboins and Crees, and on the south by the Sioux. Each of these invading nations being more numerous than the nation invaded, the Crows were necessarily engaged in perpetual war, sometimes with one and sometimes with the other of these tribes. Hence the last ten years show a great diminution in their population, which numbers at the present time not more than four hundred warriors.

Occasionally the Crows have enjoyed peace with the tribes of the Blackfeet, Sioux, Bannocks, Assiniboins, etc.; and it is a quite remarkable fact that they have never been the first to violate a treaty of peace except in the following instance, which I will narrate in full.

In 1843, the great chief of the nation was known by the title of "Tezi-Goë," a word which sounds bad enough, meaning Rotten Belly. He was as much renowned for his bravery in war as for his wisdom in council, and the patriotic love that he testified to the whole nation. Seeing with pain the great losses that the continual incursions of so many enemies caused his tribe, he resolved to conclude a solemn treaty of peace, if not with all, at least with a great part of the Blackfeet. He made all suitable arrangements, and convoked his council, to deliberate on the most prompt and the most efficacious means of success in his great design. All the warriors hastened to his aid. After having discussed the different points, it was unanimously decided that a party of twenty-five braves should repair to the Blackfeet camp, to offer them the calumet of peace.

The guide chosen to conduct the band was one of the nation of Blackfeet, taken prisoner by the Crows some years before, and hitherto retained in captivity. In order to attach him more securely to the good cause, the Crows granted him his liberty, with the title of brave, and the permission to wear the eagle's plume. He was, besides, loaded with presents, consisting of horses, arms and ornaments of every kind. Having received his instructions, he set out joyfully and with signs of gratitude, fully resolved to neglect nothing

to obtain and consolidate an honorable and lasting peace between the two nations. A place had been designated in which the two tribes might meet as friends and brothers, to celebrate the grand event. The deputation, therefore, set out for the Blackfeet camp of 400 lodges, commanded by the great chief Spotted Deer, or Ponukah-kitzi-Pemmy, which they found encamped in the valley of the Marias river, a pretty large branch of the Missouri river, in the neighborhood of the Great Falls.

About a month before the departure of this expedition, two Crows had been killed, near their own camp, and their scalps carried away, by a war-party of Blackfeet. The two brothers of these unfortunate victims fasted and took their oaths according to custom. These oaths consisted in vowing that they would each kill a Blackfoot, the first good chance. They communicated their intentions to no one. The bravery and determination of these two men were well known. They were elected to join the band of deputies, and promised ostensibly to forget their private wrongs for the public welfare; but in secret they renewed their first intentions, foreseeing that this excursion would probably furnish an occasion of avenging the double murder of their brothers.

The band progressed slowly, using many precautions, and redoubling them as they approached the camp of the Blackfeet. When within a few days' distance from it, they separated in companies of two or three, to scour the country and assure themselves whether any Blackfeet parties were out of the village. In the course of the day the two brothers stayed together, and discovered two Blackfeet Indians returning from the chase, with several horses laden with buffalo meat. Having with them a calumet-handle, they advanced boldly toward their enemies, and offered them the pipe, as on similar occasions. The Blackfeet Indians received the calumet, and were informed that a great deputation, commissioned on the part of the Crows, was repairing to their village, with pacific intentions. They acted with so much address that after some moments the Blackfeet were

entirely reassured, and conceived no suspicions nor suffered the least anxiety. One of them presented his gun to one of the two Crows, and the other gave his horse to the second. They took the same way together toward the camp, but their path led through a deep and lonely ravine. There the snare was discovered. The two Blackfeet suddenly received mortal blows, and were thus cowardly assassinated by the two Crows, who scalped their victims. They then killed the horses with arrows, and concealed their carcasses beneath the underwood and briers. The two scalps were carefully secured in their bullet-bags. Having removed all traces of blood from their habiliments, they rejoined their companions, without making known the cruel act of private vengeance they had consummated, secretly and in violation of all received Indian usages. The day which followed this atrocious crime the deputation made a solemn entrance into the camp of the Blackfeet, and were received by the chiefs and braves with the greatest cordiality, and with every attention of Indian hospitality.

The Blackfeet declared themselves favorable to the treaty of peace. They received joyfully the proposition which the Crows made by their guide and interpreter, the recent prisoner. All the politeness and attention of which Indians are capable were lavished upon the deputies. They were invited to a great number of feasts, to amusements and public sports, which lasted late in the night. They were afterward distributed to the lodges of the principal chiefs, in order to repose after their fatiguing journey.

The inclination to steal is very common among the women of several tribes of the northwest. The Blackfeet women share largely in this bad reputation. One of these feminine pilferers, favored by the darkness of night, silently entered the lodges where the Crows were peaceably sleeping. She relieved their pouches of all that could prove valuable to her. While searching, she laid her hand upon a damp, hairy object, and instantly perceived it to be a scalp. She seized it, quitted the camp in the greatest possible silence, and, by the

glimmering of the watchfire which was burning in the middle of the camp, examined the bloody trophy. It is very difficult to move an Indian, for he is habituated to strange sights. Such an event would have spread alarm among white men, but it only tended to render the Indians more circumspect and more prudent in taking measures. The woman, after reflecting a moment, turned her steps toward the lodge of the head chief, awoke him, and communicated to his ear in the softest whisper the important discovery she had made. He lighted a pine torch, in order to examine the scalp. At the first glance he recognized it as that of a young hunter who had not yet come back from the chase. The chief instantly formed his plan. He made signs to the woman to follow him, recommended her to retire to her own lodge, because nothing could be done before daylight, and forbade her to divulge her secret or to excite the slightest suspicion. He feared that in the confusion which would probably arise, and sheltered by the darkness, some of the Crows might escape.

Spotted Deer then, alone and noiselessly, made the rounds of his camp. He aroused his bravest warriors, to the number of twenty or thirty, by a single touch, and also those whom he desired to consult in this circumstance. They followed him, asking no questions, and were conducted to a solitary place in the vicinity of the camp. There, forming a circle and lighting a torch, the chief displayed the scalp, and related to them the adventure of the woman.

The youngest of his counselors desired instant revenge on the Crows, but the prudent chief represented to them that the night was not a favorable time; besides, that having smoked together the calumet of peace, to kill them in their own lodges, and in the very camp of the Blackfeet, would be at variance with all their customs and practices, and would draw upon them the contempt of all other Indian nations. He, however, commanded them to hold themselves armed and ready at daybreak.

The Crows rose early. They were somewhat surprised to



see the lodges they occupied surrounded by a band of four or five hundred warriors, armed and mounted on their fleetest coursers, and with countenances far from friendly, as on the previous eve. But Indians are not easily disconcerted; they awaited the result in silence. As soon as daylight appeared in the camp, Spotted Deer convened a grand council and summoned the Crow deputies to appear. They at once obeyed, and took their places with the air of haughty indifference, peculiar to the Indian, in the centre of a circle of enemies who were burning with vengeance. When all were in order Spotted Deer arose, and thus addressed the Crows: "Strangers, only yesterday you arrived in our camp. You declared yourselves the deputies of your principal chiefs, sent to conclude with us, hitherto your foes, a solid and durable treaty of peace. We listened to your message. Your words and propositions seemed reasonable and advantageous. All our lodges have been open to you; you have shared in our feasts and hospitality; you joined in our games. Yesterday we had the intention of showing you today still greater liberality. But, before discoursing further, I have one single question to ask you. Crows! I must have an answer; and that answer will decide whether peace be possible, or whether a war of destruction must continue." Then drawing the scalp from the bullet-pouch, and displaying it before them, he cried: "Tell me, Crows, whose hair is this? Who among you claims this trophy?" Those of the Crows who were ignorant of the affair, looked on with amazement, and could only imagine that the Blackfeet sought a pretext for quarreling. No one replied. The chief resumed: "Will no one answer? Must I call a woman to question these Crow braves?" Then beckoning to the stealer of the scalp, he said to her, "Show us to which warrior this trophy belongs." Without hesitation, she pointed to one of the brothers. Every eye was fixed upon him. The chief, Spotted Deer, approaching the murderer, said to him, "Knowest thou this scalp? Didst thou take it? Fearest thou now to avow it?" With one bound the young Crow

placed himself opposite the chief, and shouted: "Spotted Deer, I fear not! It is I who took the scalp! If I endeavored to conceal it, I did so with the desire of doing more evil! Thou askest whose hair is this. Look at the hairy fringe of thy shirt and thy leggins. In my turn, I ask, whose hair is that? Belongs it not to my two brothers, slain by thee or thine, hardly two moons ago? or belongs it not to the relations of some Crow here present? 'Tis vengeance brings me here! My brother holds in his shotbag the companion of this scalp. We determined, before leaving the camp, to cast into thy face these bloody tufts, at the same moment, as our challenge of defiance."

This language determined the Blackfeet. "Young man, thou hast spoken well," replied Spotted Deer; "thou art valiant and fearest not death, which will strike thee and thy companions in a few moments. Yet we have smoked the calumet together. It is not suitable that the ground on which that ceremony took place should drink thy blood. See, Crows, the hill before you! It is in the way that leads to your lodges. So far we allow you to go. When you get there, we will pursue you. Go on, and leave us."

The Crows instantly left the place, and advanced toward the hill designated by the Blackfoot chief, determined to sell their lives dearly in this unequal combat. Their enemies mounted their horses, and awaited with ardor the order for the pursuit.

As soon as the Crows reached the hill, the terrific war-whoop — the *Sassaskwi* — resounded through the camp. The Blackfeet, burning to avenge the outrage received, rushed forward with the greatest impetuosity. The Crows, after running some moments, found a deep ravine excavated in the plain by the running waters: judging the position favorable, they took refuge in it, and maintained themselves for some time. As soon as, in their first ardor, the Blackfeet approached the ravine to dislodge them, a general discharge of muskets and arrows from the Crows killed eight Blackfeet, and wounded a great number. This discharge

routed them, and forced them to draw off. The Blackfeet dismounted, and on foot there were several skirmishes between the two bands; but all were disadvantageous to the Blackfeet, for the Crows were protected in the hole, and only showed their heads through necessity, while their enemies fought in the open plain. A great number of Blackfeet lost their lives in these different attempts, while the Crows lost not a man. Spotted Deer, seeing the danger and the useless destruction of so many warriors, made an appeal to his braves. He proposed to them to place himself at their head, and to fall simultaneously on their enemies. His proposition was accepted; the warwhoop resounded anew through the bloody plain; they attacked the Crows *en masse*, and after having discharged on them their guns and arrows, armed only with their daggers and tomahawks, they darted with confused violence into the ravine, and in a few moments horribly massacred the whole band. In this last attack it is worth noting that not a single Blackfoot lost his life.

The combat ended, the scalps were carried off by the warriors who had most distinguished themselves in the affair. The women cut the corpses of their slain in such small pieces, that it would be difficult to detect among them the smallest trace of the human form. The scalps, with all the torn scraps of flesh, were then attached as trophies to the extremities of poles and lances, and triumphantly borne through the camp, mid chants of victory, yells of rage, with howling and vociferations against their enemies. There was also a general mourning, caused by the loss of so many warriors fallen in this horrible engagement. Since that day, war continues without relaxation to the present time.

This shocking recital I learned in 1851, on that very battle-field, and from a chief who was in the engagement.

I request you, in a special manner, to pray very particularly for these poor Indians. During fourteen years they have implored the favor of having some of our Fathers sent to them. The scripture, "They asked bread, and there was

none to break it to them," may be justly quoted in regard to them. In my short visits to them I have been touched with their affability, their beneficent hospitality and the respectful attention they gave to my instructions. I augur very favorably of their good dispositions, and am convinced that two or three fervent and zealous missionaries could gather consoling fruits for religion from these barbarians, who sigh to know and practice the gospel of peace. Since my last interview with them in 1851 I have received several letters from them.

Do not forget me in your prayers and be so good as to remember me to the Fathers and brothers of St. Michael's College.

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*Fire-worship.*

St. Louis, Nov. 14, 1857.

*Reverend and Very Dear Father:*<sup>11</sup>

The ancient worship of fire exists among our Indians from time immemorial. It is found in their traditions, as in the history of almost all the nations which have had temples and altars in which was a pyre, a hearth, a brasier, in order to entertain continually the fire used in their sacrifices. The Greeks adored fire under the name of Haitos, and the Latins under the name of Vesta. Father Charlevoix represents the tribes of Louisiana, and especially the ancient tribe of the Natchez, as keeping up a perpetual fire in all their medicine lodges or temples. Among the Moquis of New Mexico the sacred fire is constantly maintained by aged men. They believe that great misfortunes will afflict the whole tribe should the fire be extinguished.

<sup>11</sup> Letter XLIV, Second Series, *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres*; Letter XVII, Second Series, *Western Missions and Missionaries*. The latter text is here followed.

The superstitious devotion to fire was general among the Mexicans at the period of the Conquest. In a book entitled, *Inie Calotle in Ilhuicac*, or *Way to Heaven*, printed in 1607 and 1612, we see that each one of the eighteen months of the Mexican year was consecrated to a particular divinity, honored by festivals more or less solemn, and almost always by human sacrifices.

The first month, which begun on the second of February, was consecrated to *Altachuala*, god of the *detention of waters*; the second, to the *destroying god of nations*; the third, to the *god of the waters*; the fourth, to the *god of maize*; the fifth, falling about Easter, to the god *Tescatlipoca*, which was the Jupiter of the Romans; the ninth was consecrated to the *god of war*.

The tenth month, called *Xocolh-huetzi*, began on the 4th of August. Then took place the great feast of the god of fire, or *Xuchten-hetli*, with numerous human sacrifices. They thrust living men into the flames. When these were half-burnt, but still alive, they tore out the heart, in presence of the image of the god. Then they planted in the middle of the court of the temple a lofty tree, round which they performed a thousand ceremonies and sacrifices worthy of the founder of this feast. It lasted longer than the others.

In the eleventh month falls the festival of *Toci*, mother of the gods; on the twelfth, that of the *Coming of the gods*; on the thirteenth, the *Feasts upon the mountains*; the fifteenth month was reserved to the god of war, and the seventeenth to the god of the rains.

The 12th of January commenced, with the eighteenth month, called *Itzcali*, another feast of fire. Two days previous (the 10th), in the middle of the night, they kindled the *new fire* before the idol of the god, elegantly ornamented. With this fire they lighted a grand pile. The hunters brought all that they had killed or fished from the waters, and presented it to the priest, who cast it into the furnace. Then all the assistants were obliged to eat very hot the *tamalillos*, that is to say, little loaves of corn-meal

containing a small portion of roasted meat. What was most singular in this festival, is that, three successive years, no human victim was immolated, and the fourth year, the number of victims surpassed that of other feasts. The king in person and the lords presented themselves in the midst of this heap of corpses to dance, and all sung, with respect and solemnity, the *reserved chant*, which they call in their language, *Neteuhcicuicalistli*.

In a *Treatise on the Idolatry and Superstitions of the Mexicans*, a manuscript of 1629, we perceive that what particularly attracted the veneration of the Mexicans was fire. For this reason this element presided at the birth, and at almost all the actions of life among these victims of error. The infant was born in this superstition. At the moment of its birth, fire was kindled in the room of the mother, and it was maintained four consecutive days, without removing any of it. They believed that if the live coals were drawn out, a cloud would suddenly appear over the eye of the newly born. On the fourth day the elders took the child and the fire out of the chamber; then they passed the fire four times round the child's head, twice in one direction and twice in its opposite. Then the new-born infant received its name, which was in general that of the animal or of the element to which its birthday was consecrated — as the alligator, the serpent, the tiger, the eagle, etc.; or the water, the fire, the house, etc.

In the different sacrifices, tapers and incense almost always had a share.

We also find among them a mythological recital, which shows that a personage, formerly covered with leprosy, obtained the empire of the future world, for having passed by the ordeal of fire, and was transformed into the sun, to the great disappointment of other great personages who shrank from the test. Is this the cause of their respect for fire, and the reason why they attribute to it a mysterious power? The Potawatomes say that Chipiapoos, or the *Dead-man*, is the grand manitou that presides in the country of souls and

there maintains the sacred fire, for the happiness of all those of his race who arrive there. I have spoken of it in my *Oregon Missions*, p. 350.<sup>12</sup>

Fire is, in all the Indian tribes that I have known, an emblem of happiness or of good fortune. It is kindled before all their deliberations. "Having extinguished the enemy's fire," signifies with them to have gained the victory. They attribute to fire a sacred character, which is remarkable everywhere in their usages and customs, especially in their religious ceremonies. They generally maintain mysterious ideas concerning the substance and phenomena of fire, which they consider supernatural. To see a fire rising mysteriously, in their dreams or otherwise, is the symbol of the passage of a soul into the other world. Before consulting the manitous, or tutelary spirits, or before addressing the dead, they begin by kindling the sacred fire. This fire must be struck from a flint, or reach them mysteriously by lightning, or in some other way. To light the sacred fire with common fire, would be considered among them as a grave and dangerous transgression.

The Chippewas of the North kindle a fire on every new tomb, during four successive nights. They say that this symbolical and sacred light illumines their solitary and obscure passage to the country of souls. The following is the origin of this sacred and funereal fire among this people. I received the legend from the mouth of our worthy Watomika.

A little war-party of Chippewas met some enemies in a large and beautiful plain. The war-whoop was instantly shouted, and the contest commenced. Their chief was a valiant and distinguished warrior. On this occasion he surpassed himself in bravery, and a great number of his

<sup>12</sup> Longfellow has embodied this legend of Chipiapoos in his poem, "Hiawatha," but ascribes it to a plagiarist, who copied Father De Smet's narrative without the least credit.—*Editor* [of 1859 Ed. De Smet's Potawatomi letter was written January, 1847; Schoolcraft's five-volume work, 1853-56; Hiawatha, 1854-55].

enemies fell beneath the redoubled blows of his tomahawk. He was giving the signal and the cry of victory to his braves in arms, when he received an arrow in his breast and fell lifeless on the plain. The warrior who receives his last blow in the act of combating is never buried. According to the ancient custom, he remains seated on the battlefield, his back resting against a tree, and his face turned in the direction which indicates the flight of his enemies. It was the case with this chief. His grand crest of eagle feathers was properly adjusted on his head — each plume denoted a trophy or a scalp won in combat. His face was carefully painted. They clothed him and adorned him with his most beautiful habiliments, as though he were yet alive. All his equipment was placed at his side, his bow and quiver of arrows, of which he had made such noble usage in war, reposing on his shoulder. The “post of the brave” was planted before him in solemn ceremony. He received all the honors due to an heroic and illustrious warrior. The rites, the chants, the funereal speeches, all, all were celebrated according to the custom of his nation in similar circumstances. His companions at length offered him their last farewells. No one had the slightest doubt of his death — of the glorious death of their great chief. Were they deceived? The sequel of the legend will show.

Although deprived of speech and of all other means of giving signs of life, the chief heard distinctly all the words of the songs and of the discourses, the cries, the lamentations, and the bravadoes of his warriors. He witnessed their gestures, their dances, and all their ceremonies around the “post of honor.” His icy hand was sensible to the pressure of the friendly grasp; his lips, though pale and livid, felt the ardor and heat of the farewell embrace and salute, without his being able to return it. Perceiving himself thus forsaken, his anguish became excessive, as also his desire to accompany his companions in their return to the village. When he saw them disappear one after the other, his spirit agitated him in such a manner, that he made a



violent movement — he arose, or rather *scemed* to rise, and followed them. His form was invisible to them. This was for him a new cause of surprise and contradiction, which swelled at once his grief and his despair. However, he determined to follow them closely. Wheresoever they went, he went also. When they marched, he marched; whether riding or on foot, he was in their midst. He camped with them; he slept by their side; he awoke with them. In short, he shared in all their fatigues, in all their troubles, in all their labors. While he enjoyed the pleasure of their conversation, while he was present at their repasts, no drink was presented to allay his thirst, no dishes to appease his hunger. His questions and his responses equally remained without response. “Warriors! my braves!” cried he, with bitterness and anguish; “do you not hear the voice of your chief? Look! Do you not see my form? You remain motionless — you seem not to see and hear me. Stanch the blood which is flowing from the deep wound I have received. Suffer me not to die deprived of aid, to famish amid abundance. O you braves! whom I led often into the thickest of the fight, who have always been obedient to my voice, already you seem to forget me! One drop of water to quench my feverish thirst — one mouthful of sustenance! In my distress, how dare you refuse me!”

At each halt, he addressed them in alternate supplication and reproach, but in vain. No one understood his words. If they heard his voice, it was rather for them as the passage or the whispered murmurs of the wind of summer through the foliage and branches of the forest, unnoticed and unheeded.

In fine, after a long and painful journey, the war-party arrived on the summit of a lofty eminence, which overlooked the whole village. The warriors prepared to make their solemn entrance. They decorated themselves with their handsomest ornaments, carefully painted their faces, attached to themselves their victorious trophies, especially scalps, which they fastened on the ends of their bows, toma-

hawks and lances. Then burst forth a unanimous shout, the cry of joy and of victory of the Chippewas, the "Kumaudjeewug! Kumaudjeewug! Kumaudjeewug!" — that is to say, they have met; or, they have fought; or, they have conquered. This enthusiastic shout resounded throughout the whole camp. According to custom, the women and children went forth to meet the warriors, in order to honor their return and proclaim their praises. Those who had lost some members of their family approached with anxiety and eagerness, to find out whether they were really dead, and to assure themselves that they died valiantly, in battling with the enemy. The old man, bowed by the weight of years, consoles himself for the loss of a son, if he sank like a brave man, arms in hand; and the grief of the youthful widow loses all its bitterness when she hears the praises bestowed on the manes of her valiant spouse. The stirring recitals of the combat awaken a martial fire in the hearts of all the youth; and children, yet incapable of understanding the cause of the grand festival, mingle their infantine shouts of joy and gladness with the boisterous and reiterated acclamations of the whole tribe.

Amid all this clamor and all these rejoicings, no one was conscious of the presence of the great war chief. He heard the information that his near relations and his friends received concerning his fortunes. He listened to the recital of his bravery, of his lofty deeds, of his glorious death in the midst of his vanquished enemies. He heard them speak of the post of the brave, planted in his honor on the field of battle. "Here I am!" cried he; "I see! I walk! Look at me! Touch me! I am not dead! Tomahawk in hand, I shall renew my march against the enemy, at the head of my braves; and soon, in the banquet, you will hear the tones of my drum!" No one heard him; no one perceived him. The voice of the great chief was no more to them than the perpetual din of the falling waters from cascade to cascade at the foot of their village. Impatient, he took the direction of his lodge. There he found his wife

in deep despair, cutting, in token of mourning, her long and floating locks, lamenting her misfortune, the loss of a cherished husband, and the desolate state of her orphan children. He strove to undeceive her, and to comfort her with words of tenderness; he sought to clasp his infants in his arms; but here again, vain and futile were his efforts; they remained insensible to his voice and his paternal caresses. The mother, bathed in tears, sat inclining her head between her hands. The chief, suffering and dejected, besought her to dress his deep wound, to apply to it the herbs and roots contained in his medicine sack; but she moved not; she answered only with tears and groans. Then he approached his mouth close to the ear of his wife, and shouted aloud, "I am thirsty! I am hungry! Give me food and drink!" The woman thought she heard a rumbling in her ear, and spoke of it to her companions. The chief, in his vexation, struck her a severe blow on the brow. She quietly pressed her hand to the stricken place, and said, "I feel a slight headache."

Frustrated at every step, and in all his attempts to make himself known, the great chief began to reflect on what he had heard, in his youth, from the distinguished jugglers. He had learned that sometimes the spirit or soul quits the body and wanders up and down at hazard, according to its own will and pleasure. He therefore thought that perchance his body was lying on the field of battle, and that his spirit only had accompanied the warriors on their return to the village. He instantly resolved to return by the path he had pursued, at a distance of four days' march. The three first days he met no one. In the afternoon of the fourth, when approaching the battle-field, he remarked a fire in the centre of the path which he was following. Wishing to avoid it, he quitted the track; but the fire, at the same instant, changed position, and placed itself before him. In vain he tried to go from right to left, the same mysterious fire ever preceded him, as if to bar his entrance to the field of battle. "I also," said he to himself, "I am a spirit; I

am seeking to return into my body; I will accomplish my design. Thou wilt purify me, but thou shalt not hinder the realization of my project. I have always conquered my enemies, notwithstanding the greatest obstacles. This day I will triumph over thee, Spirit of Fire!" he said, and, with an intense effort, he darted through the mysterious flame.

He came forth from a long trance. He found himself seated on the battle-ground, his back supported against the tree. His bow, his arrows, his clothes, his ornaments, his war accoutrements, the post of the brave, all were in the same state and occupied the same position in which his soldiers had left them on the day of strife. He raised his eyes and perceived a large eagle, perched on the highest branch of a tree above his head. Instantly he recognized his manitou bird, the same that had appeared to him in his earlier days, when he came forth from the state of childhood; the bird that he had selected for his tutelary spirit, and of which he had always worn a talon suspended from his neck. His manitou had carefully guarded his body, and had prevented the vultures and other birds of prey from devouring it. The chief arose, stood some minutes, but found himself weak and reduced. The blood from his wound had ceased to flow, and he dressed it. He was acquainted with the efficacy of certain leaves and roots suitable for healing bruises. He sought them, gathered them with care in the forest, and crushing some between two stones, applied them. He chewed and swallowed others.

After the lapse of a few days, he felt sufficient strength to attempt to return to his village; but hunger consumed him. In the absence of large animals, he lived on little birds that his arrows brought down, insects and reptiles, roots and berries. After many hardships, he arrived at length on the shore of a river that separated him from wife, children and friends. The chief uttered the shout agreed upon in such circumstances, the shout of the happy return of an absent friend. The signal was heard. A canoe was im-

mediately sent for him. During the absence of the canoe, the conjectures were numerous concerning the absent person, whose friendly voice of approach had just been heard. All those who had belonged to the war-party were present in the camp. The dead alone remained on the field of battle. "Might not the unknown on the other shore be an absent hunter? Or might not this shout prove a bold ruse of an enemy to take the scalps of the rowers?" To send a canoe was therefore judged imprudent, because they were not sure of the absence of an individual from the village.

While on the opposite shore all these conjectures were increasing, the war-chief embarks. He soon presents himself before them, amid the acclamations and joyful shouts of all his relatives and friends. The Indians eagerly pour forth from every lodge to shake hands and celebrate the happy return of their chief and faithful conductor. That day will be for them ever memorable and solemn. They return thanks to the Master of Life, and to all the manitous of the Indian calendar, for the preservation and return of their beloved chief. The whole day is consumed in dances, songs and banquets.

When the first burst of astonishment and universal joy had a little subsided, and the usual tranquillity was restored to the village, the chief beat his drum in order to convene his people. He related to them the whole story of his extraordinary adventures, and terminated his recital by making known to them, and imposing on them, "the worship of the sacred and funereal fire" — that is to say, the ceremony which consists in maintaining, during four consecutive nights, a fire on every newly-closed sepulchre. He told them that this devotion is advantageous and agreeable to the soul of the deceased; that the distance to the country of souls is four long days; that in this journey the soul needs a fire every night in its encampment; that this funereal fire, kindled on the tomb by the near relations of the departed, serves to enlighten and warm the soul during its peregrination. The Chippewas believe that when this religious rite

is neglected, the soul or spirit is forced to discharge the difficult task of making and maintaining a fire itself, and that with the greatest inconvenience.

Here I am, dear Father, at the close of the legend of the Chippewas. I give it as I received it. I am assured that it is very ancient. The worship of fire among our Indians springs from the worship of the primitive pagans, who, in order to purify themselves, leaped over fire, either a mysterious one, or lighted in honor of some divinity. The laws of Moses prohibited this practice among the Jews.

Yet one word more, Reverend Father, and I finish this lengthy epistle. If you will read over one of my former letters, you will there find that in my visit to the Crows, camped at the base of the Rocky Mountains, I was the object of an extreme veneration among these savages. Why? I was considered as the bearer or the guardian of the "mysterious fire." In effect, I carried a box of phosphoric matches in the pocket of my *soutane*. The savages perceived that I used them to light my pipe or their calumet. In a second visit I learned the cause, very futile in itself, which had attached such great importance to my poor person.

I receive from time to time news from these poor and unfortunate pagans. They do not forget the visits which they have received, and I certainly never forget these dear children of my heart. They continue to beg, earnestly, every year, that missionaries be sent them to baptize their children and instruct them in the holy faith, which can alone render them happy here and hereafter.

You asked me one day, Reverend Father, in an excursion which we made together during my last visit in Belgium, "What is the degree of civilization of the tribes that you have visited?" I replied to you: "I do not know all that Europeans wish us to comprehend by the word *civilization*. These savages are spoken of as exceptional beings, possessing another nature. They are men like ourselves. They

only differ from us because they are ignorant, poor, and unfortunate. But their hearts are so good! There are some who have much natural ability, and what is more valuable, a great deal of faith and virtue!" Is not the close of my letter a confirmation of what I said to you? What gratitude! What desire to know God! If, therefore, there is question of civilization of souls for heaven, oh! we have no need of European civilizers. Cause prayers to be offered that God may send us missionaries, and we will make them happy!

I commend all these dear savages, our brethren in Jesus Christ, redeemed by the same blood, and inclosed in the same Sacred Heart — I commend them all most earnestly to your holy sacrifices, and to your kind prayers.

Deign to believe me, with the most profound respect,  
Reverend Father,

Ræ. Væ. servus in Christo,  
P. J. DE SMET, S. J.

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*Great Medicine Dance among the Senecas.*<sup>13</sup>

(As related to me by the Chief of the Six Nations.)

When one is sick among the Senecas, or when an epidemic rages in their camp or village, in ordinary times, the medicine band or jugglers are applied to by the family of the sick patient, or by the village. They implore their assistance, from the relief of the evil spirits who have taken possession, or entered the body or bodies of their relatives. In the first case, should the family be rich in horses, and have plenty of other worldly goods, it pays abundantly for the operation. In an epidemic or general calamity, the performance is always *gratis*.

The chief of the medicine band calls on his devotees and

<sup>13</sup> From the Linton Album.

they assemble either in a lodge or cabin, from which every ray of light is excluded. All enter the dark abode, dressed in their most fantastic apparel, their faces all covered with the most hideous painted masks, roughly carved out of light wood. Each carries his medicine bag. Their gestures and movements are all unnatural, they hop and dance, they cut all sorts of shins and whimsical pranks, turning their heads right and left as they move along and enter the dark hall. A table is placed in the middle. On it each attendant deposits his medicine bag. Utter silence is observed by all. An occasional groan, or rather grunt, is heard now and then. All squat down on the naked floor, until the first sign for operation be given. The hovering of the eagle, high and distant above the hall, is heard at last, breaking in upon the deep silence that reigned within. The flapping of the eagle's wings and its shrill notes become more and more distinct, as the great medicine bird lowers and finally, with a loud piercing sound, announces its presence in their midst.<sup>14</sup> The chief, or Great Medicine Man, then arises and opens the feast, in which nothing else is used than the boiled heads of deer, already cooked for the great occasion. He seizes one head, with both hands, gives the sound of the ravenous crow, pouncing upon its prey, and he devours his portion. The deer heads, in succession, are passed around the circle, each member repeating the cry of the pouncing crow, until all the meat has been consumed and the bones left bare. Then the dancing, the beating of drums, and the sound of the Indian flute, accompanied with unearthly sounds and stamping of feet, all keeping time with the music — thus the night passes in revels. When twilight begins to appear, the curtains are all withdrawn. The stage or cabin is then wide opened. Each juggler takes up his medicine bag, in which he finds

<sup>14</sup> The flapping of the eagle's wings and its screechings are performed by an amateur of the musical band, who draws the various eagle sounds from his flute.— *Author's Note.*



a new supply of medicines, all carefully and mysteriously arranged by an invisible spirit.<sup>15</sup> Each carries in his hand the empty skin of a snapping turtle, holding it by the neck, the chief badge of the medicine confraternity. The turtle contains some small water-worn pebbles, which they rattle as they come out, exhibiting the same gestures and movements as on entering the medicine hall on the preceding evening.

Then they proceed to the sick man's lodge or cabin, hopping and dancing around the dwelling, shaking their snapping turtle shells, and making hideous and unnatural sounds through the nostrils, in imitation of the owl — all this to frighten off the evil spirit and drive it out of the body of the patient. After having made several rounds, the chief medicine man throws open the entrance, falls his full length on the floor and drags himself along, in all sorts of antics, keeping up meanwhile his rattling and his guttural sounds and cries. He goes under the bed, removes every object, searches and passes in every nook and crook, tumbles in the fire and handles the glowing coals,<sup>16</sup> which he scatters around the sickroom. After this long performance and operation, they all join in a common dance, accompanied by the sharp rattling turtles and the guttural gibbering songs, and the scene closes, the evil spirit is put to flight and they receive their pay. Should the patient recover, the Indian medicine men have wrought a great new wonder, and they receive all the credit for the cure. On the contrary, if the sick man dies, to another more powerful spirit the death of the patient is cunningly attributed.

<sup>15</sup> The renewal of the mysterious medicine bags is made by one of the confraternity under the dark veil of the night.— *Author's Note.*

<sup>16</sup> The handling of the red-hot coals is attributed to the hands and other exposed parts of the body being besmeared with the sap of a certain weed, which protects against burns and renders them insensible to heat.— *Author's Note.*

*Grass Dance among the Yanktons.*<sup>17</sup>

When one enters an Indian camp, whatever be the size of it, 100 to 200 lodges or 800 to 1,000 souls, one is struck by the order and tranquillity that prevail. Among them as everywhere else the children are playing with all their might at their little innocent games, their bows and arrows or balls, or running races. The women are about their usual housework which is various and ample enough. They do the cooking, cut the wood and go for water. They work the skins of the animals killed in the chase — that is, they remove the hair from the hide, dry it, scrape it, tan it and paint it; they soften the skins to be used for garments, which they afterward embroider with porcupine quills or beads of various colors. Besides all this, they have the entire care of their little papooses or children; they are always and everywhere industriously occupied. The men look after the horses, make bows and arrows, prepare and dry their smoking herb (kinikinik) or busy themselves about useful or purely fanciful matters. Their favorite occupation is to smoke the calumet in peace, eat a good piece of broiled buffalo or deer and then take a nap or else chat over the news of the day and the future movements of the camp. Though less perhaps than civilized countries, still the Indian camps also have their idlers and loafers, their good-for-nothings who kill time before the mirror, daubing their faces with colors and adorning themselves from head to foot.

On the other hand, upon the arrival of a person whom they desire to honor, everything is life and movement in the camp; everybody is on foot to celebrate their guest's visit. He passes through a long series of handshakes and later he is honored with a serenade accompanied with a dance. The dances are extremely varied and animated,

<sup>17</sup> Letter to Father Terwecoren, dated November, 1867. Translated from the French.

and if the visitor stays long enough, they give him the whole series. On each occasion a large circle of dancers is formed, all hideously painted. The musicians begin to beat their drums and tambourines and all accompany the music with a measured chant varied with piercing yells, grunts and roars to accentuate the rhythm. When the women's voices are added, the vocal part of the performance is soft, plaintive and melodious. The dance is often a combination of different dances. Here is a list of the principal ones: the Chief's dance, the Beggar's dance, the Buffalo and Corn dances, the dance of the Dead, the Marriage dance, and the dance of Return from War, accompanied with prisoners and sacrifices. The war dance is everywhere the most important and most varied; it is the faithful image of an Indian battle-field. It represents the departure of the warriors, their arrival in the enemy's country, the attack, the scalping, their triumphal return to the tribe and the torture of the prisoners. They put a lively enthusiasm into these dances; their ardor and activity form a striking contrast to the stoical repose of their ordinary way of life.

After this explanatory preface, I propose to give you the details of the Grass dance instituted by the good chief Pananniapapi before his conversion to the faith. He is the head chief of the Yankton tribe, which consists of nearly 3,000 souls and belongs to the Sioux nation.

Among the Indians each tribe has its societies or associations. The principal one among the Yanktons is called the Grass band or *Pejimakinnanka*. All the braves, or men of heart, as the Indians express it, belong to this fraternity. All the members enter into a solemn engagement: first, to avoid quarrels among themselves and to submit any differences which may arise to the arbitration of two or three wise men. That is their supreme court, improvised for the occasion, and there is no appeal from its decision: the result is generally happy and they live in good understanding and great harmony: second, the society undertakes to

give aid and assistance to the weak, to protect the widow and orphan and to succor the sick and the stranger in need.

At the ceremonial dances each member carries a long bunch of grass, which is among them the emblem of abundance and charity. It is the grass that nourishes their horses and domestic animals, and fattens the buffalo, the deer, the elk, the bighorn and the antelope of the plains and mountains. Their horses carry all their belongings in their periodical migrations and they ride them on their travels and to the chase. The flesh of the wild animals nourishes them and their skins serve them for winter and summer garments, for bed and blankets. The skin of the buffalo especially serves in the construction of their canoes and skiffs and their comfortable lodges and tents, and furnishes them cords and everything necessary for the making of their saddles and bridles. The Grass band willingly shares the fruits of the chase with the orphan, the widow, the old man and the stranger.

It is especially in the spring, when the grass is tender and sweet, that their ceremonial dances take place. The badge or distinctive mark of the society is the bunch of grass braided and attached to the waist of each member in the form and appearance of a long tail.

At the first signal given by the master of ceremonies all the brethren are on foot carefully painted and in their finest costumes. They form a large circle, brandish their weapons, whether guns, lances, war-clubs, bows and arrows or any other arms which have been the instrument of some heroic act either in war or in the chase. All their movements are in strict time to the sound of the drum, tambourine, flute and gourd filled with pebbles. While they leap and dance with fantastic gestures and capers, each brother in his turn sings his *Dowampi* or song, recounting his lofty deeds of valor or his heroic charities. The choruses in which all join are full of sarcasm of cowardice and avarice. Each dancer seems to have a pirouette and to take a position all his own. They jump up and down and the ground seems to

tremble beneath the beating of their feet. They wind in and out and turn in every direction, right and left, in an admirable confusion, keeping time with the deafening sound of the wild music.

The dance is always followed by a feast. The guests usually being numerous, it takes place in the open on the place of their meeting. A circle is formed about the boiling kettles and the roasting meat, which are more or less numerous according to the number invited. Every guest carries his plate or dish. The master of ceremonies chosen for the occasion is he who has received the most dangerous wounds in war. Eg-gha-kata-matscha, or Mean Deer, is today the head of the society. He received a bullet in a fight with his enemies, which passed through his right arm and all his chest; still he recovered. In the dance it is he who rises first and sets the pace. After the dance it is he again who first touches the boiling kettles and the roasting meats. Each number of the band helps himself after him and the invited guests follow. Every one eats and does honor to his piece and drinks his soup and coffee amid the most joyous and animated conversation.

Permit me to add the remark that the dances of the Indians (except the Scalp dance, which really makes one shudder) are generally modest and innocent. The sexes are never mingled. The men dance by themselves and the women form a ring around them. These savage dances certainly exceed in propriety many dances in civilized countries.

## CHAPTER VII.

### RELIGIOUS BELIEFS.

Primitive superstitions — The theory of Wakan or medicine — The creation legend — Sacrifice to avert evil — Dread of the unknown — Charms and amulets — The Creator approached through his works — Murder and vengeance — Robbery not wrong in itself — Ideas of a future state.

St. Louis University, Sept., 1866.

*Reverend Dear Father:*

THIS is a copy of a letter sent to Reverend Father Weld, at his own request, for his *Home Journal*, should it meet with his approbation. I made a promise to Reverend Father Terwecoren to send him the same little production for his *Précis Historiques*, in which most of my letters have appeared. It was written during my leisure hours on the steamer *Ontario*, during my late long mission and trip to the Rocky Mountains. I take the liberty of sending it to your Reverence such as it was originally written. I will acknowledge to you that I have somewhat an interested motive in doing so, however; our old acquaintance and friendship gives me some little title, together with your thorough knowledge of the English and French languages. Should you find time to glance over it and should you think it worthy of being published, it would afford me great honor and pleasure, if your Reverence were willing to undertake its translation.

I have chosen for my subject the moral code and religious ideas of the western Indian nations who inhabit the upper plains watered by the Missouri river and its numerous tributaries. I am well aware that the task is rather a difficult one. I have made careful researches on the subject and have sought and obtained valuable information from intelli-

gent traders who have resided a number of years among the various Indian tribes of the West and have become familiar with their manners and customs. I mention with gratitude and pleasure the names of my principal informers and kind friends, Messrs. [E. T.] Denig, [Robert] Meldrum and [Alexander] Culbertson.

Moral teachers have always thought it worth their while to examine into and thoroughly understand the people whom they are called upon to instruct and to analyze their religion, superstitions, or moral code, if any, with a view to combat error effectively and to implant truth. There are no people amongst whom the Christian religion has yet been attempted more various and obstinate in their superstitions than the northwestern tribes of roving Indians, and notwithstanding much has been advanced by different writers and residents among them, we see but little that would serve to show a teacher in what their errors really consist, or how they may be successfully refuted. Most stories of travel among the Indians only exhibit some of their manners and customs at large without pointing out or revealing their motives of actions. Indeed, nothing but a long and continued intimacy with their camp and language, the lot of very few, would enable them to do so.

By most persons the capacity of the Indians has been greatly underrated. They are generally considered as low in intellect, wild men thirsting after blood, hunting for game or plunder, debased in their habits and groveling in their ideas. Quite the contrary is the case. They show order in their national government, order and dignity in the management of their domestic affairs, zeal in what they believe to be their religious duties, sagacity and shrewdness in their dealings and often a display of reasoning powers far above the medium of uneducated white men or Europeans. Their religion, as a system, is far superior to that of the inhabitants of Hindostan or Japan; therefore to overcome this and establish the truths of Christianity, both their reason and feelings must be wrought upon by teachers pur-

suing such a course of life and occupation as will convince them of the sincerity of their beliefs and endeavors. The grace of God operates meanwhile in their untutored minds and hearts to bring them to the knowledge of the true and holy faith, which he alone can give; as it is written in the holy scriptures: "Faith is a gift of God."

It is therefore advisable to know what is the true nature of their religion when closely analyzed; what are their ideas of the Creator, worship, of futurity; what in their opinion constitutes crime. Are crimes offenses to the Great Spirit or to the individual? Have they, or are they under, any moral obligation to serve the Great Spirit? Are good deeds rewarded and bad ones punished in this life or in a future state? Do they believe in a future at all? How does this belief affect their course of action in this life? Are they in reality idolaters? and if so, in what and of what do their idols consist? These and other points bearing upon their moral conditions are what I propose to explain, though not perhaps in the order in which they stand.

All these Indians believe in the existence of a Great Spirit, the Creator of all things, and this appears to be an inherent, original and inborn idea. They do not, however, embody it; it is a spirit. The name of this spirit is Wakan Tankah or Great Medicine. The word "medicine" in this case has no reference to the use of drugs, but means all that is incomprehensible, supernatural, all-powerful; everything that cannot be explained by ordinary means, or that is above their comprehension.

Their own priests or conjurers are likewise termed Wakan. A steamboat, a watch, any machinery, even toys of whose principle of motion they are ignorant, would be called Wakan—medicine. Now this great medicine, Wakan Tankah, refers to something greater than the power of man; consequently the acts of the Great Spirit are manifested in the elements, natural phenomena, sickness and death, famine and distress, loss occasioned by invading foes,



strokes of lightning, etc., in every way to them unaccountable by natural means.

They think this great medicine pervades all air, earth and sky; that it is omnipresent, omnipotent, but subject to be changed and enlisted on their side in any undertaking if the proper ceremonies and sacrifices are made. It is the author of both good and evil according to its pleasure, or in accordance with their attention to their mode of worship.

Its good acts are apparent in years of great abundance of game, seasons of health, triumph over enemies, etc.; and the evil in great distress, losses, defeat, infectious diseases, or any other great misfortune, the cause of which is unknown and cannot otherwise be attributed. And as it seldom happens in their precarious life that the intervals between accidents or calamities are long, this Great Spirit is more feared than loved. Its bounties are passed by unheeded and unthanked, whilst its visitations are fearfully numbered. Power is its attribute and its residence is supposed by some to be in the sun.

They do not acknowledge any separate existing spirit of evil, although they have a name for a being of the kind in their language; yet the idea has been implanted by the whites in late years and is by them but faintly realized. Great evil is a dispensation of the anger of the Great Spirit which it is in their power to avoid by making the proper sacrifices, prayers and fasts, which they all do; yet they make no demonstrations of thanks by offerings or otherwise when success has been the apparent result of their ceremonies. This would seem to prove that they believe the aid of the Great Spirit to have been bought, paid for, by the value of the articles sacrificed, or only a compliance with obligation on its part accruing from their personal infliction of pain.

This great unknown spirit or medicine created all things — a few men and women of different colors first, from which original stock sprang the various races of mankind, whites, Indians, negroes, etc. The Indians, they say, are

made naked, but with such qualifications as to suit a hunter — knowledge enough to make and use his arms at war or in the chase, a constitution to stand severe cold, long fasting, excessive fatigue and watchfulness, eyes to see, ears to hear, and legs to follow the game; and therefore they soon felt their superiority over all animals. They believe that all animals are made especially for them, for if not for whom else? They only prey upon each other; besides, Indians could not live without meat. The earth was made for grazing the same animals, for planting corn and raising fuel, all for the use of the Indians. This in the beginning was the work of the Great Spirit. To this being then they make sacrifices and do penance by fasting, making incisions in their bodies and public prayers several times a year. The sacrifices consist principally of scarlet cloth, new kettles, skins and furs, tobacco and other things, which with great solemnity and ceremony are presented to the sun and thunder, the greatest mediums to which they may prove available with the Great Spirit; at the same time the devotee utters a prayer, making requests of the things he most stands in need of, and promising a repetition of the sacrifices in case his demands are complied with. Afterward the article sacrificed is destroyed to prevent its falling into the hands of travelers or enemies. This ceremony is usually made by each Indian alone in his lodge, or on the hills, or in the forests or bushes, several times a year.

Now although they sacrifice, pray, inflict severe punishment on their bodies and starve for days from religious motives, yet all this is only to procure present and temporal advantages. We see nothing in this denoting a moral responsibility — no repentance for past deeds, no thanksgiving for favors received. Crime and sin therefore, as viewed in a Christian light, can have no existence among them. If they felt themselves in any way guilty they would assuredly do penance and offer sacrifice to obtain forgiveness; but we do not find this to be the case with any of them. Moreover, crimes cannot be offenses to the Great Spirit, as we will see

hereafter that his aid is invoked to commit the greatest of crimes and sins. Therefore their idea of a Great Spirit is nothing more than a dread of unknown evil befalling them, which it is in their power to avoid by sacrifice, penance, to an unknown incomprehensible power, which they know from actual phenomena has an existence. Further than this they are at a loss. They have no idea of ascribing to it such attributes as mercy, forgiveness, benevolence, truth, etc.; neither will they have, until such words have a signification and appreciation amongst themselves.

This view of the Great Spirit appears to close observers to be the correct and general one of all the prairie tribes, when divested of the superstitions and fabulous narration with which it is often clothed. War and peace could not be regarded as his acts, as they know that they themselves make both; but success or defeat would, as these are beyond their control; therefore a successful warrior is always called *Wakan* (medicine) meaning thereby that he has by some means secured the aid of the Great Spirit. Natural phenomena unattended with good or evil results would pass by unheeded, but destructive tornadoes, death by lightning, by sickness such as apoplexy, would be viewed as his special acts. Eclipses are warnings, severe thunder is a warning, and to these offerings are made with the hope of averting some pending calamity. From this dread of unaccountable evil arises their repugnance to converse on the subject, as to do so would lay open their secret sources of apprehension, and might, they think, by some levity, produce the evil they seek to avoid, or by a counterpoise of sacrifice on the part of some malicious individual, render theirs unavailing. Having explained concisely their idea of the Great Spirit, we will consider some of their minor objects of faith and worship.

Their belief in amulets or charms is general, and the material of these charms or medicines so various, their influence over individuals so diversified, that to enumerate the whole would take too much space and indeed is not requi-

site. We must, however, endeavor to present the idea which, though well known and realized by us, is nevertheless difficult to explain. It is that although the Great Spirit is all-powerful yet his will is uncertain; he is also invisible and only manifests his power in extraordinary acts, smaller matters being beneath his notice and under supervision of minor spirits. Now it is the want of some tangible medium, consecrated by ceremony, guarded with care, and invoked with solemnity, that induces them to select some object as his medium. Every Indian, upon attaining the age of manhood, becomes a warrior, a hunter, a man of family, and at that time is obliged by his different occupations to live in constant apprehension of his life and property from various enemies and various other causes. He therefore then chooses something for his Wakan (medicine). This object is chosen in consequence of some dream or of some incident or idea presented on an important occasion. In this way a skin of a weasel, heads and bodies of different birds stuffed, images made of wood and stone, of beads worked upon skin, rude drawings of bears, of buffalo bulls, wolves and serpents, of monsters that have no name, nor ever had an existence, in fact, everything animate or inanimate is used, according to the superstition and belief of the individual.

This object, whatever it is, is enveloped in several folds of skin, with a lock of some deceased relative's hair and a small piece of tobacco inclosed and the whole placed in a *parfleche* sack neatly ornamented and fringed, and this composes the arcanum of the medicine sack. This sack is never opened in the presence of any one, unless the owner or some of his family fall dangerously ill, when it is taken out and placed at the head of his bed and the aid of the Great Spirit invoked through it. Ordinarily this sack is opened in secret; the medicine smoked and invoked and prayers and sacrifices made in its presence, and through it, as a tangible medium to the Great Spirit, who is unknown and invisible. No sacrifices are made directly to it, yet it is invoked separately for intercession or rather as a medium for interces-

sion, to avert smaller evils that come under the jurisdiction of lesser spirits, such as appearance of ghosts, diseases of horses or dogs, to find lost or stolen property, for a successful hunt, etc., though not for abundance of game, as the production of game would come within the power of the Great Spirit, though the matter of killing the same would depend upon other powers affected and biased in his favor by the ceremonies to the medium. They know well enough that the material of the charm or medicine has no intrinsic power, neither do they ascribe any to it, the effect lies in their faith in the supernatural, as exhibited to the object as a visible medium. This is in fact the same operation of mind that displays itself in the charms believed in by ignorant whites, and may be considered in that light. Although many white ignorant Christians believe, though erroneously and sinfully, in the charms of quack doctors and old women, fortune-tellers, dreams, ghosts and warnings, yet this does not affect their belief in a Supreme Being; neither does it that of the Indian. As long as he has good luck in his different ordinary undertakings, he will say his "medicine is good;" but should a series of petty misfortunes befall him, he will throw it away and substitute some other. When pictures, medals or crosses are given to them by the missionaries, great care is had to give the Indian the true meaning of the veneration and respect attached to the object.

From the foregoing you can judge whether they are in reality idolaters. That they render a species of worship to objects of almost every description is true, yet their devotion only refers, through these toys, to the source of all power. Even the sun is only worshipped as being the residence of the Great Spirit, not for any supposed power inherent in that planet. They do not believe in the virtue of the material of which their medicine is made; neither do they ascribe to it an immaterial spirit; but the mind by viewing them has a resting point, a something to address in form, not for great favor or aid, but for daily protection from smaller evils. This result is expected by the request being made through an ob-

ject considered sacred and consecrated by care and ceremony to whosoever business it is in the realms beyond to superintend these matters. Uneducated and unenlightened as they are, obliged mentally to grasp at protection from supernatural evil in every shape and form, from the great luminary the sun, as the most powerful, to the smallest atoms that might possibly be of some aid, they, through these portions of creation, endeavor by sacrifices, invocations, personal afflictions and fastings, to excite the interest and protection of a great invisible power, to whose approach no certain way in the Indian's belief presents itself. It would appear that in this respect they are not far behind some Christian whites of every country in superstition, who also have their chance, their luck, their fortunes told, and other ideas fully as repugnant to the belief of an all-wise and overruling Providence as the faith of the Indians presents. The very universality of the practice of this sort of idolatry by the Indians proves it to be their true belief, and appears, in fact, an acknowledgment of the existence of an overruling Providence. In accordance with this belief, their prayers and sacrifices are all directed to obtain only temporal and not spiritual welfare. They pray not for what they do not feel to want.

If no moral sense of right and wrong is found amongst them, it must follow that personal advantages are all that is left worth praying or fasting for. If they pray and sacrifice to the sun and thunder, it is in their idea to acknowledge the power of the Creator in these great portions of his work. Great evil, great good is evaded or invoked through these great apparent mediums; smaller evils or benefits are avoided or sought through the medium of charms; yet even these are not expected through the power of the material of the charm, but the consequences attendant on its sacred character as rendered so by constant care, prayers and sacrifices through it to supernatural agencies.

Having shown what is their idea of the Great Spirit and analyzed the nature of their worship, we will next consider

what in their opinion is crime. Can the Great Spirit be offended, and if so, what are deemed offenses to it?

The total absence of all moral restraint as regards futurity, and the sole object of their worship being self-aggrandizement in this life, compel us to conclude they have not the faintest idea of any moral responsibility. Crime therefore, of any kind, as viewed by us, viz.: as an offense toward God and to the laws of man, can have no existence with them. Take for instance the greatest of all crimes, murder. An Indian never commits what to him are equivalent to our ideas of murder. As soon as he arrives at the age of manhood he finds himself thrown upon his own resources; he must depend upon himself alone to protect himself, his family, or property, and furnish his household with the means of living. As he is but a hunter, his horse and gun are his fortune; his life, even the lives of all his family, often depend on a few loads of ammunition. Property is of value to the Indian; he has no stock of ready cash to replace it if lost or stolen. Should any one endeavor to impose upon him, take his property or insult his family, to whom shall he look for redress? There are no courts of justice, no prisons or public executions amongst them, and their civil councils take no cognizance of private differences. Therefore he is bound by the nature of his isolated position to be the sole judge of his own acts and self-administrator of justice. He must be firm, obstinate, ready with his knife and tomahawk, as the Indian expresses it, or he is entirely unfit for the station he occupies.

The constant habit of carrying arms induces the necessity of using them, and many petty offenses that would be settled amongst whites with the tongue, or fists, are decided by them with arms. An Indian never strikes but with the intention to kill. Quarrels of all kinds, therefore, being liable to exact extreme measures of redress, they are by no means so common as one would suppose. When each man is aware that his life is at stake, he is cautious how he provokes. But if it be necessary, each will endeavor to take

advantage of the other; each is compelled to act so as to save his own life. Indians do not murder each other for their property, because by killing one of his own nation it would have quite a contrary tendency. He would be obliged to fly to another band to avoid being slain by the relations of the deceased, and instead of being gainer by the transaction, would be obliged to abandon his own, to become an outcast, to impoverish all his relations, who never cease paying for the dead to stop further bloodshed, besides placing his own life in constant jeopardy, in case of meeting any of the relations of the murdered man. Therefore, it is entirely out of the question that murder should be deliberately from their cupidity.

The only other way in which one man might kill another would be in quarrel, and this often happens; but no difference what the object of the quarrel, be it a horse, an insult, etc., or who is right or who is wrong; when the difference arises to the point of meriting a blow it becomes absolutely self-defense on the part of both, each to preserve his own life by taking that of his adversary. There is no middle course, and several who have killed their people under these circumstances have regretted, deeply, the necessity, but contended they could not do otherwise. Not to kill when the death of one becomes necessary, from any cause, would be accounted the height of foolishness and cowardice, and ruin an Indian forever with his own people or even with his own family, besides surrendering up his life to the other without a struggle. Therefore, in all cases, murder in their idea is an act of self-defense attendant on their peculiar civil organization. It is an affront to the individual, entailing upon it the risk of a like punishment, by the relations of the deceased, outlawry and poverty, but cannot be considered by them as an offense to the Great Spirit. No man amongst them would kill another for the mere love of killing, for to do so would, as we have shown, subject him to outlawry, assassination and ruin, without any prospect of gain; which would be entirely incompatible with Indian character. The



murder of their enemies is considered honorable warfare, the same as among whites; the difference in the manner of its execution is part of their military training. Taking this view of the matter, we can easily perceive how an Indian could, consistently with the former idea of the Great Spirit, pray to it to aid him against his enemies of every kind, whether they be of his own people or of a different nation.

Robbery and theft are not carried on to any extent amongst them, as the former would be punished the same as murder and the latter would subject him to the ridicule of all. Indians will occasionally steal small articles from one another, but when questioned they will say they were in want of them and could not get them any other way. When they rob whites they think they are doing right. With them all whites are interlopers, getting rich from the labors of the Indians, and to take a portion of their goods is nothing more than their due long since in arrears. Therefore, theft is only resorted to as another means of supplying want and the disgrace is thought full punishment. Robbery, when it does occur, is the consequence of some quarrel and merges into the extreme penalty above related. From this we can conceive that neither robbery nor theft can be considered as offenses to the Great Spirit, as it is only another way of the Indian securing means to make a living for himself and family. It is, however, an offense to the individual and punished accordingly. Should an Indian steal a gun or a horse, two of the most valuable articles amongst them, he would give for a reason that he required them for the support of his family. Besides, guns, horses, and even the meat brought into camp are more or less public property; at least, all receive the benefit of the hunter's labor. The horses and guns do not leave the nation; they merely change owners and the produce of each is divided the same as before the theft was committed. In this, therefore, as well as the other, the aid of the Great Spirit would be invoked.

Transgression against the sixth commandment is looked upon by the Indians as an offense to the individual only — husband or father — not to the Great Spirit, and as such is punished by exacting payment — killing or taking the horses of the offender.

With regard to profane swearing, there is no word in the language of the Indians equivalent to even the smallest oath in such general use among civilized Christians. The name of the Great Spirit is seldom mentioned above a whisper and that only in rare and solemn occasions and never in ordinary conversation. In bearing witness an Indian's solemn assurance, or oath, in their form, could be depended upon.

They know not the Sabbath day. Their solemn days are frequent and on these occasions there is a great intensity of devotion in their ceremonies and personal inflictions. From all this it is evident they have no moral accountability. Not feeling themselves guilty of sin, they do no penance for bad deeds. But can the Great Spirit be offended? If so, how? He can be and is offended, they say, by not attending to the proper ceremonies, fasts, penances and sacrifices, sufficient to insure his aid in their greatest undertakings. Therefore the neglect of worship is the only offense. When their ceremonies are performed too seldom, or even the nature of the article sacrificed is not of sufficient value, or when they have promised a sacrifice and not fulfilled the same, his anger is felt in distress of various kinds, such as sickness, death, losses, defeat, famine or in some of the many calamities which it is their intention to avoid by performing their religious rites. Neglect in this point is the only offense, but a great one in their estimation. Hence their obstinate adherence to their ceremonies, upon the fulfillment of which the entire prosperity of the life of the Indian and his family depends. No moral obligation is felt to worship him, neither from the fact of their creation, existence, or with regard to a future state.

This leads us to consider what they believe with regard to futurity. That the soul lives after death is the general assent, and that it is a final state; but by pursuing the inquiry we do not arrive at any certain idea of the soul's occupation there. They always say they don't know. This much, however, some acknowledge, that when they die, their spirit is taken to the south, to a warm country; but this place does not appear to be either in the earth or in the heavens. Here is a state of happiness free from all distress, want, war or accidents. Some are more comfortably situated than others, particularly great warriors and those who have paid especial attention to their religious ceremonies and have offered large sacrifices. No punishment for offense is apprehended, but all is peace, plenty and harmony. If more minutely questioned, they will describe a counterpart of the Mohammedan paradise, or a shadowy image of this life, abstracting the evil. Many of the Indian tribes speak dismally of the future of the wicked; their abode is a place of desolation, destitute of fruits and roots, of animals of all kinds, where perpetual winter reigns — marshy and miry, filled with dangerous reptiles of every description — whilst in the portion of the good reign eternal summer and sunshine, an abundance of the choicest animals of the chase, of fruits and of roots — a place of peace and of never-ending happiness.

There is no resurrection of the body in the creed of the Indians, though they are presumed to have bodies given them in the future state, presenting the same features as in this life, partaking of its nature, but not subject to the same vicissitudes of accidents, sickness, etc. Amongst some there appears to be the idea of two souls, one of the body, which hovers forever near the burial place, and the other of the mind, admitted to this southern paradise. As I have said above, animals of all kinds are found there. It does not appear they are souls of the same who died on this earth, neither is their state of happiness of eternal duration. Reasoning powers and immortality are not ascribed to the

brute creation. Anything referring to a future state is rarely made the subject of their conversation. There is a great difference of opinion. Some think death to be a final state of both soul and body, though the ghost of the body remains near its cemetery. In reality, they have but little sincere belief in the existence of a future state, or at least not much importance is attached to the idea during life. At their death, their greatest anxiety appears to be for their families left on earth and not much for what is to become of their souls. They admit its uncertainty and appear not to fear anything on the score of future punishment. Upon the whole, there is nothing in this belief that affects much their general conduct through life, and as little on their deathbed; and from this fact we may reasonably conclude that the foregoing is the correct view of their religion, as they do not feel guilty of offenses toward the Great Spirit, but claim reward for their devotedness in their manner of worship. They have no idea of an atonement or a redeemer who has come on earth to rescue them and to instruct them in the way of salvation. They are seated according to scripture: "In the shadow of death." They must first be taught a correct idea of the Great Spirit, of crime, of right and wrong; their wild passions must be subdued before the Christian principles can be implanted into their hearts.

"Faith is the gift of God." The conversion of these poor heathens is the work of the Lord, for it implies the entire regeneration of the adult Indian, which would be next to a miracle of grace. The task is truly a great one, but with assistance from above it may be overcome. In all my experience among these Indian tribes I have found them always respectful, assiduous and attentive to instruction on the holy word of God. On all occasions they express an earnest willingness or anxiety to have their children instructed in the consoling truths of religion, and in no instance did I ever meet with a spirit of opposition on their part. The work of their conversion requires, no doubt,

an abundance of Christian patience, of perseverance and prayers. I am fully convinced that we may reckon on your holy sacrifices and prayers in furthering and promoting this noble work of the Lord. "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Amen.

Your humble brother in Christ, etc.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### INDIAN LEGENDS AND TRADITIONS.

#### *Potawatomi Legends.*

Potawatomi theology—A good spirit and a bad—The creation legend—Warfare of Nanaboojoo and the manitous—The bridge of the dead—The prophet Keokuk and his new religion—The Potawatomies and their territory—Indians sober and drunk—Story of the Piasa bird—Burial customs—The giving of feasts—Story of a father's vengeance.

St. Louis University, January 10, 1847.

*Very Reverend and Dear Father Provincial.*<sup>1</sup>

**A**GREEABLY to my promise, I send you the account given by the Potawatomies, residing at Council Bluffs, respecting their own origin, and the causes which gave rise to their "great medicine" and juggling, considered by them as of the highest antiquity. Such superstitions, indeed, are found to exist among all the tribes of the American continent, differing only in the form and the accompanying ceremonies. The Nanaboojoo, or Nanabush, of the Potawatomies, the Wieska, of the Ojibwas, the Wizakéshâk,<sup>2</sup> of the Crees, the Sauteux and the Blackfeet, the Etalapasse of the Chinooks on the coast of the Pacific, can, among these different tribes, be traced up to the same personage.

I send it *verbatim*, as it was communicated to me by Potogojecs, one of the most intelligent chiefs of the Potawatomi nation. Though fabulous, it is not entirely devoid

<sup>1</sup> Legend of the Potawatomi Indians as related in a letter to the Father Provincial, dated St. Louis, January 10, 1847. Published as Letters XXV, *Oregon Missions*, XXVII, *Missions de l'Orégon*. The English text is followed here.

<sup>2</sup> Page 525.

of interest; it should excite us to offer up our prayers the more fervently to the Great Father of Light for these poor benighted children of the forest, and beg of him to send good and worthy laborers into this vast vineyard. Having inquired of this chief what he thought of the Great Spirit, of the Creator, and of the origin of his religion, or great medicine, he replied as follows: "Macketakonia (Black-robe), I will give you a faithful account of what my tribe believes in these matters. We have not, like you, books to transmit our traditions to our children; it is the duty of the old men of the nation to instruct the young people in whatever relates to their belief and their happiness.

"Many among us believe that there are two Great Spirits who govern the universe, but who are constantly at war with each other. One is called the *Kchemnito*, that is, the Great Spirit, the other *Mchemnito*, or the Wicked Spirit. The first is goodness itself, and his beneficent influence is felt everywhere; but the second is wickedness personified, and does nothing but evil. Some believe that they are equally powerful, and through fear of the Wicked Spirit, offer to him their homage and adoration. Others again are doubtful which of them should be considered the more powerful, and accordingly endeavor to propitiate both, by offering to each an appropriate worship. The greater part, however, believe as I do, that *Kchemnito* is the first principle, the first great cause, and consequently ought to be all-powerful, and to whom alone is due all worship and adoration; and that *Mchemnito* ought to be despised and rejected!

"*Kchemnito* at first created a world, which he filled with a race of beings having nothing but the appearance of men — perverse, ungrateful, wicked dogs — that never raised their eyes to heaven to implore the assistance of the Great Spirit. Such ingratitude aroused him to anger, and he plunged the world in a great lake, where they were all drowned. His anger thus appeased, he withdrew it from the waters, and created anew a beautiful young man, who,

however, appeared very sad, and being dissatisfied with his solitary condition, grew weary of life. Kchemnito took pity on him, and gave him, during sleep, a sister, as a companion to cheer his loneliness. When he awoke and saw his sister he rejoiced exceedingly — his melancholy instantly disappeared. They spent their time in agreeable conversation and amusement, living for many years together in a state of innocence and perfect harmony, without the slightest incident to mar the happiness of their peaceful solitude.

“The young man had a dream, for the first time, which he communicated to his sister: ‘Five young men,’ said he, ‘will come this night, and rap at the door of the lodge — the Great Spirit forbids you to laugh, to look at them, or give an answer to any of the first four, but laugh, look and speak, when the fifth presents himself.’ She acted according to his advice. When she heard the voice of the fifth, she opened the door to him, laughing at the same time very heartily; he entered immediately, and became her husband. The first of the five strangers, called Sama (tobacco), having received no answer, died of grief; the three others, Wapekone (pumpkin), Eshketâmok (water-melon), and Kojêes (the bean), shared the fate of their companion. Tâaman (maize), the bridegroom, buried his four companions, and from their graves there sprang up shortly after pumpkins, water-melons, beans and tobacco plants in sufficient abundance to supply their wants during the whole year, and enable them to smoke to the manitous and in the council. From this union are descended the American Indian nations.

“A great manitou came on earth, and chose a wife from among the children of men. He had four sons at a birth; the first born was called Nanaboojoo, the friend of the human race, the mediator between man and the Great Spirit; the second was named Chipiapoos, the man of the dead, who presides over the country of the souls; the third, Wâbosso, as soon as he saw the light, fled toward the north,



where he was changed into a white rabbit, and under that name is considered there as a great manitou; the fourth was Châkekénapok, the man of flint, or fire-stone. In coming into the world he caused the death of his mother.

“ Nanaboojoo, having arrived at the age of manhood, resolved to avenge the death of his mother (for among us revenge is considered honorable); he pursued Châkekénapok all over the globe. Whenever he could come within reach of his brother, he fractured some member of his body, and after several rencontres, finally destroyed him by tearing out his entrails. All fragments broken from the body of this man of stone then grew up into large rocks; his entrails were changed into vines of every species, and took deep root in all the forests; the flintstones scattered around the earth indicate where the different combats took place. Before fire was introduced among us, Nanaboojoo taught our ancestors how to form hatchets, lances and the points of arrows, in order to assist us in killing our enemies in war and animals for our food. Nanaboojoo and his brother, Chipiapoos, lived together retired from the rest of mankind, and were distinguished from all other beings by their superior qualities of body and mind. The manitous that dwell in the air, as well as those who inhabit the earth and the waters, envied the power of these brothers, and conspired to destroy them. Nanaboojoo discovered and eluded their snares, and warned Chipiapoos not to separate himself from him a single moment. Notwithstanding this admonition, Chipiapoos ventured alone one day upon Lake Michigan; the manitous broke the ice, and he sank to the bottom, where they hid the body. Nanaboojoo became inconsolable when he missed his brother from his lodge; he sought him everywhere in vain, he waged war against all the manitous, and precipitated an infinite number of them into the deepest abyss. He then wept, disfigured his person, and covered his head, as a sign of his grief, during six years, pronouncing from time to time, in sad and mournful tones, the name of the unhappy Chipiapoos.

“ While this truce continued, the manitous consulted upon the means best calculated to appease the anger of Nanaboojoo, without, however, coming to any conclusion; when four of the oldest and wisest, who had had no hand in the death of Chipiapoos, offered to accomplish the difficult task. They built a lodge close to that of Nanaboojoo, prepared an excellent repast, and filled a calumet with the most exquisite tobacco. They journeyed in silence toward their redoubted enemy, each carrying under his arm a bag, formed of the entire skin of some animal, an otter, a lynx, or a beaver, well provided with the most precious medicines (to which, in their superstitious practices, they attach a supernatural power). With many kind expressions, they begged that he would condescend to accompany them. He arose immediately, uncovered his head, washed himself and followed them. When arrived at their lodge, they offered him a cup containing a dose of their medicine, preparatory to his initiation. Nanaboojoo swallowed the contents at a single draught, and found himself completely restored. They then commenced their dances and their songs; they also applied their medicine bags, which, after gently blowing them at him, they would then cast on the ground; at each fall of the medicine bag, Nanaboojoo perceived that his melancholy, sadness, hatred and anger disappeared, and affections of an opposite nature took possession of his soul. They all joined in the dance and song — they ate and smoked together. Nanaboojoo thanked them for having initiated him in the mysteries of their grand medicine.

“ The manitous brought back the lost Chipiapoos, but it was forbidden him to enter the lodge; he received, through a chink, a burning coal, and was ordered to go and preside over the region of souls, and there, for the happiness of his uncles and aunts, that is, for all men and women, who should repair thither, kindle with this coal a fire which should never be extinguished.

“ Nanaboojoo then redescended upon earth, and, by order of the Great Spirit, initiated all his family in the mysteries

of the grand medicine. He procured for each of them a bag well furnished with medicines, giving them strict orders to perpetuate these ceremonies among their descendants, adding at the same time that these practices, religiously observed, would cure their maladies, produce them abundance in the chase and give them complete victory over their enemies. (All their religion consists in these superstitious practices, dances and songs; they have the most implicit faith in these strange reveries.)

“Nanaboojoo is our principal intercessor with the Great Spirit; he it was that obtained for us the creation of animals for our food and raiment. He has caused to grow those roots and herbs which are endowed with the virtue of curing our maladies, and of enabling us, in time of famine, to kill the wild animals. He has left the care of them to Mesakkummikokwi, the earth, the great-grandmother of the human race, and in order that we should never invoke her in vain, it has been strictly enjoined on the old woman never to quit the dwelling. Hence, when an Indian makes the collection of roots and herbs which are to serve him as medicines, he deposits at the same time on the earth a small offering to Mesakkummikokwi. During his different excursions over the surface of the earth, Nanaboojoo killed all such animals as were hurtful to us, as the mastodon, the mammoth, etc. He has placed four beneficial spirits at the four cardinal points of the earth, for the purpose of contributing to the happiness of the human race. That of the north procures for us ice and snow, in order to aid us in discovering and following the wild animals. That of the south gives us that which occasions the growth of our pumpkins, melons, maize and tobacco. The spirit placed at the west gives us rain, and that of the east gives us light, and commands the sun to make his daily walks around the globe. The thunder we hear is the voice of spirits, having the form of large birds, which Nanaboojoo has placed in the clouds. When they cry very loud we burn some tobacco in our cabins, to make them a smoke-offering and appease them.

“Nanaboojoo yet lives, resting himself after his labors, upon an immense flake of ice, in the great lake (the North Sea). We fear that the whites will one day discover his retreat and drive him off, then the end of the world is at hand, for as soon as he puts foot on the earth, the whole universe will take fire, and every living creature will perish in the flames!”

In their festivities and religious assemblies, all their songs turn upon some one or other of these fables. When the chief had finished this history, I asked him whether he had any faith in what he had just related. He answered in astonishment: “Assuredly I have, for I have had the happiness to see and entertain three old men of my nation, who penetrated far into the north, and were admitted into the presence of Nanaboojoo, with whom they conversed a long time. They confirmed all that I have recounted to you!”

Our savages believe that the souls of the dead, in their journey to the great prairie of their ancestors, pass a rapid current, over which the only bridge is a single tree, kept constantly in violent agitation; managed, however, in such a way that the souls of perfect men pass it in safety, whilst those of the wicked slip off the tree into the water and are lost forever.

Such is the narration given to me by the Potawatomi chief, comprising all the articles of the creed held by this tribe; we can hardly fail to recognize in it, much obscured by the accumulation of ages, the tradition of the universal deluge, of the creation of the universe, of Adam and Eve; even some traces of the incarnation are found in the birth of Nanaboojoo; he was descended of parents, one of whom only, his mother, was of the human race; he is, moreover, the intercessor between God and man.

If the early Jesuits or other Christian travelers had never been among these people, or if the Indians had never visited a Christian community, one might infer that they are in some sort direct descendants of Noah, and that they have preserved the tradition of the universal deluge, although

obscured, altered and become fabulous in the long succession of ages.

<sup>3</sup>Keokuk, surnamed the Prophet, chief of the Kickapoos, a tribe of the nation of Potawatomes, is the inventor of a new doctrine. He has adherents to the number of about 400, young men for the most part. He claims to have received his religion by supernatural intervention, from the mouth of the Great Spirit himself. He calls himself the envoy of God, Christ under a new form, and invites all the nations of the earth to come and gather under his banner. He adopts sundry moral precepts, among others abstinence from all liquors and the keeping of Sunday. He appears profoundly ignorant of Christian doctrines,<sup>4</sup> and only admits certain points of it which agree with his ideas. His fellow religionists assemble for prayer four times a week between one and three in the afternoon. This prayer consists of a few detached sentences, often repeated in a monotonous musical tone. All perform this in concert, and to keep harmony in the words each holds a small strip of wood in his hand, an inch and a half wide by eight to ten long, upon which some arbitrary characters are traced, which they follow with a finger until the last mark gives warning of the end of prayer.

They reckon five of these characters or marks. The first represents the heart, the second the heart and the flesh, the third life, the fourth their names, the fifth their families. During the service they run over these marks several times. First the person imagines himself as existing upon earth, then he draws near the door of the house of God, etc. Putting their finger upon the lowest mark, they say, "O our Father, make our hearts like thy heart, as good as thine, as strong as thine.—As good as thy house, as good as the door of thy house, as hard and as good as the earth around thy house, as strong as thy walk-

<sup>3</sup> The remainder of the Potawatomi legend is translated from *Missions de l'Orégon*, pp. 288-303.

<sup>4</sup> See Catlin, vol. II, pp. 98-100.

ing staff. O our Father, make our hearts and our flesh like thy heart and thy flesh.—As powerful as thy heart and thy flesh.—Like thy house and thy door and thy staff, etc. O our Father, place our names beside thine—think of us, as thou thinkest of thy house, of thy door, of the earth around thy house, etc. O our Father, make our families as holy as thine, as holy as thy house," etc. They repeat this prayer to the point of satiety. There is no question of sin, nor confession, nor repentance, nor penance. In these respects they appear more densely ignorant than the rudest savages; for they, in their sacrificial offerings, recognize their transgressions against the Holy Spirit and the necessity of repentance and penitence. It is savage nature, and every departure from it can only cast them into a deeper abyss. For in religious matters, savages, in their primitive condition, are children of nature; to abandon that state, without being under the influence of the great truths of the Christian religion, is necessarily to follow a downward path.

To be beaten with a rod is one of the articles of their moral code, and they submit thereto when they have committed some fault. But since in their prayers there is no confession of sin against God, it appears that they only submit to this suffering for the sake of the wholesome effect produced upon the present state of society among them.

The offender, who is often the only one cognizant of his crime, goes to one of the four or five persons authorized to make use of the rod, and declares himself guilty of a transgression, for which he desires to receive a certain number of blows upon his bare back. After the flagellation, which often draws blood, the penitent shakes hands with the operator and the others who are present, and thanks him for the favor he has just done him, declaring that he is relieved of a heavy burden.

Not long ago, the prophet himself had committed so notorious an offense that he could not claim exemption from the rigorous rule of flagellation on the pretext of his

lofty dignity. But to lessen the mortification of so public a humiliation, he convoked a council of the elders, in which it was resolved that by reason of a sort of general apostasy of the community, a flagellation of all hands was necessary. A day was set, and every man, woman and child belonging to the sect received the allotted portion of blows upon their backs.

The Potawatomes are divided into two tribes; those of the forests, among whom are a great number of Catholics, and those of the prairies, who have never had priests among them. These last form a mixed nation, composed of Potawatomes, Winnebagoes, Foxes, Chippewas, Sauks, Ottawas, Menominees and Kickapoos; there are more than 3,000 of them. They separated from their brothers of the forests at the beginning of the war for the independence of the United States; one part took the side of the English, the other that of the Republic. The Potawatomes sold their lands in the States of Illinois and Indiana in 1836, receiving from the Government 5,000,000 acres in exchange upon the Missouri, at Council Bluffs, toward the forty-first and forty-second degrees of north latitude. The climate of the country is extremely variable, and thunder storms are very frequent in the months of June and July. The winter is not so long as in Belgium, but the cold is much more intense; on the other hand the heat is much greater in summer. The country in general is composed of fair plains and forests interspersed, and watered throughout by the Missouri. Three other rivers, the Nishnabotna, the Mosquito and the Boyer, traverse it. The Potawatomes are very gentle and tractable by nature; they do not lack spirit and never appear timid; no rank or dignity is known among them; their chief has no other revenue than what his lance, arrows and carbine bring him; his throne is his steed. He promulgates the law, and when he can he executes it. He must be more courageous than his subjects, and never receives any more than each of them in the

divisions that they have to make. The first in fight, he is always the last to leave the field.

Most of these savages are capable of sustaining a very interesting conversation, upon matters not out of their range; they love to jest and take a joke very well; they never dispute nor become heated in conversation; they never interrupt any one whomsoever; they always reflect a few moments before answering in an important matter, or else defer their replies to the next day. They have no expression to blaspheme the name of the Lord; their most injurious term is "dog." They live scattered in cabins. The profound peace in which they live comes in large part from their letting every man do what seems to him good. Often years will pass without the least quarrel; but when intoxicated with liquor, which is brought them in large quantities, all their good qualities vanish; they no longer resemble men; everybody takes flight around them; their yells and howls are frightful; they hurl themselves upon each other, bite noses and ears and rend one another in a horrible manner. Since we came among them, four Otoes and three Potawatomes have been killed in drunken rows.

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Here is a very singular tradition, which I have from the head chief of the nation; it is current among all the tribes of the Illini, or of the States of Illinois, Indiana and Ohio. In ascending the Mississippi, above St. Louis, between Alton and the mouth of the Illinois River, the traveler observes, between two high hills, a narrow passage where a small stream enters the river. This stream is called the Piasa, which means in Indian language "The bird that devours men." At this place appears, on a smooth perpendicular rock, the figure of an enormous bird with outspread wings chiseled in the rock higher than a man can reach. The bird that this figure represents, and whose name is borne by the little stream, has been called the Piasa



by the Indians. They say that "several thousand moons before the arrival of the whites, when the great mammoth or mastodon, which Nanaboojoo or Na-na-bush destroyed and whose bones are still found, was feeding on the grass of their immense green prairies, there was a bird of such monstrous bigness that he would carry off an elk in his claws without trouble. This bird, having tasted human flesh one day, would thereafter touch no other meat; his cunning was not less than his might; he would stoop suddenly upon an Indian, carry him away to one of the caverns of the rock and devour him. Hundreds of warriors had endeavored to destroy him, but without success. For several years entire villages were almost devastated, and terror spread among all the tribes of the Illini.

"At last Outaga, a war chief whose fame extended beyond the great lakes, went apart from his tribe, fasted for the space of a moon in solitude and prayed the Great Spirit, the Master of Life, to deliver his children from the claws of the Piasa. The last night of his fast, the Great Spirit appeared to him in a dream and told him to choose twenty warriors, each armed with a bow and a poisoned arrow, and to conceal them in a designated spot. A single warrior should show himself openly to serve as a victim to the Piasa; all the others should let fly their arrows at the bird, as he descended upon his prey. On waking, the chief thanked the Great Spirit and returned to tell his dream to the tribe. The warriors were chosen without delay, armed and set in ambush. Outaga offered himself as the victim; he was ready to die for his nation. Climbing upon an eminence, he saw the Piasa perched on the rock; he stood erect, planted his feet firmly on the ground, and laid his right hand on his heart, which did not flutter, and struck up with a steady voice the death-song of a warrior. At once the Piasa soared aloft and darted like lightning upon the chief. All the bows were stretched and every arrow buried itself to the feather in his body. The Piasa uttered a wild and frightful cry and fell dying at Outaga's feet.

Neither the arrows nor the bird's claws had touched the warrior. The Master of Life, to reward his generous devotion, had suspended an invisible buckler above his head. It is in memory of this event that the image of the Piasa was chiseled into the rock."<sup>5</sup>

Such is the Indian tradition; I give it as it came to me. In any event, it is certain that the figure of an enormous bird is to be seen at an inaccessible height upon the rock, where it appears to be carved. No Indian ever passes by the place in his canoe without firing his gun at it. The marks left by the bullets on the rock are almost innumerable. The bones of thousands of men are piled in the caverns around the Piasa; how, by whom and why it is not easy to guess.<sup>6</sup>

He who has committed a murder is punished with death by the victim's relations, unless he "redeems his own body" and covers the blood by a payment of horses, robes, etc. If he offers himself to them to expiate his crime and no one has the sad courage to take his life, as often happens, then he is "washed of the murder" and need pay nothing. One of our neighbors, who had killed his wife, came off free upon paying a horse to each one of her brothers. The murderer paints his face black and his lips red for a time, to show that he thirsts for blood and means to sate himself.

When a husband or wife dies, the survivor pays to the kinsmen of the deceased the "debt of the body," in money or horses, and according to his or her means; one who should neglect to pay the debt would be in danger of seeing all his possessions destroyed. A wife must wear mourning

<sup>5</sup> Parkman, *Disc. Great West*. Chap. V.

<sup>6</sup> This painting, usually identified with the one described by Marquette in 1673, was visible on a rock at the upper end of the city of Alton, Illinois, until the demolition of the rock, for building-stone, by St. Louis parties in 1866 and 1867. Marquette saw a pair of monsters, each as large as a calf. From information collected by Father Hill, of St. Louis, it appears that in recent times there was only one figure visible, though some claimed to have seen a small figure in front of the large one. It was exposed to southwestern storms and defaced by bul-

for a year after her husband's death; that is she may neither comb her hair nor wash herself. When, however, she is eaten up by vermin, a kinswoman of the departed may take pity on her and render her that service.

The Potawatomi keeps the soul of his dead relation supplied with provisions for a whole year; he throws part of every meal into the fire, thinking that the soul receives comfort and strength thereby. The Otoes, their near neighbors, generally strangle one or two of their best horses on their comrade's grave, that he may ride them in his great journey to the other world; they hang up the tails of these horses on long poles. Their heaven matches their ideas; it is an immense prairie, beyond the sunset, where spring is everlasting, and which is full of countless varieties of grass, buffalo, deer, antelope, bear and all sorts of game.

When a chief or brave of the nation is buried, all the warriors who have taken some trophy from the enemy, gather to pay him the last respects. They accompany the bier to the burial place, where one of the principal orators pronounces the funeral oration. He recalls all the dead man's fine qualities, all the noteworthy actions of his life, the enemies who have fallen under his hatchet, the scalps he has taken and the ferocious beasts he has killed. Then they put him in the grave, his face toward the setting sun; give him his carbine, lance, bow and arrows; fill his powder horn and bullet pouch; place beside him his pipe and well-filled tobacco bag, with some other provisions such as sugar, dried meat, corn, etc.; supplies that might be needful to him on his journey to the land of souls. All wish him a fortunate trip, take his hand for the last time, and the grave is closed. Then they plant before the mound the "post of the

lets, and was of a pale red color; Marquette's monsters were red, black and green. The painting was eighty feet above high water and sixty above the base of the cliff, and fifteen or twenty below its top. Indians of the eighteenth century were remembered to have feared it as powerful medicine, without knowing anything of its origin, and to have invariably discharged all their guns at it when they passed.

braves;" at its top is painted in red the animal or totem, guardian spirit of the dead man, and all present make one or two marks besides; these are red crosses, whereby they mean to represent so many souls of their vanquished enemies, whom they thus devote to the service of their comrade in the other world, as slaves. I have seen posts with 80 to 100 of these crosses upon them.

The parents of one child had contrived a little opening in its grave-mound, to allow passage for the soul. The desolate mother watched the grave for two days, to find whether her little one had met with kindness in the other world, or was unhappy there. She claimed to know by these signs; if she saw a pretty bird or some beautiful insect, it was a favorable omen; but if she met a disgusting reptile or a bird of prey, then all was lost for her child. Fortunately the weather was serene, and butterflies and other lovely insects of every kind and color were flitting all about. The poor mother therefore returned comforted to her home.— She came to see me afterward, for instruction in our holy religion and to have her two little girls baptized.

As soon as an Indian desires to marry, he manifests his inclination by playing upon a certain kind of flute called *popokwen*; he roams through the village, suitably painted and adorned, and gives frequent serenades before the abode of her whom he has chosen for companion. As soon as the girl consents to marry him, the parents or brothers fix the price; he has to give each of them a horse, or some other valuable object, and she is turned over to him. Mostly, however, they sell the girl to whomsoever they see fit without consulting her inclinations; and the women are so used to this that they seldom murmur or complain.

An Indian's wife is truly a slave. They say that the Great Spirit (Kchemnito) in a council that he held with their forefathers, decided "that the men should protect the women and hunt the animals; that all the rest should be the duty of the women;" and they hold scrupulously by this

decision. The wife alone therefore is charged with all the work of the household; she washes, mends, cooks, builds the cabins, tills and sows the fields, cuts the wood, etc.; so too she appears old at thirty or thirty-five years. As for the men, except for the hunts that they make from time to time, they lead an entirely idle life; they talk, smoke, play cards or hide the ball under the slipper, and that is all.

When a child is to be named, the parents make a great feast; they send to each of the guests, by way of invitation, a little scrap of tobacco leaf or a small stick; this is their manner of inviting. After the meal, the eldest of the family proclaims the name, which generally has reference either to some distinguishing mark, or to some dream of the child's, or to some good or evil characteristic by which he may have made himself known. With boys, this ceremony takes place when they attain their seventeenth year. They have to undergo beforehand a very strict fast of seven or eight days, during which the parents recommend to their child to pay great attention to dreams that the Great Spirit may send him, which are to reveal his future destiny; he will know if he is to be a great chief or a good hunter by the number of animals that fall beneath his hatchet or of scalps won from the enemy in his dreams. The animal that appears to him is to become his manitou or totem, and all his life long he must bear some token of it about him; claw, tooth, tail or feather, it matters not what.

The caste of false ministers of religion among the Indians is known under the name of Big Medicine; those who belong to it form a band by themselves. Each of them is provided with a bag, which contains sundry roots and medicinal plants, to which they pay a sort of worship. They guard the utmost secrecy as to their beliefs, and are very close about admitting new members. They dance and sing a great deal in their reunions, and give one another hard knocks, squeezing their medicine bags under their arms. One very noteworthy thing which I have from several eye-witnesses, is that they confess themselves conquered and

cease their superstitious performances, whenever a baptized person, wearing a token of his religion, such as a cross or a blessed medal, comes near their meeting place. An old woman, whom I am instructing at this time and who long belonged to the Big Medicine, has been threatened with death by the jugglers if she becomes a Christian; still she remains firm in her good resolutions. The example of her husband and her six children, whom I have baptized, encourages her to brave these menaces. The chiefs of this sect are feared among the savages and impose greatly on their credulity; they make the poor Indians believe that they can at will take the form of a serpent, bear, wolf or any other animal; that they can foretell the future and discover murder and theft. Their knowledge of herbs allows them often to make extraordinary cures. After administering the medicine to the sick, they utter cries and yells, pretend to suck the malady from the body by long tubes, dance around the sufferer and perform the most astonishing antics before him.

There is a tradition among the Potawatomes that there is in the moon an old woman, always busy at the making of a big basket. If she succeeds in finishing her task the world must perish; but a great dog is watching her continually, and destroys her work as often as she has it nearly done. The fight between the dog and the woman takes place at every eclipse of the moon. The big dog is the black spot that appears on the south of that luminary.

The Potawatomi who gives frequent feasts is, according to the expression of their songs, one of the heroes of the village. At the beginning of winter, when the hunt has been successful, every lodge presents a scene of rejoicing. Night and day the sound of the flute is heard, together with the deafening clamor of the *terweêken* or drum, accompanying the monotonous songs of the savages. There is a sacred custom among them, that he who gives the feast may take no share in it himself; he would be dishonored and deemed sacrilegious. The hunter cuts up the animal that he has

killed into as many pieces as he wishes to send invitation-sticks to his friends. Any one who cannot come to the feast sends back the stick with some tobacco or some other small present to smooth over his refusal. Generally the whole village is invited, for each of the inhabitants lives in a continual dread of being poisoned by some jealous neighbor. A savage keenly resents a slight or snub; he is vindictive in the extreme, and vengeance being a virtue, according to his ideas, sooner or later he will find an occasion to vent all his anger upon any one who has dared to scorn him.

The tragic story which I am about to relate is a striking proof of this. I have it from the nephew of Kitchechaonissi himself. One of the finest villages of the Potawatomies, before their emigration to Council Bluffs, was on the point where the Kankakee and Des Plaines rivers unite to form the Illinois. Kitchechaonissi or Great South Wind, a famous warrior, was their chief. His bravery made him feared; but at the same time, by his fatherly kindness, he had won the esteem and love of all his people. He was so fortunate as to have six sons, brave as himself and excellent hunters. He often gave feasts and entertainments to all his village. Sometimes, however, he dared to brave one or another of his neighbors, neglecting, whether in contempt or for any other cause, to send them invitation sticks.

The Indians carry their knowledge of poisons and of the art of administering them very far; they make use of them with admirable dexterity upon whomsoever displeases them. The five eldest sons of Kitchechaonissi died one soon after another in the course of the same year, victims of the secret vengeance of some envious or vindictive savage. The old man's grief was long and bitter; years passed without his giving a single feast, and he obstinately refused all invitations. His remaining son was his only consolation, his sole hope and the prop of his old age. Endowed with all good qualities in mind and body, brave in war, skillful in the chase, he was especially noted for a filial devotion and submission, until then unequalled among the Indians. Kit-

chechaonissi loved him as much as a father and chief can love a distinguished son, the favorite of the village, the hero of the nation. His only pleasure was to deck him with the richest and finest adornments known to the nations. The son, by his assiduous care, had brought back the old brave to his former serenity, and apparently to all his happiness.

One day he returned from the hunt with a large bear that he had killed, and according to his custom he laid it at the feet of Kitchechaonissi. The old man bade him cut up the beast and invite all the elders of the village to the Feast of the Bear. Through oversight, the young hunter forgot four old men of the great medicine band; but he resolved to return to the desert immediately after the feast, in order to invite them the first to a second banquet. The mirth and rejoicings of the people were great on this occasion, for it was the first time since the death of his five sons that this beloved chief had taken part in a great solemnity. Everything went off most harmoniously. Kitchechaonissi was at the height of pleasure, listening to the praises of his son, and the songs that celebrated his great bravery and lofty virtues. Alas! grief followed closely this paternal triumph; the next day the young hero found himself unwell; the most famous jugglers were called in to his aid; but all their methods, songs, dances, the power of their breath, were practiced to no avail; the sickness quickly made fearful progress, and on the eighth day, all the village, mourning and weeping, accompanied Waâpekiejeck, the Dawn, which was the young warrior's name, to the tomb of his unhappy brothers.

Kitchechaonissi painted himself black and disappeared from the village, after the burial; his people sought him everywhere, but in vain. He had withdrawn to the most desert place, among the cliffs, to weep. Often, in the bitterness of his heart, he prayed the Master of Life to permit him to go and join his dear children in the land of souls. One day while seated at the edge of a torrent plunged in



reveries, he thought he heard a voice saying, "Rise, Kitchechaonissi, rise quickly; cross the river, climb the steep hills, and you shall see your son whom you so mourn." He rose at once; the sun had just finished his course and disappeared behind the distant bluffs. The old man looked about him on all sides; but seeing no one, he raised his eyes and hands toward heaven, exclaiming "How now! shall I see my son? My fingers closed his eyes; my hands dug his grave; my lips kissed his pale and livid brow, before lowering him beside his unhappy brothers!" But an irresistible power seemed to drag him on; he obeyed it. He threw himself into the torrent and gained the opposite shore; it was a desert place, difficult of access. How great was his surprise when he heard the dull sound of a drum, coming from a ravine on the farther side of the great hill. Like the hunter who has found the trail of the animal he pursues, the old man crossed the high mound with a speed astonishing for his age. The sound of the drum becomes louder and louder as he proceeds, and his uneasiness and curiosity are extreme. He stops an instant to take breath, and to look about him with caution. He soon discovers, in a deep ravine, a bark lodge, whence the noise issues. Under cover of the darkness he hastens with a light step toward the mysterious spot. He trembles in all his limbs; his blood is ice in his veins; scarcely can he breathe. A thousand phantoms rise before his imagination, excited and disturbed by so many troubles. The promise that he had heard upon the rock, "You shall see your son," at last reanimates his courage. He takes a few steps forward, looks in at a chink in the lodge, and is seized with astonishment, indignation and horror; he recognizes the four old men who did not take part in the Feast of the Bear, busied in horrid incantations with their medicine bag spread out before them. He looks more closely and sees five skulls upon posts. He goes around the cabin, looks through another crack, and discovers by the firelight a fifth Indian standing motionless at the farther end of the lodge.—Is

it his son? He examines him attentively. He has the same garments, the same ornaments, with which he was buried. It was thus that he had painted his face at his last feast.— But why this livid hue, these closed eyes, this corpse-like appearance? How has he come to this fearful desert? and in a society a thousand times more fearful yet? For a long time Kitchechaonissi had suspected these four old men of being the cause of his sorrows. Thoughts of vengeance, hope, doubt, were toiling in his breast. He knew not what to do; he watched all their motions and listened attentively. The one who had the drum began beating it again; the next shook his gourd rattle, the third blew the flute, while the fourth addressed the most insulting language to the young hero, boasting at the same time of the great power of their medicines, which neither he nor his brothers had been able to resist. Like a tiger, or a lioness robbed of her young ones, Kitchechaonissi felt all at once his vigor return, his blood boiled in his veins. Armed with his terrible tomahawk, he rushed into the lodge and discharged all his fury upon the terrified murderers of his children; he laid them all dead at his feet, and they dared not try to resist him. Then he went to embrace his son, and found that he had in his arms only his stuffed skin.— This occurrence was soon known to all the village; the young man's grave was opened; his remains were not there, nor those of his brothers. Circumstances proved beyond a doubt that the old men were the poisoners, and that they had received, according to Indian customs, the just penalty of their crimes.

I have the honor to be, etc.

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<sup>7</sup> Their songs always have some bearing on their religious opinions; they often address them to Na-na-bush, or the

<sup>7</sup> Extract from manuscript letter on the Potawatomes, dated Council Bluffs, St. Joseph Mission, August 20, 1838.

Friend of Man, the nephew of the human race. They beg him to be their spokesman, and present their prayers to the Master of Life. Often too they are consecrated to Me-suk-kum-ik-okwi, or the Earth, the great-grandmother of the human race. They tell in these songs how Na-na-bush created the earth by the Great Spirit's orders, and how the great-grandmother received a command to provide for all the wants of the uncles and aunts of Na-na-bush; meaning thereby men and women. Na-na-bush, always the benevolent intercessor of the human race, obtained from the Great Spirit the creation of animals; their flesh was to serve as food and their skins for raiment. He procured also for mankind medicinal roots and herbs of sovereign power, to cure their maladies and enable them to kill the animals in the chase. All these things were intrusted to Me-suk-kum-ik-okwi, and in order that Na-na-bush's uncles and aunts might never invoke her in vain, he asked her always to stay at home. For this reason, when an Indian is digging up medicinal roots, he always deposits in the ground his little offering to Me-suk-kum-ik-okwi.

All these songs are marked down on birch bark or on little flat pieces of wood. The ideas are expressed by emblematic figures.

They believe the thunder to be the voice of certain living beings. Some think that these beings resemble men, others that they have the form of birds. Every time that it thunders, they burn tobacco, offering it as a sacrifice to the thunder. It is doubtful whether they know the connection between the thunder and the lightning-flash that precedes it.

## CHAPTER IX.

### AN OLD DELAWARE LEGEND.<sup>1</sup>

Sorrows of the daughter of Wawanosh—Delaware legend of the rainbow.

**T**WO centuries have passed away since the fame of Wawanosh was sounded along the shores of Lake Superior. He was a Delaware chief of an ancient line, who had preserved the chieftainship in their family from the remotest

<sup>1</sup> The name Delaware, that the Indians of this nation bear, was given them by the whites. It is derived from Lord Delaware, one of the early English colonial governors in America. Among themselves these people are called Lenni Lennapi or the primitive nation. They resided anciently in a great country west of the Mississippi. With the "Five Nations" so renowned in the Indian history of this continent, they seized and occupied a large territory southeast of their ancient domain. In the course of this long migration, the Delawares divided into three great tribes, called the Tortoise tribe, the Turkey tribe and the Wolf tribe. In the time of William Penn they occupied the whole of Pennsylvania, and extended from the Potomac to the Hudson. As the white population began to increase, strengthen and extend over these vast territories, the Delawares (like all the other tribes) found it necessary to plunge deeper into the forests and plains, and yield to their conquerors or usurpers. While a great part of the nation established themselves on the Ohio, or the margin of the Muskingum, others regained the shores and the forests of the Mississippi, whence, according to their traditions, their ancestors had set forth. When colonies of Europeans came to take possession of that large and handsome river, which the celebrated Jesuit Marquette first discovered, and [to which he] gave the now consoling and sublime name of the "Immaculate Conception," they repulsed once more the Delawares, and Government granted these Indians a little territory southwest of Fort Leavenworth on the Missouri. In 1854 the Delawares ceded this last foothold to the United States.—*Author's Note.*

times, and in consequence had a lofty pride of ancestry. To the reputation of his birth, he added the advantages of a tall and commanding person, and the dazzling qualities of great personal strength, courage and activity. His heavy bow was renowned for its dimensions throughout the surrounding plains, and he was known to have shot one of his flint-headed arrows through the body of a deer. His counsel was as much sought as his prowess was feared; so that he came in time to be equally famed as a hunter, a warrior, and a sage. But he had now passed the meridian of his days, and the term "Ak-kee-wai-zee," "one who has been long above the earth," was familiarly applied to him. Such was Wawanosh, to whom the united voice of the nation awarded the first place in their esteem, and the highest seat in authority. But pride was his ruling passion. Wawanosh had an only daughter, who had now lived to witness the budding of the leaves for the eighteenth spring. Her father was not more celebrated for his deeds of strength than she for her gentle virtues and all the accomplishments of an Indian maid.

Her hand was sought by a youth of humble parentage, who had no other merits to recommend him but such as might arise from a tall and graceful person, a manly step, and an eye beaming with the fires of youth and ardent attachment. These were sufficient to attract the favorable notice of the daughter, but were by no means satisfactory to the father, who sought an alliance more suitable to his rank and the high pretensions of his family.

"Listen to me, young man," replied Wawanosh to the trembling hunter who had sought the interview, "and be attentive to what you hear. You ask me to bestow upon you my daughter, the chief solace of my age and my choicest gift from the Master of Life. Others have asked of me this boon, who were as young, as active, and as ardent as yourself. Some of these persons have had better claims to become my son-in-law. Young man, have you considered well who it is that you would choose for a father-in-law? Have

you reflected upon the deeds which have raised me in authority, and made my name known to the enemies of my nation? Where is the chief who is not proud to be considered the friend of Wawanosh? Where is the hunter who can bend the bow of Wawanosh? Where is the warrior who does not wish to be one day the equal in bravery of Wawanosh? Have you not heard that my fathers came from the far east decked with eagle plumes (marks of bravery) and clothed with authority?

“And what, young man, have you to boast of that you should claim an alliance with my warlike line? Have you ever met your enemies on the battle-field? Have you ever brought to the camp a trophy of victory? Have you ever proved your fortitude by suffering protracted pain, enduring continued hunger, or sustaining great fatigue? Is your name known beyond the humble limits of your native village? Go then, young man, and earn a name for yourself. It is none but the brave who can ever hope to claim an alliance with the wigwam of Wawanosh. Think not my ancient blood shall mingle with the humble mark of the *Awansees* (a kind of fish), fit *totem* (family distinction) for fishermen.”

The humbled and intimidated youth departed; but he resolved to do a deed that should render him worthy of the daughter of Wawanosh, or die in the attempt. He called together several of his young companions and equals in years and imparted to them his design of conducting an expedition against the enemy, and requested their assistance. Several embraced the proposal immediately; others were soon persuaded into it, and before ten suns had set he saw himself at the head of a formidable party of young warriors, all eager, like himself, to distinguish themselves in battle.

Each warrior, according to the custom of the day, was armed with a bow and a quiver of arrows, tipped with flint or jasper. He carried a *mush-kee-moet* or knapsack upon his back, provided with a small quantity of parched and pounded corn, mixed with a little *pemmican* or pounded drymeat. He

was furnished with a *puggamaugun*, or war-club, of hard wood, fastened to a girth of deer-skin, and a kind of stone knife. In addition to this, some carried the ancient *shee-sheegwun*, or Indian lance, consisting of a smooth pole about six feet in length, with a spear of flint firmly tied on with splints of hard wood, bound down with deer sinews. Thus equipped, and each warrior painted in a manner to suit his own fancy, and ornamented with appropriate feathers, they repaired to the spot appointed for the war dance.

A level grassy plain extended for nearly a mile from the lodge of Wawanosh toward the point of land called *Shogwoi-ma-koony*. Lodges of bark were promiscuously interspersed over this green, with here and there a cluster of trees or a solitary pine which had escaped the fury of tempests for so many years. A beach of yellow sand skirted the lake shore in front, and a tall forest of oaks, pines and poplars formed the background. In the centre of this green stood a large shattered pine; with a clear space around, renowned as the scene of the war dance, time out of mind. Here the youths assembled, with their tall and graceful leader, distinguished by the feathers of the white eagle which adorned his head. A bright fire of pine wood blazed upon the green. He led his men twice and thrice in a circle around this fire, with a measured step and solemn chant. Then suddenly halting, the war-whoop was raised, and the dance immediately began. An old man sitting at the head of the ring beat time upon the drum, while several of the warriors shook their *sheesheegwuns*, and ever and anon made the woods re-echo with their yells.

Thus they continued the dance for two days and nights, with short intermissions; when dropping off, one by one, from the fire, each sought his own way to the place appointed for the rendezvous, on the confines of the enemies' country.

Their leader was not among the last to depart; before leaving the village he bid an affectionate adieu to the daughter of Wawanosh. He imparted to her his firm de-

termination to perform an act that would establish his name as a warrior, or die in the attempt. He told her of the bitter pangs he had felt at her father's taunts; that his soul spurned the imputations of cowardice implied by his language. He declared that he never could be happy, either with or without her, until he had proved to the whole tribe the strength of his heart, which is the Indian term for courage. He said his dreams had not been so propitious as he could wish, but that he would not cease to invoke the favor of the Great Spirit in his behalf. He repeated his protestations of invincible attachment, which she returned, and pledging vows of mutual fidelity, they separated.

All she ever heard of the young warrior after this interview was that he had received an arrow in his breast, after having distinguished himself by the most heroic bravery. The enemy fled, leaving many of their warriors dead on the field. On examining his wound, it was perceived to be beyond their power to cure. He languished a short time, and expired in the arms of his friends.

From that hour no smile was ever seen in the once happy lodge of Wawanosh. His daughter pined away by day and by night. Tears and sighs, sorrow and lamentation were heard continually. No efforts to amuse were capable of restoring her lost serenity of mind. Persuasion and reproof were alternately employed, but employed in vain. It became her favorite custom to fly to a sequestered spot in the woods, where she would sit under a shady tree and sing her mournful laments for whole hours together.

Thus she daily repeated her plaintive song. It was not long before a small bird of beautiful plumage flew upon the tree beneath which she usually sat; and with its sweet and artless note seemed to respond to her voice. It was a bird of a strange appearance; such as she had never seen before. It came every day and sang to her, remaining until it became dark. Her fond imagination soon led her to suppose it was the dead warrior's spirit, and her visits were repeated with greater frequency.



She did nothing but sing and fast. Thus she pined away, until death, which she so frequently desired, came to her relief. After her decease, the bird was never more seen; and it became a popular opinion that this mysterious bird had flown away with her spirit to the happy land of life. But the bitter tears of remorse fell in the lodge of Wawanosh; and he lived many years to regret his false pride and his harsh treatment of the noble youth.

Thus far the legend which I hold from a worthy sachem of the Lenni Lennapi nation or Delawares.

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*The Indian Tradition of the Flood and the Rainbow.*<sup>2</sup>

This is the opinion concerning the rainbow and the deluge, which I have found among the Lenni-Lennapi or Delawares,<sup>3</sup> who inhabit the Territory of Kansas in the United States.

Sin-go-wi-chi-na-xa<sup>4</sup> is the name the Lenni-Lennapi, or First People, give to the rainbow. It is a very significant word; it comprehends a great many things and can hardly be translated. I will try, however, to give the literal signification. Sin-go-wi-chi-na-xa means a large luminous circle, composed of several narrow circles, differing from one another in color, but so mingled that no line of demarcation can be observed between them.

The following is the tradition that is handed down in this tribe. The rainbow dates from the oldest times. After the creation of the earth, the Great Spirit covered it with a dark blue and azure vault. A great uneasiness took possession

<sup>2</sup> From the French of the third Belgian edition.

<sup>3</sup> Father De Smet does not appear ever to have been among the Delawares. His informant in the lore of that nation was Reverend Father Beschor, Delaware and Jesuit, whose story he has told under the name of Watomika.

<sup>4</sup> The letter x is used to indicate the German ch-sound.

of the heart of the spirit or Manitou of the Waters. He feared that the rain would no longer be able to penetrate this azure blackness, and that consequently the element in which he had his pleasure and which yielded him existence, namely, water, would fail him, and that he, abandoned and without a dominion, would become an object of scorn and ridicule among the other tutelary spirits of the earth. The Spirit of the Waters therefore made a humble appeal to the Great Spirit, praying him to have pity on him and not permit so great a calamity to come upon him.

The plaintive words of the Spirit of the Waters went to the heart of the Great Spirit, and he was penetrated by pity and compassion. For this reason he deigned to open an attentive and benevolent ear to his discourse.

The Great Spirit therefore assured the Spirit of the Waters that his fears were unfounded, and as a proof, he commanded the Spirit of the Wind, who resides in the region of the setting sun, to blow with impetuosity. Immediately thick and sombre clouds were seen above the western horizon. They spread abroad with great rapidity, until the black azure of the firmament, which had so greatly alarmed the Spirit of the Waters, had entirely disappeared.

Then the voice of the Great Spirit was heard amid the clouds. Its sound was heavy, deep and prolonged, resembling the noise of bellowing waters falling in a multitude of cataracts, falls or cascades.

At the same instant, the Spirit of the Rain, the brother of the Spirit of the Waters and the Spirit of the Wind, broke forth and loosed himself in torrents. The waters fell and continued to fall, until the rivers and lakes had overflowed their limits and covered the surface of the earth. The birds took refuge in the highest branches of the trees, and the animals sought the summits of the loftiest mountains.

At this sight, the heart of the Spirit of the Waters became calm and tranquil once more; he ceased to dread and to doubt his lot.

His submission was agreeable to the Great Spirit, and he ordered the rain to cease and the clouds to disappear, at sight of the luminous circle called Sin-go-wi-chi-na-xa.

Ever since that time, the Lenni-Lennapi salute the rainbow whenever it is displayed, because they regard it as a certain sign of the benevolent disposition of the Great Spirit.

Such is the tradition of the rainbow among the Delawares, and it is evidently the altered history of the deluge. How did this knowledge reach these savages? It is evidently one of the secrets of God.

## CHAPTER X.

### TCHATKA,<sup>1</sup> THE CHIEF OF THE ASSINIBOINS.

Tchatka's beginnings as a medicine man — Removal of his uncle — Poison and pyrotechnics — A big drum — A medicine dream — A successful war-party — Abundant scalps — Marries plentifully — His coadjutor — Reverses on the warpath — Attempts seizure of Fort Union — Runs out of poison — Disastrous defeat — Predicts his own death — Notes on the Assiniboins.

*Reverend Father:*

**Y**OU have received the address of Matau-Witko,<sup>2</sup> or Crazy Bear, the present chief of the Assiniboins. This has shown the favorable dispositions entertained by that chief for our holy religion. I spoke to you of their hunts, of an expedition of peace and war sent by the Crows,

<sup>1</sup> The story of Tchatka was furnished Father De Smet by the Indian trader, Edwin T. Denig, and was sent in French to Reverend Father Terwecoren, editor *Précis Historiques*. It forms Letter XIII, Second Series, *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres* and *Western Missions and Missionaries*. The latter text is here followed.

<sup>2</sup> Maximilian of Wied mentions this chief, calling him Manh-Quitkatt, or l'Ours Fou. He appears also in Larpenteur as Crazy Bear, and is there said to have proved the greatest chief of the Assiniboins. "Tchatka" means left hand in the Assiniboin language. Maximilian of Wied saw this chief leading the attack on Fort Mackenzie, August 28, 1833; gives his name as Minohenne (which would apparently mean something about water) and says he assumed the name Tatogan, or Antelope, after that occurrence. Tchatka appears occasionally in Larpenteur's journal, where he is called Gauché, and nicknamed Co-han — "hurry up." He is described as a "queer kind of grizzly-bear fellow, very odd in his way," and as "the terror of all the neighboring tribes." Left Hand is still told of by old Assiniboins, and a lineal descendant of his, named Left Handed Bear, is (1903) living on one of the Montana reservations. In Father De Smet's manuscript letters he calls him variously Gaucher, Gauchet and Gauché.

or *Absharokays*, to the Blackfeet, or *Ziarsapas*,<sup>3</sup> their inveterate enemies. I have described the Assiniboin worship, which, in regard to ceremonies, superstitious practices, and various point of belief, resembles all others in use among the different Indian tribes of the Upper Missouri.

These details must have given you an idea of the depth of heathen darkness in which the North American Indians are yet shrouded. How worthy, alas! are they of exciting Christian compassion and devotedness! How noble the mission of rescuing the minds and hearts of this despised and forlorn race from the degrading superstitions and infamous cruelties to which they are abandoned: of sowing in that uncultivated soil the mustard seed, which will spring up and bear the immortal blossoms of present and future happiness!

Some of our Fathers are already engaged in this noble task. It is to be hoped that a greater number may be inspired to join them in bearing the torch of faith to all the nations which deserve it, and incessantly implore Black-robos. I speak from actual knowledge when I say that most of the nations of the great desert manifest a desire for instruction, and listen willingly to the word of the Lord.

To initiate you still further in the knowledge of Indian manners and customs, I have thought that you would be pleased to receive a sketch of the life of the most renowned chief of the Assiniboins. He was a crafty, cruel, deceitful man, a bad Indian, in every sense of the word; his whole life was full of horrors. For forty years he led his tribe in the forest. At the commencement of his career, his band numbered over 2,000. He led them from war to war, sometimes with success, often with reverse. Disease thinned the band — poison and battle wasted them like snow. When they were but a handful, he beheld the remnant of his gallant band disperse and seek an asylum in a more powerful

<sup>3</sup> Father De Smet has here confused different families known by the name of Blackfeet. The *Sihasapa* are a division of the Teton Sioux, elsewhere called by him Blackfoot-Sioux, and they have nothing to do with the Blackfeet proper.

and numerous camp. He died as he had lived. Either from fear, jealousy or hatred, he had recourse to poison to rid himself of all who opposed him. Pursued by remorse and despair, he used the same means to put an end to his own days. He died in most terrible convulsions. This story will show you that the Indians, too, have their Neros and Caligulas.

All the accounts that I have read on the statistics of the Indians, show that their numbers constantly decrease. To what is this remarkable decline to be ascribed? The history of the Assiniboin tribe, led by this wicked chief, is more or less the history of the decline of the other tribes. Ambitious chiefs and partisans keep up incessant wars in their tribes, and unknown diseases thin them. Then comes the acquaintance with the whites; the Indians learn, and easily adopt, the vices and excesses of the pioneers of our civilization. The spirituous liquors, which they offer the Indians in abundance — more terrible than war — sweep them off by hundreds, and they disappear, leaving behind them only sad mounds, as tombs, which dot the plains and highlands by the river-side, till the plow at last levels these last vestiges of a race.

If time permits, I will hereafter give some details on the present condition of the Indian tribes under the domination of the Great Republic. The Government has just organized, in the western desert, two new Territories — Kansas and Nebraska.<sup>4</sup> They embrace an extent of neither more

<sup>4</sup> Nebraska Territory extends to 49° north, the northern boundary of the United States; on the south, the line of 40° separates it from Kansas; its eastern limit is the White river and the Missouri, which separate it from Minnesota and Iowa; on the west, it extends to the Rocky Mountains.

Kansas Territory extends three degrees, or 208 miles, farther south; on the east is the State of Missouri; on the north, the thirty-seventh degree separates it from the Cherokee Reservation; on the west, it is bounded by the Rocky Mountains.

These two Territories contain over 500,000 square miles, or forty times the surface of Belgium.—*Author's Note.*

nor less than between 500,000 and 600,000 square miles. They will then be divided into several States, and each of these States will be larger than France. Whites are already pouring in in thousands, all hastening to take possession of the best sites. The law has just passed; no steps are yet taken to protect the Indians, and already fifty new towns and villages are in progress; barns, farms, mills, etc., rise on all sides as though by enchantment. I did not then think that the moment of invasion was so near.

The narrative with which I will entertain you to-day is well known in all the region where the scenes occurred. I have it from two most reliable sources — that is to say, from a man of tried probity and veracity, Mr. Denig, of the St. Louis Fur Company, and from a worthy Canadian interpreter. Both resided many years among the Assiniboins, and knew the subject of the story, and witnessed many of his acts.

This hero is Tchatka or le Gaucher, an Assiniboin chief. He exercised, during his long career, more power over the band or tribe that he led and governed, than any other savage Nestor whose history I have learned. He had received several names; but that of Gaucher, or Awkward, is that by which he was known among the *voyageurs*<sup>5</sup> and fur-traders. His other names were, Wah-kon-tangka, or Big Medicine; Mina-Yougha, or the Knifeholder; and Tatokah-nan, or the Kid. These titles were bestowed on him at different periods of his life, in memory of some remarkable deed by which he had distinguished himself, and which will appear in the course of my narrative.

The family of Tchatka was very numerous, and enjoyed great influence. As the members purposed electing him their chief, and conductor of the camp, as soon as he should attain his majority, he attracted the attention of the northern fur-traders of Upper Canada and the Hudson Bay Com-

<sup>5</sup> I use the word *voyageur*, a Canadian term, adopted in English to designate the white hunters of the West, a peculiar set of men.—*Author's Note.*

pany's territory. The intimacy which he cultivated with the whites, united to a high degree of native cunning, proved the means of his acquiring many arts, which gave him on his return a kind of distinction among his people. He had also obtained, by means of a white man, a quantity of poison, and had learned its properties and use. Tchatka was an unprincipled, deceitful, cunning, cowardly man. Although young and vigorous he always kept out of danger. While the warriors of his tribe were fighting in the plain, he would be seated on a hill or some other spot from which he could observe all that passed. He had been initiated into all the tricks of the jugglers. He never performed incantation and juggleries without a good horse beside him, on which he sprang in case of defeat. He was always the first to escape, abandoning the combatants to their own luck, and got off as well as he could. As we shall see in the sequel, he became chief of 280 lodges, or about 1,200 warriors. The great confidence which they had in their leader seems to have been the cause of his great success in the war against the Blackfeet and other enemies of the nation.

As soon as Tchatka had attained the requisite age, he used every effort to attain his object and satisfy his ambition. He calculated the advantages and ascendancy he would obtain over the people by becoming initiated in the great band of medicine men or jugglers,<sup>6</sup> and he pretended to the gift of prophecy. A second motive for this initiation was, that he might thereby conceal his want of bravery — a quality indispensable in a chief. Many remarkable stories are related of his exactitude in predicting future events, and for which the simple savages could give no explanation.

<sup>6</sup> The Wah-kons, or medicine men, among the American Indians, and the Panomoosi of Northern Asia, belong to the same class. In both hemispheres these charlatans pretend to heal diseases by witchcraft; they predict the issue of wars and hunts. In all cases they pretend to be inspired by manitous; that is, divinities or spirits. They generally retire to the depth of the forests, where they pretend to fast for several days, and often practice very rigorous penances, consisting especially in



Tchatka was not ignorant that there were several persons in the tribe whose influence was great, who were older than he, and who had acquired by their valor in war, and by their wisdom in the council, real titles to the dignity of head chief. In order to arrogate to himself the sole government of the camp, he conceived the frightful design of getting rid of his competitors. He brought to the execution of his project all his cunning and deceit. I have already alluded to the poisons in his possession. By secret experiments he became well informed concerning their power and influence. He administered them himself, or by the hands of others, so adroitly that not the least suspicion was excited. His character of prophet came to his aid. He predicted to his victims, often several weeks and months before the event, that they had not long to live, according to the revelations of his Wah-kon, and manitous or spirits. The accomplishment of this species of prediction established his reputation; he obtained the title of "Strong in Jugglery." The poor savages regarded him with fear and respect — as a being who could at his will dispose of life. Many made him presents of horses and other objects, in order to escape figuring on the list of his fatal predictions.

The most influential and courageous personage of the Assiniboins, the principal obstacle to the ambition of Gaucher or Tchatka, was his own uncle. To a lofty stature, his uncle joined a bravery, a boldness, and a violence which no one dared oppose. He bore the name of Walking Bow,

corporal macerations; then they beat the drum, dance, sing, smoke, cry, and howl like wild beasts. All these preparatives are accompanied by a host of furious actions, and such extraordinary contortions of body, that they would seem possessed. These jugglers are visited secretly by night by accomplices in their craft and hypocrisy, who carry them all the news of the village and its neighborhood. By these means the jugglers, on leaving the forest and returning to the village, easily impose on the credulous. The first part of their predictions consists in giving an exact account of all the events of the village since their departure — marriages, deaths, returns from the war or the hunt, and all other remarkable items.—*Author's Note.*

or Itazipa-man. He was renowned for his valorous deeds in combat. His robe, his casque, his clothing, his tomahawk, lance, and even the bridle and saddle of his steed, were adorned with scalps and trophies taken from his enemies. He was surnamed The One-eyed, or Istagon, because he had lost an eye in battle by an arrow.

Tchatka was jealous of the power of Istagon, and of the influence the latter exercised over the whole tribe. Hitherto he had not attempted the life of his uncle; as he feared his anger, he desired to assure himself of his protection. He needed him as long as those were living who might oppose his ambitious march, the success of which was so little merited on his part; no deed of arms, no trophy gained from the enemy, could authorize him to carry his pretensions higher. By his arts and flattery, by an assiduous attention and feigned submission to the smallest desires of the chief, the cunning young man succeeded in gaining the friendship and confidence of his uncle. They saw each other more frequently; they gave each other feasts and banquets, in which the greatest harmony seemed to reign. One evening Tchatka presented his guest a poisoned dish: the latter, according to the Indian custom, ate the whole. Knowing, by experience, that in a few hours the ingredient would produce its effects, Tchatka invited all the principal braves and soldiers of the camp to repair to his lodge, announcing that he had an affair of the highest importance to communicate to them. He placed his Wah-kon in the most suitable and most conspicuous part of his lodge. This Wah-kon of Gaucher's consisted of a stone, painted red, and surrounded by a little fence of small sticks about six inches in length. It lay at a little distance from the fire, which was burning in the centre of the lodge, and opposite the place where he sat. It had occupied this place for several years.

As soon as the whole assembly were arranged, Tchatka disclosed his Wah-kon. He declared to them that the thunder, during a nocturnal storm, had launched this stone into the middle of his lodge; that the voice of the thunder had

told him that it possessed the gift and the spirit of prophecy; that the Wah-kon stone had announced that a great event was about to take place in the camp; for that very night the most valiant brave of the tribe would struggle in the arms of death, and that another, more favored than he by the spirits, would take his place, and would be proclaimed head chief of the camp; that at the very moment the chief expired, the Wah-kon stone would vanish, and accompany the spirit of the deceased into the country of souls.

A mournful silence succeeded this singular declaration. Astonishment, mingled with superstitious dread, was depicted on the faces of all those who composed the assembly. No one dared to contradict the discourse of Tchatka, or call in doubt his words. Besides, on many other occasions his predictions had been realized at the appointed time. He whose death had been foretold, without being named, was present. As several occupied nearly as high a rank as himself in the camp, and shared the power in concert with Istagon, the latter did not at first apply to himself exclusively the announcement of death which had just been made so mysteriously. He did not yet feel the effects of the poisoned dish, and had not even the slightest suspicion on the subject. Each withdrew to his own lodge; but dark apprehensions troubled their minds, and agitation controlled their hearts. Who will be the victim announced?

Toward midnight a messenger informed Gaucher that his uncle and friend was very sick, and wished positively to speak with him. The uncle suspected the perfidy of his nephew, and was resolved to stretch him dead at his feet while he yet possessed sufficient strength. The wily Tchatka answered the messenger, "Go, tell Istagon that my visit to him would prove useless. I could not possibly at this moment quit my lodge and my Wah-kon."

In the mean time a great tumult and great confusion arose throughout the camp; consternation became general. In his horrible convulsions, and before they had deprived him of the use of speech, Istagon declared to the braves who

first answered his call, that he suspected Tchatka of being the cause of his death. They at once uttered shrieks of rage and vengeance against the latter, and hastened to his lodge to execute their threats. Tchatka, apparently grieved and melancholy, on account of the unhappy lot of his uncle, and trembling with fear at the sight of so many uplifted tomahawks, besought these avengers of Istagon to suspend their wrath and deign to listen to him. "Relations and friends," said he, "Istagon is my uncle; the same blood flows in our veins; he has ever loaded me with marks of his friendship and his confidence. How then could I injure him? A few moments ago you saw him vigorous with health; now that he is grappling with death you come to discharge your vengeance upon me! What have I done to deserve it? I predicted the event! How could I help doing so? Such was the decree of my great Wah-kon! Approach, and observe it closely, for I announced at the same time that my Wah-kon would disappear, in order to accompany the soul of the chief into the region of spirits. If my word is accomplished, and my Wah-kon stone disappears, is it not an evident sign that the death of Istagon is rather a decree of the manitous than a treachery on my part? Wait, and judge for yourselves." These few words had the desired effect; they seated themselves as sentinels around the mysterious stone. Neither calumet nor dish was handed round in this mute circle — silent in appearance, but tumultuous in reality, for their hearts were agitated with different emotions, to which the discourse of the perfidious Tchatka had given rise.

During the two hours that this scene lasted, the fire gradually became dim, and shed only a few feeble glimmerings, which were from time to time reflected from these sombre and sinister faces. In the interval, some runners arrived, to announce the progress of the malady. "Istagon is in convulsions, and utters naught but shrieks of rage and despair against his nephew — his convulsions grow more feeble — he is losing his speech — he can only be heard with

difficulty — he is in agony — Istagon is dead.” Cries of distress accompanied this last message. At the same instant the mysterious stone burst into a thousand fragments, with a noise like thunder, which palsied all present with fear. In scattering, it filled the lodge with cinders and fire, and wounded severely the nearest of the observers. Stunned and frightened, all took flight from this scene of prodigies. The indignation and revenge which animated them a moment before against Tchatka, gave place to fear, mingled with awe and respect for him, and they no longer dared approach him. The supernatural power of the Wah-kon was acknowledged, and he who had received it from<sup>7</sup> the thunder was honored throughout the camp with the title of Wah-kon-Tangka, that is, Great Medicine.

This pretended supernatural affair is thus explained: The wily savage had been a long time preparing the part he intended performing. Some days beforehand he pierced the stone, and charged it with nearly a pound of powder. A train of powder, carefully covered over, conducted from the place in which he was seated to the hole excavated in the stone — a distance of six or eight feet. He seized a favorable instant for lighting a piece of tinder, and at the very moment that the death of the “One-eyed” was announced, he fired the train — the stone exploded.

All these subtle and perfidious means of Gaucher must appear very simple in the civilized world, where poison and powder are so often employed in all manner of crimes and misdemeanors; but among the Indians the case was widely different. They were then ignorant of the destructive power of these two articles. It is not therefore astonishing that they saw only Wah-kon — that is to say, the supernatural and incomprehensible — in all this.

At his death, Istagon left a great number of friends, especially among the warriors, who were sincerely attached to him on account of his bravery. Several among them,

<sup>7</sup> Fr. from it.

less credulous perhaps than the others, eyed Tchatka with stern and threatening looks every time that he appeared in public. But as he lived retired, rarely quitting his lodge, their disdain and aversion for him were not much remarked. Besides, as I have already observed, he had a numerous band of relatives; the members of his family, on whom he could rely, with his partisans, formed a fourth part of all the camps, or about eighty lodges.

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Tchatka was well persuaded that a politic stroke was still necessary to gain the undecided, the discontented, and the incredulous. Circumstances seemed to favor this measure; he resolved to have recourse to it while the prodigy of the stone was still fresh in their memory. It has occasionally happened, too, that on the death of a chief, a numerous camp divides into different companies, above all if there had existed any anterior discord. Tchatka, therefore, shut himself in his lodge during several days, without communicating openly with any one. The camp expected something marvelous. The causes of this long retreat were discussed; they lost themselves in conjectures; all, however, were fully persuaded that some new manifestation, either good or evil, would be the result. On the fifth day of Tchatka's retreat, a general uneasiness was manifested among the savages, and they spoke of dividing.

What was the famous Tchatka, the Great Medicine—the hope of some, and the terror of others — doing? Nothing else than making a drum, or *tchant-cheega-kabo*, of dimensions that never any Indian had imagined. Some time beforehand, in the premeditation of his exploit, he had secretly sawed a piece of an enormous hollow tree, very suitable to his design. Its height three feet, and its breadth two, his drum resembled a churn. One end was covered with goat skin, and the other only with wood. He employed several days in cutting and scraping the interior of this

famous instrument, in order to render it lighter. On the exterior of this *tchant-chcega-kabo*, he painted the figures of a grizzly bear, of a tortoise, of a buffalo bull — three superior genii in the catalogue of the Indian manitous. Between these figures were painted human heads, without scalps, filling every space, about eighty in number. On the skin of the drum, a chief of the Blackfeet tribe was represented, without a scalp, in black, and daubed with vermilion.

He had finished his work, and made all his preparations. At midnight the voice of Tchatka was heard, with the muffled sound of his *tchant-cheega*, which resounded through the camp. As though just coming forth from an ecstasy, he offered aloud his thankgivings and his invocations to the Great Spirit, and to all his favorite manitous, to thank them for the new favors with which they had just crowned him, the effects of which were to reflect upon the whole tribe. Without delay, every one listened to his call and repaired to his lodge. Observing the usual customs, the counselors, the principal among the braves and soldiers, entered first, and soon filled his abode; while hundreds of the curious, old and young, collected and besieged it without. Curiosity is at its highest pitch; they are on fire to learn the explanation of the mysterious news; they wait with anxious impatience.

As a preliminary, Tchatka intoned a beautiful war-song, without paying the slightest attention to the multitude which pressed around him. In his quality of medicine man, his head-dress was made of swan's-down; his face and his breast were painted in figures of different colors; his lips, dyed with vermilion, indicated that he thirsted for blood and breathed the spirit of war. When he perceived that the whole band was around him, he arose, and with the voice of a stentor, addressed the assembly.

"I dreamed," said he, "friends and warriors, I dreamed! During five days and five nights, I was admitted into the land of spirits; living, I walked among the dead. My eyes have witnessed frightful scenes; my ears have heard fright-

ful moans, sighs, lamentations and howlings! Have you courage to listen to me? Can I suffer you to become the victims of your most cruel enemies? For, know that danger is near — the enemy is not far distant!”

An aged man, whose white hairs announced seventy winters, the grand counselor of the nation, and a juggler, replied:

“A man who loves his tribe conceals nothing from the people. When danger is at hand, he speaks; when the enemy is in sight, he goes out to meet him. You say you have visited the region of souls; I believe in your words. I also, in my dreams, have frequently conversed with the ghosts of the departed. Tchatka, though young, has given us extraordinary proofs of his power; the last hour of Istagon was terrible, but who dares rise to blame you? You only predicted the two events: the chief died, and the Wahkon disappeared. I also performed wonders in my youth. Now I am old; but although my limbs begin to be feeble, I have yet a clear mind. We will listen to your words with attention, and then we will decide on the course we ought to take. I have spoken.”

The speech of the old man had a favorable effect on the whole assembly. Perhaps he was in Tchatka's secret. All the succeeding orations manifested a feeling of inclination to the murderer. The latter, reassured concerning the dispositions in regard to him, continued his recital with firmness and showed confidence respecting his future plans.

“Let those who have ears, hearken to me! those who have not, are free to go! You know me. I am a man of few words, but what I advance is true, and the events which I predict arrive. During five days and five nights my spirit was wafted amid the spirits of the dead, especially of our relatives and friends — of our friends whose bones are whitening on the plains, and which the wolves drag into their lairs — of our friends who, still unavenged, wander up and down, amid swamp and snow and ice, in sterile and forsaken deserts, which produce neither fruit, nor root, nor



animal, to subsist on. It is a place of darkness, where sunlight never enters. They are subject to all privations — cold, hunger, thirst. We, their friends, their relatives, their brethren, are the cause of their long sufferings and fearful woes. Their sighs and moans were unsupportable. I trembled in every limb; my hair stood erect on my head; I believed my lot fixed with theirs; when a kindly spirit touched my hand and said: ‘Tchatka, return to the place which thou hast left; return to thy body, for it is not yet time for thee to enter the land of spirits. Return, and thou shalt be the bearer of good news to thy nation — the shades of thy deceased relations shall be avenged, and their deliverance is nigh. In thy lodge thou wilt find a drum, painted with figures that soon thou shalt learn to know.’ At this instant the spirit left me. Coming forth from my dream, I found my drum, painted as you now behold it. When my body was restored to animation, I found that I had not changed position. During four days and four nights I had the same vision, varied sometimes, but always accompanied with complaints and reproaches concerning our recent defeats by our enemies, the Blackfeet. The fifth night, the manitou addressed me anew, and said: ‘Tchatka, henceforth the *tchant-cheega-kabo* shall be thy Wah-kon. Arise, follow without delay the war-path which leads to the Blackfeet. At the source of Milk river thirty lodges of the enemies are encamped. Set out instantly, and after five days’ march thou shalt reach the camp. On the sixth thou shalt make a fearful carnage. Every head painted on the drum represents a scalp, and the taking of these scalps will appease the manes of thy deceased parents and friends. Then only will they be enabled to quit the frightful abode where thou beholdest them, to enter the beauteous plains where plenty reigns and where suffering and privation are unknown. At this moment a Blackfoot war-party is prowling around the camp. They sought a favorable moment, but not finding it, have gone in search of a weaker enemy. Set out, then, without delay; thou shalt find an easy victory; thou shalt find in

the Blackfoot camp only old men, women and children.' Such were the words of the manitou, and he disappeared. I returned to my body. I recovered my senses. I have told you all."<sup>8</sup> Thus spoke this extraordinary man.

Before continuing the strange history of Tchatka and of his predictions, it will be necessary to explain that he gained over to his cause and person several active young men, the best runners in the camp. From them he obtained in secret all the news and information that they could gather in their long expeditions, either as to the hunt, or as to the proximity, number and position of the enemy. The juggler, as soon as he is informed, makes his medicine or incantations, and then prophecies to the people, who, not suspecting the trick, deem all supernatural that comes from the impostor's mouth.

Let us continue: the discourse of Tchatka (for we will so style him in our narrative, although he had now received that of Wah-kon-Tangka or Big Medicine) had produced the effect he desired on all his auditory. The Assiniboin entertained a mortal hatred against the Blackfeet; this detestation had been transmitted from father to son, and augmented by continual aggressions and reprisals. We may form an idea of the propensity that Indians have for war, from the expression which they use to designate it. They call it "The Breath of their Nostrils." Each family numbered some member slain by their dreadful adversary. Tchatka's words aroused in their hearts the most violent thirst of vengeance. The *sassaskwi*, or war-whoop, was the unanimous response of all the warriors in the camp. They lighted bonfires, formed groups for chanting invocations to

<sup>8</sup> Many of our Indian tribes celebrate, toward the close of winter, the "Feast of Dreams." The ceremonies are often prolonged to ten days or a fortnight. They might rather be termed Bacchanalia or Carnival. Even the Indians call it the "Feast of Madmen." These are days of great disorder;— when all they dream or pretend to dream must be executed. Dances, songs, and music form the principal ceremonies of the feast.—*Author's Note.*

their manitous, and executed the scalp-dance. Then each one examined his arms, and the whole scene changed into a vast workshop. The soldiers sharpened the double-edged knives and daggers, filed anew the lances and arrows, vermilioned the battle-axes and the tomahawks, bridled and saddled the horses; while the women mended and prepared the moccasins, the leggins and the sacks of provisions necessary for the journey. As though it were a grand gala occasion, every one daubed his face with vermilion according to his fancy, and arrayed himself in his handsomest ornaments. Never had so lively and so unanimous an enthusiasm appeared in the tribe. All relied implicitly on the promises of Tchatka, and counted on certain victory. The warriors felicitated themselves on having at last found an opportunity to efface the shame and opprobrium inflicted on the nation, and to avenge the death of their kindred. The camp breathed naught but war. The man who had set all in motion remained silent and alone. Tranquil in his lodge, beside his big drum, he would neither take part in the public rejoicings, nor join in the singing and dancing the war-dance.

When the war-party was formed and ready to depart, several old men and soldiers were deputed to Tchatka, to ask him to take the lead, and conduct the enterprise in person. He replied: "You have seen that the two events that I predicted have drawn upon me the ill will of a great number. I am young — I am no warrior — choose an older and more experienced man than I to lead the braves to battle. I will stay here; leave me to my dreams and my drum." The deputies reported his response to their comrades; but the latter insisted anew that Tchatka be of the company. A new deputation, composed this time of the nearest relatives of Istagon, sought Tchatka in the name of the whole camp, and announced to him that henceforward he should be their war-chief, and all promised him respect and obedience. After some hesitation, Tchatka surrendered to their entreaties, saying: "Friends and relations, I forget the

wrongs that I have endured. If my predictions are accomplished — if we find the camp of the Blackfeet which I have designated — if we tear from the enemy as many scalps as are on my drum, will you in future believe in my great medicine? If I declare to you that on the second day after our departure we shall detect the trail of the war-party that has passed near our camp — if we slay on the battle-field the great chief of the Blackfeet, and you see him as he is painted on my drum, without a scalp and without hands;— if all this be accomplished literally, will you in future respond to my call?" They all accepted his conditions.

Immediately Tchatka arose, intoned his war-song to the sound of his drum and to the acclamations of the whole tribe. He then joined his band, but without arms, not even a knife. He ordered them to fasten his drum on the back of a good horse, which he had led beside him by one of his faithful spies and runners, by the bridle.

In order to understand better the issue, it may not be irrelevant to say a few words on the Indian chiefs. Each nation is divided into different bands or tribes, and each tribe counts several villages. Every village has its chief, to whom they submit in proportion to the respect or terror which his personal qualities inspire. The power of a chief is sometimes merely nominal; sometimes, also, his authority is absolute, and his name, as well as his influence, extends beyond the limits of his own village, so that the whole tribe to which he belongs acknowledge him as their head. This was the case among the Assiniboins in the time of Tchatka. Courage, address and an enterprising spirit may elevate every warrior to the highest honors, especially if his father or an uncle enjoyed the dignity of chief before him, and he has a numerous family ready to maintain his authority and avenge his quarrels. Yet when the seniors and warriors have installed him with all the requisite ceremonies, it must not be supposed that he, on this account, arrogates to himself the least exterior appearance of rank or dignity. He is too well aware that his rank hangs by a frail thread, which

may quite easily be broken. He must gain the confidence of his uncertain subjects, or retain them by fear. A great many families in the village are better off than the chief;—dress better, are richer in arms, horses and other possessions. Like the ancient German chiefs, he gains the confidence and attachment of his soldiers, first by his bravery, more frequently by presents, which only serve to impoverish him the more. If a chief does not succeed in gaining the love of his subjects, they will despise his authority and quit him at the slightest opposition on his part; for the customs of the Indians admit no conditions by which they may enforce respect from their subjects.

It rarely happens, among the Western tribes, that a chief attains great power, unless he is at the head of a numerous family. I have sometimes seen whole villages composed of the descendants and relatives of the chief. This kind of nomadic community has a certain patriarchal character, and is generally the best regulated and the most pacific. The chief is less a master than a father, who reigns in a numerous household by the wish to do all in his power to render all happy. It may be said in general of the Indian nations, that tribes little united with each other, rent even by discord and jealousy, can possess little power and exercise it less.

Let us return to Tchatka, the grand chief-elect of the principal band of the Assiniboins. He found himself in command of 400 warriors. They marched the rest of the night and during the whole of the next day, with the greatest precautions and in the best order, so as to prevent any surprise. Some scouts alone ran over and beat the surrounding country, leaving in their passage signals and rods planted in the earth, and inclined in such a manner as to indicate the route that the little army ought to follow. About evening they descried a thick wood on the border of a little stream, and there erected, hastily, a kind of parapet, or defense, with the dried branches and trunks of trees, and thus passed behind it a peaceful night. In the morning they found themselves in the midst of an innumerable herd of bisons, and stopped

some instants to renew their stock of provisions.<sup>9</sup> Toward nightfall a faithful scout returned and communicated secretly with Tchatka. After marching several miles farther, the chief, with the beating of his drum Wah-kon, collected all his warriors, and pointing with his finger to a high hill some miles distant, he informed them that there they would trace the war-party of the Blackfeet, of which he had dreamed before leaving the camp. Several horsemen set out without delay to reconnoitre the enemy. At the spot indicated they found the path tracked by nearly a hundred horses. All the warriors redoubled their zeal, ardor and confidence in their new chief. The two succeeding days offered nothing very singular. They again stopped in the evening of the fifth day, without discovering the smallest vestige of proximity to the hostile camp they sought. The watchful scouts were gone, during the day, in different directions, without bringing back the least news, except the one who had been in secret communication with Tchatka. Several of the most ancient of the warriors murmured boldly, saying, "that the day predicted by the chief, on which they would surely see the enemy, had passed."

But Tchatka silenced them all, replying to them: "You seem still to doubt my words — the time is not past! Rather say, the time is arrived. You appear still young in experience — and yet a great many winters are beginning to whiten your heads. Where do you think you will find the

<sup>9</sup> I have often spoken of the bisons, improperly called buffaloes, without mentioning the great use which the Indians make of this interesting animal. They supply almost all the necessaries of life. Their skins form lodges or dwellings, and serve as clothing, litters, bridles, and saddle coverings, vessels to hold water, boats to cross lakes and rivers; with the hair, the Indians make their cordage; with the sinews, bow-strings and thread for clothes, as well as glue; the shoulder-blade is spade and pickaxe. The bison is their daily bread, their chief food. The dung of the animal, called *bois-de-vache*, furnishes abundant fuel. Last year 100,000 buffalo skins were sent from the desert to the warehouses of St. Louis. With the proceeds the Indians obtain arms and all they need—*Author's Note.*

lodges of your enemies? Is it in the open plain, or on the summit of an elevation? With a single glance of the eye we perceive all that is there, and is it there you pretend to discover them; and that, too, in a moment in which those who should protect their wives and children are afar? The bear and the jaguar hide their little ones in their dens, or in the depth of impenetrable forests; the wolf hides them in a hole; the goat and the deer cover them with hay. When you hunt the deer, do you not peep through the trees and the briars? In the fox and badger hunt, you seek their lairs. Let some one go and examine the little point of forest near the large rock, at the end of the plain in which we are."

Instantly, several of the most courageous and the most experienced in the stratagems of warfare were sent to the discovery. Favored by the night, and with all possible precautions, they entered the little wood, and made all their observations without being perceived. In the silence of midnight, they reported their news to Tchatka and his companions—"that they discovered the Blackfoot encampment in the place indicated by the chief; that the lodges were occupied solely by old men, women and children; that they could not hear the voices of any youth; and that all the horses were gone." This account filled these barbarous hearts with joy. The rest of the night was passed in songs and dances to the sound of the great drum, in juggleries and invocations to the manitous who had inspired Tchatka during his five days and five nights of dreams, and which had conducted his spirit into the regions of souls.

At the break of day the 400 Assiniboin warriors surrounded the thirty feeble wigwams of the Blackfeet. The cry of war and of vengeance, which they shouted simultaneously, like so many bloodthirsty furies, awakened and filled with dreadful fear those unhappy mothers and children left unprotected there. In accordance with their expectations, the Assiniboins found few men in the camp; all had gone with the war-party of which I have made mention. The small number of Blackfoot youth defended themselves

with desperate bravery; but they could not long resist so many enemies. The combat was short; the carnage bloody and hideous. Old men, women and children fell an easy prey to the cruel Assiniboins. Only two young Blackfeet escaped this shocking butchery. An Assiniboin who participated in the combat gave the recital of it to Mr. Denig, and declared that with his own hand he had killed fourteen children and three women. Mr. Denig asked him if he had killed them all with arrows. "Some of them," answered he; "but failing in arrows, I had recourse to the tomahawk and the dagger." He added, at the same time, that they tore from the arms of their mothers and took with them a great number of little children, and that on their way, amid their songs and the scalp-dances, they amused themselves with flaying them alive and running pointed sticks through their bodies, in order to roast them alive before the fire. The piercing shrieks of these little creatures fell upon the ear of these barbarians, amid their inhuman orgies, like the sweetest and most delightful melody. All that a pitiless and savage heart could invent of torture was put in practice on this occasion. The Assiniboins declare that they satiated themselves with cruelty, to satisfy the manes of their deceased parents and kindred, and their implacable and long-wished-for vengeance against the greatest of their enemies, the Blackfeet. The number of scalps taken surpassed greatly the number of heads painted on the drum.

When returning to their own grounds, at the first encampment which they made, one of the warriors remarked, and loud enough for Tchatka's ear, "that the Blackfoot chief had neither been seen nor slain." The chief replied: "Our work is not yet finished; we will therefore have another encounter before repairing to our homes. The Blackfoot chief shall die! I saw him scalped in my dream: such he was painted on the drum by the manitous. His scalp shall be taken from him with his own knife."

A gentle shower fell during the night; a heavy fog obscured the sky during the morning, which obliged the whole



company of warriors to remain together, in order not to lose their way. After some hours' march, the sound of a gun discharged in front of the line informed those who brought up the rear that an attack had commenced. Every one pressed forward to join the combatants. It was a rencontre with a troop of twenty or thirty Blackfeet that the fog had separated from their companions. Notwithstanding all the manœuvres of Tchatka to shelter himself from danger, he found himself enveloped in the midst of the fight, ignorant which way to turn. The Blackfeet defended themselves courageously, but they were forced to yield to the superior number of adversaries. Several escaped by means of the fog, which covered them from view.

In the heat of the engagement, Tchatka's horse was killed under him; the horseman and his steed rolled in the dust. At the same instant a Blackfoot, of lofty stature and prodigious strength, hurled his lance at him, which only grazed the head of his enemy, and struck deep, quivering in the earth. Then he attacked him, knife in hand. Tchatka rose rapidly from his fall, and, coward as he was, in self-defense he displayed skill and strength. He seized the arm of his terrible adversary, and used every effort to wrest the knife. As the combat in front of the line had ceased, the Assiniboins, perceiving the absence of their chief, returned to look for him. They found him prostrate, and still combating with his powerful enemy. The Blackfoot, now disengaged, raised his arm to plunge his knife into the heart of Tchatka, when he received the blow of a tomahawk on his skull, which stretched him without consciousness beside his vanquished adversary. The latter, in his turn, seized the murderous instrument and finished the Blackfoot. On rising he shouted: "Friends, behold the chief of the Blackfeet, for his medal reveals and proclaims him! I hold in my hand the knife of Mâtta Zia (Bear's Foot), whose mighty deeds you know, and who has been, during many years, the terror of our nation." With the same blood-stained knife he scalped him and cut off his two hands, in order to accom-

plish the last point of his great prophecy, which will be repeated from father to son among the Assiniboins, to the last generation. On this occasion Tchatka received the third name, Minàyougha, or Knifeholder.

The whole tribe gave themselves up to a delirium of joy, which I could not describe, when the expedition returned with so many trophies gained from their most cruel enemies. The dances and incantations to the sound of the mysterious drum, and the public rejoicing which commonly accompany the scalps, were renewed a hundred times during the space of a single moon. The glory of Tchatka and his manitous was chanted in the whole camp. They announced him, with the highest acclamations, the Minàyougha and the Wah-kon-Tangka *par excellence*, whom none could resist. He lost none of the advantages which he had gained in public opinion by his profound and cruel stratagem. The whole command of the tribe was intrusted to him, and never chief among the Assiniboins attracted so much respect and fear.

Like a true bashaw, or modern Mormon, he selected three wives at once, without even consulting them. Two of these had been already betrothed to two young and very influential warriors. Notwithstanding their protest, the parents believed themselves honored in being allied to the family of the great chief, by the choice which he made of their daughters, and they were conducted to the lodge of Tchtaka. To maintain peace in his new household, and put the discontented in good humor, by destroying every hope, he gave orders to one of his partisans to poison, in secret, his two competitors. The better to shield himself from all suspicion, he set off in the chase. On his return, they gave him the news of their death. He contented himself by saying "that those who were capable of contradicting him in the smallest trifles, or who presumed to despise his power, were in imminent danger of death."

In this manner the principal accomplice associated with Tchatka, for executing his numerous poisonings, fulfilled his mandates. We shall say a word concerning the relations in

which these two detestable men stood. The hidden abettor was a near relative of the chief. He was about five feet in height, and of a robust and vigorous frame. He had lost an eye in a quarrel with a young man; over the other hung a great flap of flesh, beginning from the middle of his forehead, and extending as far as his under jaw. He had a flat nose, thick lips, a large, gaping mouth, which displayed two rows of oval teeth, as white as ivory. He concealed lightly his ugly frontispiece under tufts of thick, filthy black hair, matted together with gum and resin, mingled with vermilion. For several years, when he visited Fort Union, at the mouth of the Yellowstone, he was the terror of all the children, for it was impossible to meet a human face more frightful and more loathsome. Undoubtedly the marks of contempt that he everywhere received, on account of his exterior, excited in him the inveterate hatred that he bore to his race. The artful Tchatka, perceiving some advantages that he might draw from a man of this nature in the execution of his designs, had long before taken him as associate. He always treated him with kindness, made him presents, sought his confidence on various occasions and flattered his vicious inclinations. He could, in consequence, always rely upon this man, when there was occasion to injure his equals, and the poison had been administered so adroitly to the two young warriors that neither he nor Tchatka were suspected. On the contrary, in the opinion of the whole tribe, a new gem had been added to the brilliant reputation of Wah-kon-Tangka, who could, when distant or near, control the lives of his subjects.

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During the first years that Tchatka found himself at the head of his tribe, success very generally crowned all his undertakings, and his renown passed into all the neighboring tribes. However, it sometimes happened that his warriors were beaten. On such occasions he was always the first to take flight, giving for excuse to his comrades that

his great medicine (his drum) carried him away in spite of himself. It was most prudent to credit his word, for should any one be so rash as to doubt, he would be scarcely sure of escaping the sudden and mysterious death which seemed promptly to attack all his enemies in his own camp.

In 1830, after having predicted success, he experienced his first great defeat, on the part of the Blackfeet, leaving on the plain beyond sixty warriors slain and nearly an equal number wounded. From this moment dates the commencement of his fall; the prestige which hitherto surrounded his name and his deeds began to fail. About this time the fur company had just provisioned Fort Union at the place where it stands to-day. It had been supplied with two years' stock of goods for trade with the nations of the Upper Missouri.

In hopes of repairing, in some manner, the great loss that he had just undergone, to arouse the dejected courage of his soldiers, to "cover the dead"—that is to say, to put an end to the mourning in the families which had lost near kindred in the last battle, Tchatka promised them boldly "that he would render them all rich, and would load them with an abundance of spoils, so that all the horses of the tribe would not be able to carry them. He had been favored with a new dream—a dream which will not deceive them, provided they enter into his designs, and that they be faithful in the execution of his orders." He had formed the project of seizing Fort Union, with a band of 200 select warriors. Tchatka presented himself there. He affected a singular friendship for the whites. He attempted to make the superintendent, Mr. M [cKenzie], believe that he was *en route*, with his band, for the country of the Minnetaroes [or Grosventres] of [the] Missouri, their enemies; that they had need of some munitions of war; and that they intended continuing on their way at daybreak. Hospitality was kindly accorded to them. The chief played his part so well, that the ordinary precaution of disarming guests, and putting their weapons under lock and key, was neglected on this occasion. The plan that Tchatka had developed to his

warriors was to retire to the different chambers of the fort, and to massacre, during their sleep, at a given signal, all those who occupied them. By a happy incident, some days previous to this enterprise, all the Canadian employees at the fort, to the number of about eighty, had come to Fort Union for goods to trade with the Crows and the Blackfeet. Notwithstanding this strong reinforcement, the savages might have succeeded in their design had not a still more favorable happening brought their project to light. An Assiniboin had a sister married to one of the merchants from the North. Desirous of saving the life of his sister, and of sheltering her in the *mêlée* which was to take place, he communicated to her, under the strictest secrecy, the intentions of the chief, inviting her to come and pass the night in his room, that he might the better protect her. The woman promised to follow him; but went immediately to warn her husband against the danger which menaced him as well as all the whites at the fort. The husband announced the plot to the superintendent and to all the gentlemen in charge.

The employees, one after the other, were called, without arousing the least suspicion. They quitted their apartments quietly, were armed in the twinkling of an eye, took possession of the two bastions and of all the important points of the fort. When all the precautions were taken, Tchatka and the principal braves of his band were invited to repair to the parlor of the commandant, who openly reproached them with their black treachery. Giving no heed to their protestations, he gave them their choice, either to quit the fort without blows, or to be chased from it by the big guns (cannon), which were leveled at them. Tchatka accepted the former without hesitation, and instantly withdrew, confused and vexed at having lost so fine an opportunity of enriching himself and his tribe, at having failed in his promise and in the accomplishment of his pretended dream.

Tchatka had exhausted all his medicine sack, or provision of poisons. His former northern friends had refused to furnish him any more. He was absolutely determined on

procuring some, for poison was his only means of getting rid of those who opposed his ambition or contradicted him in his plans. He performed his diabolical deeds with such skill and secrecy, that the Indians were firmly persuaded that their chief had only to will it, and they would die. Hence their abject submission to his every and least caprice. This people, formerly free as air, was reduced, during a succession of years, to the condition of slaves to the most cowardly and pitiless tyrant.

In the course of the year 1836 Tchatka presented himself again at Fort Union, at the head of a band of hunters. They went there to sell their peltry—viz., buffalo-ropes, beaver skins, and the fur of badgers, foxes, bears, deer, goats and bighorn; in a word, the fruits of their hunting excursions, in exchange for tobacco, ornaments, blankets, guns, ammunition, knives, daggers and lances. A large portion of the peltry belonged to Tchatka. He offered them to a merchant for a very small quantity of tobacco, telling him, secretly, "that he was in absolute want of poison, whatever it might cost," and begging him to procure a large amount; "without which, the charm which surrounded him among his people would abandon him hopelessly." His proposition was heard with great horror. He only received in reply severe representations on the baseness of his conduct and on his infamous and frightful proceedings. But these were ineffectual on his perverted heart, hardened by an astonishing succession of unheard-of crimes and atrocities. He left the fort with evident tokens of discontent at having been frustrated in his attempt.

During the two years which succeeded, Tchatka conducted several war-parties, sometimes with success and sometimes with reverses. It was perceptible that his years were advancing; that his manitous were less faithful than formerly; that his predictions were no longer realized; that those who criticised his arrangements lived notwithstanding. Several even dared to defy his power.

In the spring of 1838 [1837], the smallpox (it was not well known how) was communicated to the Indian tribes in [on the] Upper Missouri. The ravages of this disease entirely changed the position which Tchatka had hitherto held among the Indians. The fine camp of Tchatka, composed of 1,200 warriors, was reduced, in this single season, to eighty men capable of bearing arms. Other tribes experienced trials still more severe. This scourge counted more than 10,000 victims among the Crows and the Blackfeet; the Minnetarees were reduced from 1,000 to 500; the Mandans, the noblest among the races in the upper Missouri, counting 600 warriors before the epidemic, were reduced to thirty-two, others say to nineteen only! A great number committed suicide, in despair; some with their lances and other warlike instruments, but the greater part by throwing themselves from a high rock which overlooks the Missouri.

In the course of the following year, Tchatka formed the design of seizing, by stratagem, the large village of the Mandans,<sup>10</sup> and of taking all the horses and effects which they could find in it.

The village of the Mandans was then permanent, and in the neighborhood of the present site of Fort Clark. About five miles lower dwelt the Aricaras, new allies and friends of the Mandans, who numbered about 500 warriors and had escaped the contagion, because they were absent in the hunting grounds when the scourge broke out. The Aricaras

<sup>10</sup> I have mentioned the Mandans, and some of their traditions, in several of my letters. Their Indian name is See-pohs-ka-nu-ma-ka-kee, which signifies a partridge. They have a remarkable tradition concerning the deluge. On a high hill existing in their territory, they say that the big canoe (the ark) rested. Every year, when the willow buds, they celebrate this event by grand festivals and noisy ceremonies. Their tradition says that the branch brought back to the great canoe by the bird was a willow branch, full of leaves. The bird they allude to was the dove, and it is forbidden, in their religious code, to kill it.—*Author's Note.*— [See Catlin, vol. I, p. 158.]

belonged in ancient times to the Pawnee nation, on the Nebraska or Platte river.

Tchatka was ignorant of the circumstances of the position of the Aricaras, in respect to the Mandans, and had scarcely given a thought to the proximity of the two tribes. Having collected the sad remnant of his warriors, he communicated to them the design he had formed. "We will go," said he, "to offer the calumet of peace to the Mandans. They will accept it with joy," added he, "for they are feeble, and have the hope of finding in us a protection against the Sioux, their most furious enemies. As soon as we are admitted in the village, under these appearances of friendship, we will scatter ourselves here and there throughout their lodges, then, by a simultaneous movement, we will fall, with cutlass and dagger, on all that remain of the Mandans. They cannot escape us. All that they possess will belong to us." The plan appeared practicable to them. Desiring to do something which might ameliorate their condition, the Assiniboins accepted heartily the proposition of their chief.

The secret of this expedition was confided to no one. They passed by Fort Union, so as to procure powder, as well as the balls necessary, and a few pounds of tobacco, "wherewith to smoke peace." Arrived in sight of the village, they stopped and made signals of friendship to the Mandans, requesting them to come and join them. Tchatka placed himself on a high hill, and beating his drum, he chanted his invocations to his manitous. He deputed twelve men of his tribe, bearing a little flag and the calumet of peace, with orders to smoke it when half way between him and the village. Through good fortune for the Mandans, some Aricaras, friends and allies, when returning from the chase, had stopped among them. Of all the nations of the upper Missouri, the Aricaras are considered the most deceitful and treacherous. Tchatka, without suspecting it, found himself taken in his own nets. He came to overthrow the little Mandan tribe, and then return laden



with booty and with scalps. He fell into the snare which he had spread for others, and found himself at the mercy of worthy competitors.

After the Assiniboin deputies had smoked the calumet with the Mandans, the Aricaras set forth with all haste to go and announce to their chiefs this sudden and unforeseen reconciliation. The occasion was very favorable. Immediately the war-whoop resounded throughout the camp of the Aricaras. A few moments sufficed to saddle their horses and arm themselves. They had evidently a great advantage over their adversaries. Hidden by a headland of the forest, in the low valley, or bottom of the Missouri, they filed silently, and without being perceived, toward the village of the Mandans.

The ceremony of smoking the calumet of peace is ordinarily prolonged during several hours. First takes place a friendly interchange of news, a conversation in which each party boasts his lofty deeds, or the exploits [coups] he has achieved over his enemies, an exposition which is intended to excite the admiration of the opposite party. They then pass to speeches, in which the points in question are to be discussed. If the calumet is accepted, and passes from mouth to mouth, the resolutions are ratified and peace is concluded.

They were at this point, and were disposing themselves to enter the village together, when suddenly the Aricaras presented themselves and shouted their war-cry. At the first discharge of guns and arrows, the twelve Assiniboin deputies lost their lives. Their scalps were at once taken off and their bodies horribly mutilated. It was the affair of a moment. About 300 Aricaras, shouting cries of victory, mingled with imprecations, directed their steps toward the hill, in order to continue the massacre of the Assiniboins. At the first signal of attack, Tchatka sprang to his horse and fled. The greater part of the Assiniboins, being on foot, were easily overtaken by their enemies on horseback, and soon fell under the blows of the latter. Several

among them, however, defended themselves like braves. Notwithstanding their great inferiority in number, they killed three Aricaras; and, although wounded, were so happy as to gain the forest, and escape the slaughter.

After the battle, the corpses of fifty-three Assiniboins remained stretched on the plain, a prey for vultures and wolves. But where is their leader, the great chief of the Assiniboins? Where was he during the fight? This famous Tchatka, this Wah-kon-Tangka, this Minàyougha, this hero of the great drum, had been the first to fly on his fleet horse. But the Aricaras had fresher animals, and pressed on in hot pursuit. As they gained on him they fired repeatedly, and at last killed his horse beneath him. Tchatka rose instantly. The forest is before him; if he can reach it, there is yet a shadow of hope. He spares no effort; fear lends him wings; old as he is, he takes the start and gains the goal before his most impetuous enemies in the pursuit can reach him. Some of his own soldiers, witnesses of this famous running match, conferred on him the name of Ta-to-kah-nan, or the wild goat,<sup>11</sup> the fleetest animal of our plains.

Tchatka rejoined his soldiers in the forest. Thirty only had escaped the tomahawk and scalping-knife of the Aricaras; the greater number were wounded, and some of them mortally. They were the feeble remains, the last men of a band of 1,200 warriors. Tchatka hung his head, and hardly dared to look at them. All his nation had disappeared. Two of his sons had fallen in this last combat. His *tchant-cheega-kabo*, or great drum, was in the hands of his enemies; his favorite horse killed. He had no longer a band, upon whom he could exert his influence, and accomplish his execrable intentions of poisoning.

After this defeat, the band of Tchatka having become too reduced to form a camp, was united to the "Gens du nord," or Northern People, as they termed them; that is, to

<sup>11</sup> Fr. Cabri; antelope.

another great branch of the Assiniboins. From that time Tchatka no longer mingled with public affairs. However, he always continued to pass for a great medicine man, and was sometimes consulted, particularly on great and dangerous occasions. He never ceased, until his death, to inspire all who approached him with a certain respect, mingled with fear and terror.

"As we live, so we die," says the proverb. The end of this wicked chief was not less remarkable than his whole life. What follows I have from an eye-witness. I cite the authority of Mr. Denig, an intimate friend and a man of high probity, from whom I have received all the information that I have offered you concerning the Assiniboins, and who resided among them during twenty-two years.

In the autumn of 1843, the "Northern People" repaired to Fort Union to make exchanges in trade with their peltry. The first who presented himself at the entrance of the fort, to shake hands with Mr. Denig, was old Tchatka. "Brother," said he laughing, "I came to the fort to die among the whites!" Mr. Denig attaching no importance to these words, the aged man repeated them to him anew. "Did you understand what I said? This is my last visit to the fort. I shall die here!" Mr. Denig then inquired concerning the health of Tchatka — whether he felt ill. He spoke of it to other Indians, but all assured him that Tchatka was in good health as usual; they added, however, that before quitting the village he had predicted to them "that his last hour was approaching, and that before the next sunset his spirit would be in the region of souls." The gentlemen of the fort, informed of this news, ordered Tchatka to be called, and questioned him concerning his strange declaration. They also feared some artifice on his part, and recalled the tricks, deceits and cruelties that he had practiced on his tribe, as well as his black treason and his odious plots against the occupants of the fort in 1831. He declared positively to these gentlemen that he was quite well; that he experienced no kind of indisposition. He

added: "I repeat to you, my hour is come — my manitous call me — I have seen them in my dream — I must depart! Yes, to-morrow my spirit will take flight into the land of ghosts!" In the evening he took a good supper, and slept peacefully after, while the other Indians amused themselves during the whole night. On the morrow, Tchatka presented himself once more at the office of Mr. Denig, and had a slight spitting of blood. They tried to make him take some remedy, but he refused, saying: "All is useless — henceforth life is insupportable to me — I will and I must die — I have told you so." A little time after, he left the fort with the other Indians, and went to the margin of the river. He soon had a second attack, more violent than the first. They placed him on a sleigh, intending to transport him to the Indian camp, but he died on the way, in the most terrible convulsions. It was, according to all appearances, the same "grand medicine" which he had administered on a great number of occasions to his unfortunate victims, during his sad and long administration as chief, that at last terminated his own career.

The lifeless body of this too famous chief was carried in great ceremony into the Indian village, twenty-two miles distant from the fort. The whole tribe assisted at his obsequies. The corpse, after being painted, ornamented with their richest decorations, and wrapped in a scarlet-colored blanket and a beautiful buffalo-robe embroidered with porcupine<sup>12</sup> quills, was at last elevated and fastened between two branches of a large tree, amid the tears, cries and lamentations of the multitude.

Such was the ascendancy that his name and deeds exerted over the minds of the whole Assiniboin tribe, that the place where his mortal remains repose is at the present day an object of the highest veneration. The Assiniboins never pronounce the name of Tchatka but with respect. They

<sup>12</sup> *En porc-epic* is the term of the *voyageurs*. The long quills of the animal resemble those of a bird, and are stripped off by the women in threads, for embroidering.—*Author's Note.*

believe that his shade guards the sacred tree; that he has power to procure them abundance of buffalo and other animals, or to drive the animals from the country. Hence, whenever they pass, they offer sacrifices and oblations; they present the calumet to the tutelary spirits and manes of Tchatka. He is, according to their calendar, the Wah-kon-Tangka *par excellence*, the greatest man or genius that ever visited their nation.

The Assiniboin never bury their dead. They bind the bodies with thongs of rawhide between the branches of large trees, and more frequently place them on scaffolds, to protect them from the wolves and other wild animals. They are higher than a man can reach. The feet are always turned to the west. There they are left to decay. When the scaffolds or the trees to which the dead are attached fall, through old age, the relatives bury all the other bones, and place the skulls in a circle in the plain, with the faces turned toward the centre. They preserve these with care, and consider them objects of religious veneration. You will generally find there several bison skulls. In the centre stands the medicine pole, about twenty feet high, to which Wah-kons are hung, to guard and protect the sacred deposit. The Indians call the cemetery the *village of the dead*. They visit it at certain seasons of the year, to converse affectionately with their deceased relatives and friends, and always leave some present.

The Assiniboin give their name to the Assiniboin River, the great tributary of the Red River of the North, in the English Hudson Bay Company's territory. The word Assiniboin signifies *stone-cooking people*. This tribe had, in former times, for want of better utensils, the custom of boiling their meat in holes dug in the ground and lined with raw skins. The water and the meat were put together in these holes; then large red-hot stones were cast in until the meat was boiled. This custom is now almost obsolete, since they get pots from the whites. The original mode is used, however, on great occasions or medicine-feasts. The

Assiniboin language is a dialect of the Dacotah or Sioux. They separated from this great nation for a trifle — a quarrel between two women, wives of the great chiefs. A buffalo had been found by these two women; each of them persisted in having the whole heart of the animal; from words they came to fisticuffs; and in their rage they used their nails and teeth. The two great chiefs had the folly to take part with their better-halves in the quarrel, and separated in lasting discontent. From that epoch the two tribes have been at war.

In this last short recital, I furnish your poets with materials for a new Iliad. The two great chiefs possessed, without doubt, names more sonorous than those of Achilles and Agamemnon. I leave you to continue the similitude.

## CHAPTER XI.

### LOUISE SIGHOUIN, AN INDIAN WOMAN OF THE CŒUR D'ALÈNE TRIBE.

Sighouin's baptism — Devotes herself to the service of the missionaries — Combats the medicine men — Diabolical superstitions — A model wife and mother — The communion garment — Charity to the sick — Tale of an orphan — Devotion to the cross — Fear of spectres — Rebukes depravity — Death and burial — Mourning of the tribe — Testimony of her husband.

#### *Childhood and Baptism.*

**L**OUISE SIGHOUIN of the tribe of Skizoumish [Skits-uish] or Cœur d'Alènes, daughter of the chief of the tribe, was endowed with the noblest qualities of mind and heart, which won her the esteem and respect not only of all her nation, but also of the neighboring tribes and of all whites who had an opportunity of knowing her. A poor and humble child, but rich in virtue and exalted in grace, Louise flowered in the desert like a lily amid thorns. She was an oasis amid a sterile waste; she was a light amid the shades of death. Like the poor woman in the gospel, she had sought and found the lost treasure, and she carefully preserved it all the days of her life to her latest breath.

Before her baptism, even, she was remarkable for her rare modesty and reserve, great gentleness, and a solid judgment. Her words were everywhere listened to with admiration and pleasure, and her company sought in all families.

In October, 1841, a new era was preparing for her. In the course of the missions which I was then giving in the upper parts of the Rocky Mountains, I met for the first time three families of Cœur d'Alènes, returning from the

bison hunt on the plains of the upper Missouri. They joined my little band, and we traveled together. I found them mild, affable, polite in disposition, and above all very eager for the word of God. For several consecutive days I conversed with them on different points of faith and on the Church. After an instruction on the importance and necessity of baptism, they earnestly implored me to grant that favor to three of their little children. They were the first fruits of this tribe. When these families parted with us, all testified the most lively gratitude for what they had heard and learned with happiness: they assured me that the whole tribe would willingly accept the beautiful word of the Great Spirit, which I had announced to them, and they gave me a most pressing invitation to visit them at the earliest moment in order to instruct them.

Six months after, in April, 1842, I proceeded to their quarters. My good Cœur d'Alènes, who had been my traveling companions, had admirably prepared the way for my visit, and infused into all their countrymen an eager desire to hear the good tidings of the gospel. In consequence of the account which they gave, the chiefs had already hastened to depute to St. Mary's Mission several young men, selected from the most intelligent, in order to ask for missionaries to instruct them in the holy truths of religion.

The tidings of my coming soon spread through all the country. The Indians were to be seen flocking from all sides, through forest and plain, by the rivers and the great lake, to meet me and hear the law of God from the very lips of a Black-robe. My visit, consequently, had the most beneficial results. I baptized all the little children in the tribe and a good number of adults, who had hastened with holy avidity to come and receive the mustard seed mentioned in the gospel.

Among these was good Louise Sighouin. Enlightened by a special grace, and wishing to turn to the glory of God and the good of souls the rank which she occupied and the



universal esteem she had acquired in the whole tribe, she used all her influence to induce a great number of families to follow her to the rendezvous, which was the great Lake Cœur d'Alène, in order to hear there the good and consoling word of the gospel. From the very first she showed the greatest avidity for it; at all times was she most assiduous at the instructions of the missionary. Aided by his advice and counsels, she was seen advancing with a sure and rapid step, zealously and fervently in the path that was later to lead her to Christian perfection. Regenerated in the holy waters of baptism, where she received the name of Louise, she seemed to have reached the summit of her desires, and to think only of wearing unsullied the white robe which she had received, of keeping well trimmed on earth the flaming light that she had held in her hands, and of which from that moment she had seemed to realize and comprehend the sublime significance; in fine, of showing herself faithful and grateful to God for the great favors which he had deigned to grant to her.

Soon after this she resolved to devote herself entirely to the service of the missionaries who had come to labor in the territory of the Cœur d'Alènes. With this view she generously renounced her native spot, the guidance of her father, the society of her relatives and acquaintances, to be with the missionaries at the first, and then at the second mission station established in those countries. "I will follow the Black-robés," she often said, "to the end of the world, for fear that death should surprise and strike me far from them, and thus deprive me of the help of the holy sacraments and the salutary counsels of the Fathers. I wish to profit by their presence and their instructions to learn to know the Great Spirit well, to serve him faithfully, and to love him with all my heart."

This desire, or rather this ardent thirst to hear the word of Eternal Life, never for a moment diminished in Louise. Sooner than be wanting to the fidelity of her promises and her pious resolutions, she subjected herself, with unlimited

confidence in God and with a holy ardor, to the severest trials and greatest sacrifices. From the time of her conversion, during the whole residue of her life, she lived by choice and predilection in great poverty and in privations of every kind, never seeking to diminish them by the assistance of others, and without ever letting the slightest murmur escape her. As St. Paul lays it down, she seemed to profess "to know only Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

The zeal and fervor in the service of God, which she manifested immediately after her baptism, were the unfailing tokens of a predestined soul, filled with extraordinary gifts from heaven. These privileged favors were manifested in all their light by her admirable gentleness, which the greatest opposition could not disturb, by her patience under every trial, by her truly angelic modesty, by her fervent and sustained piety. She seemed, as it were, absorbed in prayer, and nothing apparently could then distract her thoughts. Such was her avidity, her holy ardor, to hear the word of God, that every time a new religious truth broke in its effulgence on her mind, a visible joy overspread her countenance and her whole person: to her it was the precious discovery of a hidden treasure, a living fountain, to quench her thirst of heavenly truths, a bread of life giving her new vigor. Each time she sought to share her happiness, this bread, this fountain, this treasure, with all who were like her hungering for the divine word.

An ardent and an untiring zeal for the salvation of souls seemed ever to occupy her thoughts. She employed all her leisure moments in the conversion and instruction of numerous pagans in her village. Neither the opposition which she encountered, nor the obstacles which she met, nor the insults which she received, nor the dangers to which she exposed herself, naught could divert her from the holy work which she had resolved to accomplish. Thus each day was marked by some new triumph, by some new increase of the number of the children of God or of the catechumens.

Louise boldly attacked face to face the most formidable and dangerous adversaries of religion: the ministers of Satan himself, the sorcerers or jugglers, commonly called among the Indians *medicine men*, who by their impostures and diabolical arts always impose on the simple and ignorant. They are the most deadly enemies whom the missionaries encounter, and must ever combat in the bosom of the Indian tribes. They never cease by tricks and calumnies and lies to throw obstacles in the way of the missionary and fetter the progress of religion. The presence of the priest is the more odious to them as they know that their private interest, their wealth, is at stake, and that their illicit gains will vanish and cease on the manifestation of religious truths. *Inde iræ!* Hence, their hatred and resentment; hence, too, the incessant war they wage on the ministers of the true faith, and the persecutions they incessantly excite against them, whenever they can exercise sufficient influence over their adherents. And on what a people did they exercise their influence, before the arrival of our missionaries in their country!

Father Point, a missionary among the Cœur d'Alènes from 1842 to 1846, wrote of them as follows, in a letter printed in 1848. These details prove the civilizing tendency and power of religion. ✓

“Not a quarter of a century since, the Cœur d'Alènes were so hard-hearted, that to paint them to the life, the common sense of their first visitors found no expression more just than the singular name which they still bear; minds so limited, that while rendering divine worship to all the animals that they knew, they had no idea of the true God, nor of their soul, nor consequently of a future life; in fine, a race of men so degraded, that of the natural law, there survived among them only two or three very obscure notions, which few, very few, attempted to reduce to practice. Yet it must be said to the credit of the tribe, that there were always in their midst elect souls, who never bent the knee to Baal. I know some, who from the very

day when the true God was preached to them, never had to reproach themselves with the shadow of an infidelity."

Among these the most remarkable was our heroine, Louise. Rising above all human respect, she always followed the advice of the missionary. As long as the wily medicine men existed, she untiringly opposed and exposed them. She boldly entered their lodges, and with or without their leave, spoke to them of the great truths of religion, alone true and divine, exhorting them to follow it, in order to avoid the terrible judgments of God, hell with its frightful torments. She did this with such energetic fortitude, and such peremptory arguments, that their obstinacy was shaken and their obduracy softened.

Endowed with a heart and a courage above her sex, Louise feared neither the sneers nor the threats of these deceitful and embittered charlatans. Accordingly, the Almighty blessed the efforts of this "valiant woman" of the wilderness, and always crowned them with such extraordinary success, that in a short time the medicine men and their silly juggleries fell into complete contempt. "In fine," wrote Father Point again, "from Christmas to Candlemas, the missionary's fire was kept up with all that remained of the ancient 'medicine.'" It was a beautiful sight to behold the principal supporters of it, with their own hands destroy the wretched instruments which hell had employed, to deceive their ignorance or give credit to their impostures. And in the long winter evenings, how many birds' feathers, wolves' tails, feet of hinds, hoofs of deers, bits of cloth, wooden images and other superstitious objects were sacrificed!

Among Louise's chief conquests, they especially mention the conversion of Nátatken, one of the principal leaders of the idolatrous sect. He resisted stubbornly; but at last, touched by the good example of all the converts, and above all, by the exemplary life of Louise's family, with which he was connected by blood, he yielded to the earnest exhortations, the sweet and persuasive words of the young girl,

and opening his heart to the grace of our Lord after having been long a rebel, he came like a timid lamb to the humble fold of the Good Shepherd. Louise devoted herself with the utmost care to the instruction of the new catechumen, and formed him to a kind of apostolic work in his tribe. Till then a great master of Indian sorcery, he listened to and followed her wise counsels and instructions with the docility of a child; and after all the necessary trials, Louise led him, humble and contrite, with his wife and children, to the feet of the priest, to receive the sacrament of regeneration. Nâtatken received the name of Isidore. He soon became very zealous and very fervent. Endowed with native eloquence, he unceasingly exhorted his companions to convert and persevere in the faith, and in the holy practices which religion imposes on her children. He gave the example himself. He remained faithful to the grace of the Lord till his death, which was as edifying as consoling.

Emotestsulem, one of the great chiefs of the tribe, after having been baptized under the name of Peter Ignatius, had unfortunately relapsed into gambling, the ordinary forerunner of apostasy among the Indians. As soon as Louise heard this sad news, although she was at a distance of two days' march, she resolved to go to his town and find him so as to endeavor to bring him back to his duties. She set before his eyes the scandal which his conduct occasioned in the tribe, the injustice of his course, and the danger to which he exposed his faith. She spoke to him with energy. Such was the authority that Louise had acquired by her great charity and exemplary life, such was the respect which she commanded from all, that the great chief hearkened to her with the submission of a child, and went to cast himself at the feet of the priest in the tribunal of penance, to repair the scandal and be reconciled to God.

These two incidents, the conversion of Nâtatken and that of Emotestsulem, will surprise all who know how reluctant the Indians, and especially their chiefs, are to receive correction, especially when it is administered by a woman.

Let us say a few words of the famous sect of jugglers or sorcerers, whom our modern spiritualists have begun to style mediums. This sect is spread over all the Indian tribes of both Americas, from the Esquimaux, who inhabit the Arctic regions, to the extremity of Patagonia.

All historians agree in saying, that the most perverse and wicked men in all the tribes are the medicine men. Before their conversion to the faith, as well as everywhere else among the Indian tribes, each Cœur d'Alène had his *manitou* (tutelary spirit or divinity). To this manitou the Indian addresses his prayer or supplication, and offers his sacrifices, when he is in any danger, sets out for war, or goes fishing or hunting, as well as in every other enterprise in which he is about to engage, in order to obtain success or some extraordinary favor. He believes that he can ask everything of his manitou, reasonable or unreasonable, good or bad. To obtain favors, he must be able to handle the bow and arrow, and although initiation to the manitou is considered as the most important act of life, the adept is required to submit to ceremonies and practices which are generally very difficult and often very painful. The young man after making profound incisions on the fleshy parts of the body, or after a rigorous fast, is supposed to discover in his dreams the form or resemblance under which the manitou manifests himself. During his whole life he is bound to bear the image or a mark of it; and on all occasions he must present his offerings and address his prayers to him. His talisman is the feather or beak of a bird, the claw or tooth of an animal, a root, a herb, a fruit, a scale, a stone, no matter what. He believes that this tutelary spirit will protect him against the evil genii, who to injure the children of earth excite the winds and waves, lightning, thunder and storm. This spirit protects him against the attacks of enemies and wild beasts, and in all diseases that come upon him.

If I mention these dangerous and diabolical superstitions, so profoundly rooted in the mind of the Indian, it is

to display more clearly the courage, firmness, patience and perseverance which Louise must have had to oppose them successfully and even overcome them. Louise prepared herself for the struggle by long prayers and frequent fasts, and fortified herself by her humility, by her fidelity to the grace of our Lord, who made use of her as a chosen instrument to crush the monstrous serpent beneath her feet, and expel him from her tribe. Nevertheless, the devil never sleeps, he is always sowing tares in the good field, as holy scripture tells us, he "goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." We must always fly to the "Watch and pray," for we perceive always that some trace of the old leaven remains.

As I have already remarked, Louise manifested an ardent desire and an active perseverance in instructing herself in all that pertained to the word of God and the holy practices of religion. She sought in the first place to enrich her fair soul with heavenly truths, and then with admirable zeal and charity she endeavored to relieve the missionary in his laborious toils and the continual fatigue he encountered, especially in instructing old people and children. Entirely wrapped up in her noble calling, she would go several times in the day to the priest, to set forth her doubts and ask an explanation of them, and light on some points either in the prayers or in the catechism, which she wished to fathom more deeply.

This constant assiduity and application to the study of heavenly things, soon rendered her capable of being the head teacher of the catechism, and enabled her to instruct the under teachers with great fruit. At every explanation and development which she received from the missionary, she would say ingenuously, "I thank the Great Spirit for the beautiful alms which he has deigned to bestow on me," and she felt herself bound to impart her knowledge to all the catechumens, to make them partakers in her happiness. She set the example to those good mothers, of whom Father Point speaks in his letter, who, not satisfied with giving their

children the food which they refused themselves, spent long evenings in breaking, not only to parents and friends, but also to strangers, eager to hear them, the bread of the divine word, gathered by them during the day. The missionary, sometimes present at the pious meetings of these good women, admired the spirit of God which animated them, and applied to them the promise of the prophet, "The Lord shall give the Word to them that preach good tidings with great power."—Ps. lxxvii. 12. The patience and constancy which Louise displayed in the office of catechist, deserve the highest eulogy; the salvation of souls was a work of predilection to her; the hours of the day seemed too short to satisfy her zeal, and she often consumed a good part of the night instructing her neighbor.

Amid all her occupations and exertions for the good of others, Louise never neglected the care and ordering of her own house. Her prayers, her good works, her words and her good example had drawn down the blessings of heaven on her poor and humble abode, and this model cabin, great by the virtues which it enshrined, shone with radiance amid all the other Indian lodges. Louise had comprehended at once and fully the whole extent of the duties of a good wife and mother, duties till then almost unknown to the Indians, among whom, from the moment of leaving childhood, each one becomes absolute master of himself and his actions. By her conduct beyond reproach, by her motherly vigilance over the behavior of her children, by the simple and persuasive gentleness with which she treated them on all occasions, Louise had inspired them with the most profound respect and entire confidence, and had so closely bound to her their tender hearts, that a desire manifested, or a single word from the lips of their good mother, was an absolute order, a law for them, which they accomplished in all its requirements with eagerness and joy.

Louise attended the divine offices with the greatest exactness. Although in delicate health and often sick, she never



failed to be present at all the religious ceremonies in use in the church; she attended mass, morning and evening prayers, the expositions and benedictions of the blessed sacrament, and all the other practices of devotion. Her modesty, her recollectedness, and her fervent prayers, always served as an edifying example to all present. She seemed at the summit of her happiness and joy, every time that she was permitted to approach the holy table; her preparation and thanksgiving often took whole days.

In catechising and in church Louise fulfilled all the duties of parents to their children. Sitting in their midst, she watched over their conduct and their innocent bearing. Rarely was she severe; when there was anything to reprehend, the correction was always made with a mother's tenderness and goodness, which won her the hearts not only of the children but also of their parents. She merited and received from all the tribe the beautiful name of *good grandmother*. Her counsels and corrections were always and by all received with respect, submission and gratitude; and the happy results were seen in a complete and blessed change of the whole tribe, thus augmenting joy and happiness in all hearts.

Louise, although the best instructed in the truths of religion, nevertheless came regularly to attend the catechetical instructions which the missionary was accustomed to give the children daily. She could be seen sitting or standing outside the half-opened door, regardless of the weather, heat or cold, rain or snow. She wished to gather all the important points of each instruction for her own spiritual good and that of others.

When there was question of admitting an old man, a boy or girl to partake of the sacraments, she prepared and instructed them for several days in her lodge, impressing them with the high importance of the grace which they were going to receive, and the happiness which they were going to enjoy. She then aided them with the greatest care

to examine their conscience. And that nothing should be lacking in the preparation, she took them one by one to the tribunal of penance, telling them: "Here, — kneel at the feet of the Father, who has the power to reconcile you to the Great Spirit. Say the *Confiteor* with a great sorrow for your offenses. Confess your sins with profound humility." She would then withdraw to a short distance to wait for them, and then lead them to the foot of the altar to receive the spotless Lamb, and be nourished with the bread of angels. Louise did not leave them till they had finished their thanksgiving. She wished to supply in some sort the lack of memory or capacity, when the parties seemed to need it. For fear of being guilty of any grave omission, the chiefs themselves, and many of the most esteemed men in the nation, went regularly to have her assistance in preparing for a worthy reception of the blessed sacrament.

Among other pious practices introduced by Louise in the mission, we are indebted to her for the following. On solemn days, the night previous to the general communion, hymns are sung alternately, sometimes in one lodge and sometimes in another, with charming harmony. These pious canticles have reference to the approaching day, which they are preparing to celebrate worthily. On the eve of the communion, the Indians arrange their exterior, and for most this is no small affair. They wash, clean, and mend the clothes or rags which scarcely cover them; they go and bathe in a retired part of the river, even on Christmas eve and when the water is freezing. Each one keeps in his leather bag, which serves as a wardrobe (for they have no chests or drawers), a piece of linen or white cotton, or a colored handkerchief; the women and girls wear them as a veil, the men as a cravat. Their toilet as you see is very simple and very poor; but each does his best, even outwardly, to come worthily and with respect to the table of the Lord.

Among all the virtues which distinguished Louise, and which she cherished and practised with so much zeal and ardor, shone forth especially her Christian charity to the sick and dying. Father Gazzoli, who has for many years directed that mission, assured me that during Louise's life, he never went to the bedside of a sick or dying person, without there meeting the Indian "Good Samaritan." She devoted herself to the continual service of the sick, and tended them with as much care, patience and interest as she could have bestowed on her own children and parents. While relieving their bodies with admirable and truly maternal charity, she never failed to think of their soul, and devoted herself with still greater zeal and fervor to heal its wounds, especially when the state of the patient's conscience seemed most to require it. She suggested pious thoughts, and recited with them acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition, resignation and submission to the holy will of our Lord; she constantly exhorted them to have patience in their painful trials, in imitation of our Lord, who died on the cross to save us; in one word she faithfully served her God in the person of her neighbor, conformable to these words of the gospel: "Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these, my least brethren, you did it to me."—Matt. xxv. 40. With no other recompense than what she expected from her divine Master, she fulfilled all the duties of an excellent nurse. This service she performed with as much exactness and devotedness, as an exemplary Sister of Mercy or Daughter of St. Vincent de Paul could have shown. On many occasions when she wished to exercise her voluntary mission of charity, she had to consent to great sacrifices, and almost heroic efforts over herself, to overcome her natural repugnance. Father Gazzoli relates that one day, according to his custom in certain circumstances, he invited Louise to accompany him to a patient, to aid him in the care which a most loathsome sore required. Such was the sight of the corrupt mass, that for the first time

the repugnance of the courageous woman overcame her; she durst not touch it or do the least to dress it. The missionary perceived it, and opened the abscess himself. Some moments after, Louise expressed the most lively regret at having yielded to her feelings, and told him with humility and respect: "I am greatly ashamed, Father; my weakness got the better of me. I admire your charity. I lacked courage to imitate it." She atoned for what she had reproached herself with as a fault, and immediately began to nurse the sick man, and dressed his sore with the greatest assiduity for about two months, till he recovered. It was the first time, added Father Gazzoli, that good Sighouin shrunk from a charitable desire which he expressed, and it was the last. In the sequel and down to her death, under every circumstance, she continued to fulfill, with promptness and fidelity, the requests made by her pious director, and made by him to offer her occasions of victory and merit before God. She had completely triumphed over herself, and in her humble constancy at the bedside of the sick, the most loathsome cases seemed to her the most agreeable and attractive.

Amid Louise's noble acts of charity and patience, may be cited the care she took for several years of a poor child on whom all human miseries of mind and body seemed to accumulate. An orphan, destitute of everything, crippled, blind, and what is worse, stubborn and ungovernable, such was Louise's adoptive child. Such a child was doubtless a rich windfall to exercise a saint. One day she told the missionary that she could not manage Ignatius (that was the orphan's name), and that he would not mind her in the least. The Father, who supplied his food and clothing, thought that by threatening to make him fast, he might be reduced to submission; but when it was tried, Ignatius rolled up his shirt-sleeve, and showing his arm, said: "Look there, I am fat. I can fast." He was then eleven or twelve years old. Such was the disposition of the child on whom

Louise lavished the care of a tender mother for several years, till God recalled the poor boy from this world.

Louise had a niece named Agatha, the only daughter of one of her sisters. She was, and justly so, her child of predilection. Pious, and ever attentive to her aunt's good advice and wise lessons, Agatha verified her name by her exemplary conduct and by her example amid her young companions. She was well instructed in her catechism, and was preparing for her first communion; she had already presented herself at the tribunal of penance to make a good confession, when an attack of apoplexy deprived her of speech. She survived only one day, suffering greatly, but with admirable patience. Her death was a severe and painful trial to the heart of Louise, who long after still kept her loss fresh in her mind, yet she submitted perfectly to the divine will, and convinced that her niece had gone to a better world, she overcame her grief, and shed not a tear; on the contrary, she never ceased thanking the Almighty for the favor he had bestowed upon Agatha, by snatching her away from the dangers of earth to set her in his heavenly mansion.

Louise lived in great poverty; yet the slightest murmur never escaped her to show her wants or her suffering. When the missionary was able to give her any charity, he had first to ask her whether she was not in some need, either of food or clothing. She regarded as nothing the privations and voluntary poverty which she imposed on herself through love for her divine Lord, and for her neighbor. Her lodge, formed of flag-mats, stood beside the *house of prayer*, or church, and near the poor cabin of the missionaries. There in happiness and contentment Louise found all her treasure, all her joy, and the complete fulfillment of her pious desire. There she unceasingly contemplated the home of eternal rest, which the Lord has prepared for his elect in heaven, and to which he alludes in the words: "My kingdom is not of this world."— John, xviii. 36. Those which the Acts of the Apostles add: "In very deed, I perceive that God is

not a respecter of persons. But in every nature, he that feareth him, and worketh justice is acceptable to him" (Acts, x. 34), seemed perfectly realized in poor Louise. From her conversion she faithfully followed the career which Providence had traced for her. Poverty with zeal and charity were her joy. Amid the poor of her tribe she may be said to have been the poorest, and always blessed God for her lot. Thus it is, that as we read in St. Mark, the "last shall be first." Sighouin fully comprehended this maxim, and she is at once a striking and consoling example of it. How glorious and beautiful is the society of fervent Christians, in all ranks and conditions of life! By its heavenly doctrines, benevolence admirably tempers authority; justice and charity reign in all hearts; the great humbles himself without derogating from his dignity, and the poor, the lowly, even the poor Indian woman, not only does not fall into contempt, but is elevated by the consideration of a common origin, the hope of a common end, and the distribution of the same means; in the sight of heaven all are equal, for all are children of one same Father, and called, though in different ways, to the possession of a common heritage.

Behold, then, the humble Louise, a poor Indian woman, an obedient, charitable and submissive Christian. Zeal for souls, zeal for the house of God devours her. Endowed with heroic constancy and courage, she surmounts all obstacles that oppose her generous designs. Where does she find her courage, her strength, her consolation, her happiness, if not in the love of her God, in an entire confidence in him, and a holy difference in regard to all else? All her actions seem to express constantly these words: "God alone for me! \* \* \* God alone to-day and forever; \* \* \* God alone for all eternity!" She devoted herself entirely to the cause of God; her labors, her troubles, her pain, will receive their reward. "She hath chosen the better part, which shall not be taken away from her."—Luke x. 42.

Louise always manifested a great devotion to the holy cross. In the sowing season, in order to draw down God's blessing on the crop, she each year presented to her spiritual director the seed-corn, to ask him to bless it. She then went through the great harvest field and the fields of the Indians, digging up a little piece of ground in the shape of a cross to plant her grain in. During the whole time that she maintained this practice, it was every year observed, that the crop was very abundant and very fine, even when the neighbors all around lost their grain. She had learned that heaven and earth had been disunited, and that the cross had reconciled them; that no one can enter into heaven except by the way of the cross. She sowed her grain in the form of a cross, having implicit confidence that our Lord, who died on the cross, would fructify it. The cross was her refuge on earth; it was her strength and consolation till death. We may here repeat those beautiful words of the venerable Bishop Challoner: "Jesus is delivered into the hands of his executioners; his suffering, his ignominy begins; he dies on an infamous gibbet; and he is no sooner lifted up, than *he draws all things to him*. The cross dispels the darkness that covered the face of the earth: it unveils the great mystery of life and death, of God, of our duties and our eternal destiny; in a word, in all that till then had been hidden from the wisest of pagan antiquity. The cross teaches us to suffer for the cause of justice, to bear wrongs for the glory of God, to die for his love. How admirably has the gospel been styled by St. Paul *the word of the cross*."

Louise had a tender devotion to the most blessed sacrament of the altar. That great mystery of the love of God, who deigns to lower, and as it were, annihilate himself, and "whose delight is to be with the children of men" (Prov., viii. 31), seemed to touch the good Indian woman most profoundly, and to fill her heart with the liveliest gratitude. Every morning she attended the holy sacrifice of the mass with the greatest recollectedness. For a long time she

went regularly to the missionary's cabin to ask explanations and instructions on the holy sacrament of the altar, without his supposing it to result from any motive but a desire of instruction. It was not till after the death of Louise, that he learned that when she had fully comprehended the meaning and seen the explanation of the principal ceremonies and rubrics in the celebration of the most holy mystery, she composed short prayers, full of unction, like those found in our best prayer-books. I must remark here that this practice was then as yet unknown by the catechumens among the Indians, for the missionaries, especially in the first years that followed the establishment of the mission, were unable to go beyond the most elementary instructions on the points of doctrine of the most absolute necessity. But the zeal of Louise was by no means limited to her own soul; she had at the same time in view the spiritual good and advancement of her neighbor by all these holy practices. Gifted with an excellent memory, she communicated with care and eagerness to others all the instructions that she had received on the holy sacrifice of the mass. The beautiful and admirable little prayers of which I have just spoken were in harmony with the different parts of the mass, perfectly conformable to the spirit of the Church, full of sense and piety; they seemed dictated under the inspiration of the divine Master. We may say with all assurance and truth, that this useful work of Louise was far beyond the ordinary capacity and reach of a poor Indian.

Among the holy practices in which Louise displayed most zeal, fervor and charity, and which always seemed dearest to her, all remarked her great devotion for the souls in purgatory. All her prayers, all her actions, all the merits that she might obtain from God by her pious and active life, were directed to this noble intention. She succeeded, too, after persevering efforts, in making the whole tribe relish and adopt her beautiful devotion. Every day, even during the rigorous season of winter, she proceeded to the cemetery to spend some time there in prayer. When



the household occupations of her poor family prevented her visiting it by day, she went there late in the evening, or even during the night. This was frequently the case. It seems that hell endeavored to raise obstacles to prayers so agreeable to heaven, and, at the same time, deprive the souls in purgatory of so many suffrages, and good Sighouin of all the merits she daily laid up for herself. The fact was this. Before relating it, I must observe that, in the whole tribe, Louise was regarded as a brave and nowise timid woman, and that on many occasions she gave unequivocal proofs of her natural courage. And yet it several times happened that when at prayer in the cemetery, she would be seized with affright, at the sight of fantastic figures that she seemed to behold before her. Once the spectres appeared in so frightful a manner, that, trembling with fear, she ran back to the camp with loud cries. The men immediately all flew to arms, as though a powerful enemy had assailed the village. All were convinced that the alarm given by Louise must have a real foundation. Father Gazzoli, who relates the facts, had much trouble in restoring order and tranquillity in the camp; he succeeded, however, by promising to act as sentinel all night over his dear Indians. The next day he recommended Louise not to be disturbed in her prayers by the influence of such fears; and in case the phantoms returned again to molest her, to come, even though it were midnight, and tell him, but no one else, so as to create a panic in the village. On this occasion as ever, she showed her obedience and submission; and although the frightful visions returned from time to time, her victory over the demon was complete. From that time for several years, and down to the period of her last illness, she calmly continued her pious visits to the cemetery, exempt from all trouble and all fear. One day the missionary, in an instruction, advised his flock to remember the souls in purgatory, especially after communion. Louise received the recommendation as an advice from heaven, and the first time she approached the holy table, she was

seen, after receiving the blessed sacrament, proceeding to the cemetery at the head of all the communicants, where they spent a considerable time in prayer for the relief of the faithful departed. Her example greatly increased this beautiful practice of Christian life; the greatest part of the Indians were soon seen following their pious guide to the place of rest; at last all went. This holy custom is still observed.

Our poor Indians have a very limited intelligence; their progress in religious instruction is very slow, retarded especially by the difficulty which the missionaries encounter in the language of the Indians, which is very rich to express whatever is material; but excessively poor in all that relates to the explanation of spiritual things. Hence it happens that many of these poor people have not yet that salutary horror and shame for sin, which are so powerful a means to restrain men's passions. Thus a woman who has been unfaithful or rebellious to her husband will receive pardon the moment she shows sorrow for it. A man who has grossly insulted another, or done him a grievous wrong, will go and smoke the calumet of peace with the injured person, or enter his lodge or give him an equivalent for the wrong committed. These reparations are generally received and considered sufficient, and the offender recovers the good graces of the injured party. "The wound is covered," as they express it; that is to say, "All is forgotten." When any one commits a fault, secret or notorious, he goes of his own accord to present himself to the chief and ask to be whipped. "The whip has covered his fault," no one can then speak of it. The missionary has sometimes to instruct them in the confessional on this point; for the penitent would come and not accuse himself of grievous faults known to the whole tribe. In vain will the confessor say: "You have been guilty of such or such a sin, you must accuse yourself of it before God." The penitent will reply: "Pardon, Father, I went to the chief, and the sin you mention was covered by the whip; the

whip has covered my fault." I mention this usage of the Cœur d'Alènes, because our good Louise sometimes presented herself to the chief to be publicly whipped. But here the case was different; she seized the opportunity in a spirit of profound humility, always regarding herself as a poor and enormous sinner, and at the same time from a desire to satisfy her devotion to imitate our Lord, by submitting to the cruel flagellation. Louise's faults were only of the nature of those of which the Book of Proverbs speaks, when he says that the "just man shall fall seven times and shall rise again."—Prov. xxiv. 16. Nevertheless, what she called her faults caused her such regret and confusion, that the missionary often found her bathed in tears. At the least fault, her contrition was so lively, and at the same time her veneration for the *Lodge of the Lord* (the church) so profound, and her respect for the cabin of the priest so sincere, that she durst not enter either till she had approached the tribunal of penance. We admired in her, too, that faith and that love of God, which, in the real sins and faults of others, made her share in their sorrow and shame.

A certain member of the tribe, blinded by passion, in spite of all the obstacles in the way of his illicit desires, had resolved to unite himself with a near relative of Louise's, and who was at the same time nearly related to himself. Among the Indians there is no power to prevent evil in such a case but argument; when this fails there is no means to which they can have recourse. The wretched man, deaf to all the advice of the chief and of his own friends, obdurately closing his ears to the exhortations of the missionary, had united himself to the object of his desires. The traits which I have already given of the pure soul of Louise, will speak sufficiently the grief and bitterness which this depravity in a near kinswoman must have caused her. She had already employed all the means of persuasion in her power, to prevent the union of these two miserable people. They had turned a deaf ear to her wholesome advice and counsel, as to all that others had offered.

One day the pastor showed himself more than ordinarily troubled and afflicted at the depravity and obstinacy of his two lost sheep, and at the great scandal they gave the whole tribe. He said publicly and vehemently, "We must put a stop to this at once. Let each one then implore the divine assistance, and beg the Almighty, that with as little delay as possible, he will aid to remove this great scandal from among us." Louise was present and heard the missionary's words. She was ignorant of the guilty man's threats, for he had resolved to repel by brute force and by arms, whoever would dare to prevent his retaining the object of his guilty love. Invested with courage above her strength, like the strong woman in the scriptures, and full of confidence in God, brave Sighouin immediately started from the village over woods and mountains, and marched for several days to the spot where the two culprits had hidden themselves to hide their crime and infamy. She entered the lodge to the great surprise of the guilty pair. One rushed at her, whip in hand, the other threatened to strike her; but Louise addressed them on the misfortune of their state, in words so resolute, so energetic, so overwhelming, that they stood silent and confounded before her, and without difficulty she rescued from his hands the woman whom sin alone had made his partner. She took her to her own house, and kept her there till a dispensation was obtained, on which they were lawfully married. The charity and zeal of Louise aided from on high, thus came forth triumphant from a struggle as heroic as it was delicate.

In another and nearly similar case, a wretched man drew his dagger to strike Louise, while loading her with insulting words and terrible threats; but the Christian heroine, with a calm and serene brow, portrayed to him the enormity of his conduct, his ingratitude to God, the scandal given to his neighbor. "I have come here," she said, "for the honor of God, and the salvation of your soul; I fear nothing." Here below, life is but a short passage. "The world passeth away," says the beloved Apostle, "and the concupiscence

thereof. But he that doth the will of God abideth forever.” — 1 John, ii. 17. Louise fully comprehended these maxims, she never shrunk from any danger when the glory of the Almighty was concerned.

Louise paid special attention to the young girls of her tribe. She took care of their religious instruction, and diligently watched over their behavior. In the absence of their parents she made them all lodge in her cabin of mats, and took the entire direction of them. To understand this, it will be necessary to make a little digression. An Indian lodge of mats is a pretty commodious, though not very attractive abode. It assumes all dimensions, according to the number of persons to be accommodated: a few more poles and mats are added, and the arrangements are completed. Thus Louise was able to make room for a considerable number of beds for the children, for each one has her blanket or buffalo robe. Their tables are the bare ground. Their dishes, plates and spoons, are pieces of bark or wood; their fingers serve for forks and their teeth for knives. It takes an Indian, at most, half an hour to change a lodge into a large hostelry, and furnish it to correspond. Thus Louise was able to see herself at the head of a numerous household who were her delight. How beautiful it was to contemplate the good Indian grandmother, tenderly loved and respected, amid her cherished children!

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We may apply to Louise the beautiful words of the scriptures: “Being made perfect in a short space he fulfilled a long time.”—Wisdom, iv. 13. After her vocation to the faith, she did not indeed live long years on the earth, but her years were full of merits before God. “She walked in the ways of the Lord with a rapid step.” In all that she did, she constantly kept her eyes fixed on her heavenly home, awaiting those eternal goods of which the great Apostle speaks; she made noble efforts, and em-

ployed all her moments to embellish and enrich her soul with all Christian virtues. By her regular attendance at the instructions, by her constant spirit of prayer, by the practice of every species of good work, she increased more and more in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and sweet Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Her last illness left her the use of all her faculties, which she preserved to her last breath. She thus prepared for death with all the tranquillity of the just. Her prayer was fervent and uninterrupted; her patience superior to every trial. Entirely taken up with the salvation of her soul, she seemed utterly unmindful of the sufferings of her body; she sought no relief, and never betrayed the least sign of impatience; she often tenderly kissed the cross, which she always carried around her neck. The desire of the Apostle "to be dissolved and to be with Christ" (Phil. i. 23), seemed to be during her illness her only motto and her only preoccupation.

"Always at the bedside of her who had so greatly aided me in my visits to the sick, and who had always served as my interpreter, and given me her aid with the ignorant — the spiritual directress, the guardian angel of her whole tribe — I had the happiness to witness this touching scene," says Father Gazzoli, the spiritual director of Louise. "Her virtues had shone like a brilliant torch amid the Indians; she had never sullied the white robe of innocence which she had received in baptism. I witnessed the great power of the cross, which displayed in the desert virtues till then unknown; which produces wherever it is planted so many holy martyrs, so many confessors, so many virgins and illustrious penitents. Here, amid these isolated mountains, appears a poor Indian woman, whose unshaken faith and firm hope render her superior to trials of every kind. I desired to relieve her in some way; she in obedience gratefully received what I offered, yet without seeking or asking the slightest relief or the slightest mitigation of her pains, which she accepted as so many special graces of our Lord."

Louise received from the hands of the minister of God all the consolations of the Church, the holy viaticum especially, with truly angelic piety and consolation. She thanked our Lord in all the humility of her soul, for the great favors which he deigned to grant her in that last hour of her earthly anguish, committing to his holy Providence her crippled husband and beloved children. She then made an effort to rally her little remaining strength, to thank her spiritual director for all the care which he constantly lavished on her, and especially in his instructions; she especially commended to his spiritual care the charge of all her family. The words which Louise addressed to her husband and her grieving children were consoling, full of trust in God's divine and paternal goodness, full of resignation to his holy will, and of firm hope to be one day all united again in their heavenly home. At last she turned to those who surrounded her deathbed, happy witnesses of all these edifying scenes, which the just dying in the Lord present to the living, and which realize the words of holy writ: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord."—Apoc. xiv. 13. She begged those around to intone in their language the touching hymn in honor of the souls in purgatory, and accompanied it herself in a feeble and dying voice scarcely perceptible. They were still singing it when Louise, unperceived by any, slept calmly in our Lord.

Her beautiful soul had taken its heavenward flight. She happily left the place of trouble, misery and death, to pass to an abode of glory and peace, the delights whereof are eternal. In her were fulfilled what St. James teaches us when he says: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him."—St. James, i. 12. In the pleasing hope that henceforth the eternal crown is her lot, with the deep-seated trust in her power with God, we addressed to her in heaven our poor prayers: "O Louise, intercede with God for him who

conferred baptism on you, and was your spiritual director; for your husband, for your children, and for all your dear Skizoumish. Obtain for us all the grace of perseverance in the holy service of our Lord. Amen."

Father Gazzoli then addressed those around:

"Skizoumish! the example of the pious Sighouin is in your midst, we must profit by it. Henceforth she belongs to the whole nation, for she is the common beloved mother. As we all one day desire to share the glorious reward which she has just obtained by her virtues and good works, we must all follow the path which she has traced for us, and which leads to everlasting happiness. From the day of her baptism, in April, 1842, she constantly, night and day, devoted herself to your instruction. In the service of her God, she accepted with joy and eagerness, the privations, misery, contradictions, which it pleased him to send her. In her this day are verified the words of the Lord addressed to the just: 'Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon the whole world to try them that dwell upon the earth.'"—Apoc. iii. 10.

The death of Louise Sighouin was the signal of a sudden desolation and a universal grief in the tribe, which lost a mother beloved by all, and especially by the children, a faithful friend to the whole nation, the comfort of the sick and afflicted, a guide and a support! The loss was immense, we avow. Yet this mourning was that of a Christian people, and not that of a perverse and unbelieving world, that has no hope beyond the grave. Amid this Indian tribe was renewed the salutary sadness that we ordinarily admire at the death of the just, whose memory is ever dear and in benediction, according to the words of the Holy Ghost: "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory: for the memory thereof is immortal: because it is known both with God and with men."—Wisdom, iv. 1.

The minister of the Lord was still reciting the last prayers of the Church, invoking the angels and saints to



receive the soul of her who had just expired, to present it at the throne of the Most High, when one of those kneeling beside him, ran out crying: "Sighouin, good Sighouin is dead!" The cry was taken up and echoed in the valley and in the foot of the high mountains which encircle the residence of the Sacred Heart. The Indians ran up in crowds around the lodge of the departed. In their impatience to gratify their desire of gazing once more on the pious woman, the lodge was invaded, but it was too small to hold them all, the mats were torn from the poles; the lodge thus opened on all sides, enabled the crowd of spectators to satisfy their pious wish, and they gazed in admiring silence on the last sleep of Louise.

It is a custom of the Indians for the relatives and friends of a deceased person to assemble in his lodge after his death. When the missionary, after reciting the prayers of the Church, leaves the lodge, he says: "Pray, my children, for the repose of his soul," and adds some words suited to the circumstances. Then, on a signal from one of the nearest relatives of the deceased, all present burst into tears and groans, either real or feigned, or rather they begin lamentations, often forced, and extorted rather by the usual ceremony, than by a real sorrow caused by the loss of the deceased. On Louise's death the scene of mourning was far different: it was doubtless sincere. Father Gazzoli thus relates it: "I was an eye-witness, moved to tears by all that passed. My emotion kept increasing, especially when, even before the end of the prayers, universal cries and tears, interrupted by sobs, announced clearly that no ceremony was enacting here, but, on the contrary, they had assembled to pay a just tribute of gratitude and admiration to Louise's virtues, and to relieve the lively grief caused by her loss."

It must not be imagined that sunset, on this as on other occasions, put an end to these demonstrations of sorrow, regret, veneration and love, displayed over the mortal remains of good Louise: they rather increased. The Indians

immediately put up a vast lodge, which they illuminated by a fire of resinous wood. The body, becomingly wrapped in skins of wild animals, was respectfully laid upon a bed of straw; a great number watch around, and recite prayers aloud during the whole night. The pious ceremonies of that night were till then unexampled in the country of the Cœur d'Alènes. There was on this occasion a most touching, edifying and extraordinary unanimity. Men, women and children were seen surrounding with equal eagerness the corpse of Louise, unable to tear themselves from her whom they called by so many titles, their *mother*, their *guide*, and their *true friend*. The prayers and hymns were from time to time interrupted by edifying discourses on the life and heroic virtues of the deceased; the principal chiefs of the nation were the first to retrace most touching pictures of them for the assembly.

The missionary, struck at the spectacle of so striking a testimony borne to virtue by a people possessed of such feeble ideas of it, believed it his duty to go and preside in this pious assembly. He proceeded to the lodge about midnight, at the moment when the eldest son of the deceased was making a panegyric on his beloved mother. His beautiful words, full of simple, unstudied, true eloquence, produced the liveliest sensation and emotion in all his auditory. The abundance of his tears, which did not cease to flow as long as he spoke, prevented him from continuing his long and interesting discourse. The missionary then rose, and while exhorting his good Indians to imitate the example of Louise, he expressed the sentiments of esteem and admiration which her virtues and good works had excited in his heart from his arrival in the mission.

On the day succeeding the death of Louise, her body was carried in procession early in the morning to the church, accompanied by all the Indians of the camp. The labors of the harvest were not resumed all that day. All thought alone of giving in the most expressive manner a mark of

their love, their esteem, and their grief, to the common mother of the tribe. After a solemn mass of requiem, and all the other funeral ceremonies of the Church, Father Gazzoli resolved to leave the body exposed during the rest of the day, to satisfy the pious zeal, we might almost say ever increasing devotion, of the many friends of the deceased. Her children, her family, all, in a word, constantly pressed around the bier, and seemed unable to tear themselves from it. It would have seemed too hard and too cruel to put an end so soon to the last expressions of affection of that religious assemblage, of those truly Christian hearts.

At last the day began to wane, and the shades of night would soon infold the valley. The missionary had to make an effort to overcome his own feelings, and to propose to his good children in Christ a separation so afflicting and so painful to their hearts. Yet it was the most favorable time to give the interment a funereal grandeur, and a last tribute of love and respect to the precious remains of Sig-houin.

The funeral surpassed all expectation. The children alone, boys and girls, as a proof of their innocent love, had thought of preparing with care a large quantity of resinous splinters. These primitive torches in the hands of these children of nature, dressed chiefly in bear, wolf, jaguar, beaver and otter skins, added to the ceremony, sad and mournful in itself, a peculiar air of wild majesty and savage grandeur, in keeping with the place and the interesting occasion of the assemblage. Perfect order was observed in the procession; modest piety and holy silence reigned in the two long files, one composed of men and the other of women, where nothing was heard but the prayer and the chant. The grave had been dug by the children and kindred of Louise. Her simple and modest coffin was the work of her youngest son. On reaching the cemetery, the Indians ranged themselves in order around the grave, and after the last funeral prayers of the Church and some words of con-

solation from the priest, the coffin was lowered. Each one present then threw a spadeful of earth into the grave, pronouncing a prayer and a last adieu. This touching ceremony, and the most trifling incidents of the great funeral, live in the memory of our Cœur d'Alènes. They repeat them and will repeat them to their grandchildren; they will render ever memorable this day of Christian sorrow, this religious triumph conferred on a poor Indian woman of the Skizoumish or Cœur d'Alènes.

In the month of February, 1859, in one of my visits to the husband of Louise, a poor old cripple, unable for many years to walk without crutches, I conversed with him on the holy life led by his wife on earth, on her noble qualities and the great virtues of which she had given so striking an example. I asked him what he had most loved and admired in her. "Truly, Father," he replied, "I cannot tell you in what Louise most excelled. From the blessed day on which you conferred baptism upon us, all was good and admirable in her life. Never to my knowledge was there the slightest shadow of a difference between us; not a syllable, not a word louder than another. When I was sick she carried me in the canoe; if I could not use my hands, she cut my food and put it in my mouth. Louise served me like a guardian angel. Now I am an object of pity and compassion, for I am weak in mind. I loved to hear her consoling words, to listen to her wise counsels, to follow her salutary advice, for she was full of the wisdom and spirit of God. The Fathers taught her many beautiful prayers, and we recited them together with our children. Now I have no one to repeat those beautiful prayers to me, and I am to be pitied. Yet I never cease thanking the Lord for the favors which he has not ceased to bestow upon me. I submit myself to his holy will; my heart is always satisfied and calm."

The good old man has always been a subject of edification amid his tribe, universally loved and respected by all the nation. He is a man of the greatest simplicity and of very

solid and fervent piety; nothing gives him greater pleasure than a conversation on holy things and on the great affair of salvation. You can never visit him without seeing the smile on his lips and without finding him at prayer, with his beads in his hands. He begins to say the rosary early in the morning; the first is offered to Mary to keep him in the holy grace of the Lord during the day; he recites the others either for the missionaries, for his family, for his tribe, or for some other intention. From the day of his baptism, he made it a duty to pray for me every day, and I feel the utmost gratitude to him.

Good Adolph, such is the name of Louise's husband, related to me among other things, that during his wife's life, when the village set out for the chase, or to get wild roots, and Louise went along with them, he felt very lonesome. When he saw Louise about to die, he told her: "If you die, it will be impossible for me to stay here; I shall find the time so long, I will go back to my own land." "Take care not to do so," returned Louise; "be very careful not to do so, Adolph! Do not remove from the house of the Lord (the church). As I die here, I wish you to remain here till you die. You will not be lonesome." Adolph remains faithful to his wife's recommendation. His cabin is beside the church, and although alone the greater part of the time since the death of Louise, he has not felt the time tedious for a single moment. His beads and prayer are his greatest consolation, and his only delight.

On my recent visit to the Cœur d'Alènes, I again questioned the Indians, in order to obtain new details as to the life of Louise Sighouin. The answer was this: "After so many years it is difficult to add anything to these extraordinary facts, so well known by all, except that from the time of her baptism, her life was an act of continual charity." And I can say, and all that read this narrative will agree with me, that there is no exaggeration in this summary remark. It was a devotedness of every day and every hour, a chain of links of little details of mercy, which offer

nothing very striking, unless it be that untiring constancy, which for more than ten years was always prompt night and day in exercising all works of charity, corporal and spiritual. No one will better appreciate this martyrdom of detail than those who are themselves devoted to it; and if we consider that Louise was poor, infirm, that she could only half understand the missionaries, who as yet only stammered the language of the Indians, no one will call in doubt the many graces which Louise received, and the immense profit she derived from the lessons of her divine Master. God had raised up Louise to be the assistant of the apostolic men in the outset of their labors, when they did not understand the language. It had been the same at the Mission of St. Ignatius. The Almighty had given the missionaries the chief Loyola to do among the Kalispels what Louise has done among the Cœur d'Alènes. Both were poor and infirm; it was a lively faith which animated their zeal; both devoted themselves to their last sigh, and both were bitterly deplored after their death. Loyola displayed invincible firmness. "As long as I have a breath of life, my people must walk uprightly," said he; and his virtue alone gave him the authority to speak so. Louise on the contrary had no support in her zeal except her admirable meekness, her unwearied patience. Both died about the same time, when the missionaries began to be generally understood by the Indians.

I have all these circumstances from the missionaries on the spot, especially from the reverend and worthy Father Gazzoli, nephew of the cardinal of that name who died in 1858. This Father is at this moment Superior of the Mission of the Sacred Heart among the Skizoumish or Cœur d'Alènes.

In one of my letters written ten years ago, June 4, 1849, I said: "This extraordinary attention of the Indians, and this avidity on their part for the word of God, must seem surprising in a people who appear to combine all moral and intellectual miseries. But the spirit of the Lord breathes

where it pleases him, his graces and his light prompt and aid men whom ignorance, rather than a perverse or disorderly will, has rendered evil. And that same spirit which obliged the most rebellious to cry out with St. Paul: 'Lord! what wilt thou have me to do?' can often soften the fiercest hearts, inflame the coldest, produce peace, justice and joy, where inequity, trouble and disorder reigned. The great respect and attention which the poor Indians show on all occasions to the missionary who comes to announce to them the word of God, are a source of great consolation and encouragement. He finds the finger of God in the spontaneous manifestations of these unhappy men." Since the gospel has been announced to the tribes of the Rocky Mountains, the Lord has always had his chosen souls among them. In the different missions, many neophytes are distinguished by a zeal and piety truly worthy of the primitive Christians, by a rare assiduity at all religious exercises, by the faithful accomplishment of all the duties of a good Christian, in a word, by all the virtues which we have just seen in their highest form in Louise Sighouin.

## CHAPTER XII.

### HISTORY OF THE FAMILY OF LE GROS FRANÇOIS.<sup>1</sup>

A Lewis and Clark Indian — A Catlin Indian — Tales of a traveler — Destroyed by his own good fortune — Progress of the feud — An outlawed desperado — Prowess of La Main — Things that sometimes happened at the trading posts.

**W**HEN Messrs. Lewis and Clark made their voyage up the Missouri, the only Assiniboins they met with numbered about sixty lodges of the *Gens des Roches* or Stone Indians, who were the only band of this nation then inhabiting the upper Missouri region. The rest of the nation, about 1,500 lodges in all, resided on the plains of Red river and its tributaries, and traded altogether with the Hudson Bay Company. At the head and as chief of the small band above named was Wahemugga, or Iron Flint, surnamed by the Canadian voyageurs and traders Le Gros François, a sturdy, bulky Indian, no doubt. Several gentlemen of the American Fur Company, now residing in St. Louis, have been well acquainted with this chief, who died some years ago, in an advanced age, near the Minnetaree, or Grosventre, village. He was the father of a numerous family and is supposed to have had fifty children by different wives. His children were scattered in the course of time through the different bands, composing the Assiniboin nation. About the time of his death there remained with him as follows: Wahjanjana, or Light, his oldest son, called by the whites Jackson, from his having visited the President of that name at Washington City. His second son was called Le Sucre, or Sweet. The third was named Bowundapa, or Broken Cloud; the fourth Nappana, or the Hand; the fifth Lakakeana, or *Le Premier qui volle* (the

<sup>1</sup> From the Linton Album, pp. 118-124.



First who Flies), the same who, in 1851, left Fort Union, in my company, to go and assist at the Great Council, held at the mouth of Horse creek, in the Nebraska valley, under the superintendence of Colonel D. D. Mitchell.

A sameness of character marked this whole family, and ran through many of the other children, who are yet living, though it is not necessary to state their names here. They were all proud, brave and overbearing toward their own people. In battle none were, and still are, better warriors, and for the chase, few equaled them. With the whites, however, their manner was altogether different, being tractable and friendly and supporting the traders in every way in their power. The bravery and good conduct of the eldest, named Light,<sup>2</sup> even brought him into notice, and he was chosen soldier of Fort Union, about the year 1829-30, making it his business to keep the Indians in order when they came to trade, and also to return any horses belonging to the fort that were stolen by his nation, these thefts at the time being very common. It was his custom to pursue the horse thieves to their camp, in company of some of his brothers. The guilty party might think himself very fortunate if he escaped a sound thrashing after the animals were taken from them.

About the year 1831, President Jackson invited deputies of several of these prairie tribes to visit him at the Capital and through the Indian agents made his wishes known to all the Indians. Of the Assiniboins, none could be found to risk the trip except Light, who went in company with a Cree or Knisteneau from the north, "Le Bras Coupé" (the cut arm). I think they passed the winter in Washington City and were well received by their Great Father, the President. In the spring they were sent back to their own people and arrived safe, from which time the Assiniboin was called Jackson, by which name we will call him now.

<sup>2</sup> Catlin tells the story of this Indian, and gives portraits of him, before and after his travels. (Plates 271 and 272.) He gives his name as "Wi-jun-jon or Pigeon's Egg Head."

The consequence of this trip was the ruin of the Indian. He had seen and knew too much to live according to his former habits. He had been too much flattered and caressed by the whites to respect his own people and thought himself far above them. Sporting a brigadier-general's uniform, a government medal, top boots and a cane, he thought and acted as if there were but two persons in the world worth looking at or talking about, himself and General Jackson. He condescended, however, occasionally to relate some of the strange sights he had seen, which, though strictly true, yet could not be conceived by the limited imaginations of his people. Most of them, knowing his temper, said nothing, but thought him a terrible liar. Sometimes, however, an individual would have the hardihood to call his veracity into question, when a stroke from him with his sword or tomahawk was given on the spot to silence all dispute. He could not conceive why they would not believe him when he told nothing but the truth, and consequently he was involved in continual quarrels, most of which he decided in his own favor by means of his weapons, making a host of enemies around him. He would ring the bell and have his boots blacked, ring the bell for his horse, ring it for a cup of water that stood within his reach. In short, he attempted to establish a complete despotism amongst them. Amongst other qualities it was supposed by the Indians, long before he went to Washington, that he could not be killed by a ball, this from having received several wounds in battle, apparently through vital parts, which yet healed in a short space of time. In truth the Indians thought and said: "He was impervious to death by lead."

One spring evening Jackson, stretched out as usual on his mat in the lodge, rang his bell for his Indian boy and servant whom he had named Tim. The boy making his appearance, he told him to go around the camp and invite a dozen of his people whom he named. "Tell them," said he, "that I am lonesome and will amuse them a little."

The boy went on his errand. About dark the guests began to arrive and soon the lodge was filled, with as many as could come in, amongst whom was a stranger from another camp who had arrived the day before. This fellow was one of those good-for-nothing kind of Indians, who rove about from one camp to another stealing horses and otherwise disturbing the peace. When all were seated and pipes were passing briskly around, Jackson began to tell of some of the sights and scenes he had witnessed whilst at Washington, and in these stories he always set out with saying: "When I was at Washington," no difference at what other place the thing had transpired. On the present occasion he spoke to this effect:

"When I was at Washington, one evening the interpreter told me that on the next day we should visit the Shot Tower (this was in the vicinity of Howard's Park). In the morning, after dressing as usual, we went to the place and, behold, a round stone lodge was there, about the height of four of our tallest trees piled one on top of the other. We went in and ascended in the interior by steps going round the building in the interior, and after counting 260 steps, I arrived at the summit. This building is completely round and smooth on the outside, the base about four times the circumference of our largest lodges, and getting smaller as it goes up."

Here he was interrupted by the stranger above named, who stated that what he told was a downright lie, for how could people get up so high to build. They would have nothing to stand upon, etc. When he had ceased our narrator continued: "With regard to saying 'it is a lie' I will convince you of it when my story is told. As I was going to say, from the top of this building melted lead is poured through a sieve, which in the act of falling becomes round. But from the top of this place is the most beautiful view imaginable. Houses, ships, men and everything look as if seen from the clouds and some are mere specks."

Here the stranger again broke out into a loud laugh and declared it was a "heap of lies." But Jackson would have his story; so, merely observing, "Be patient, be patient, I will convince you presently," he gave a very good description to his auditors of the beautiful scenery from the top of one of these elevated places, in the course of which he was again contradicted by the same individual, in a most positive manner. It was evident he did not know the other's temper and habits, or did not care. However, when he had brought this and other stories to a close, he said: "Friends, it is getting late, we must separate for the night, but before we part, form a ring outside the lodge and I will in the moonlight convince this stranger of the truth of my story."

This being done, Jackson took his cane and stepped out. "Stranger," said he, "when I was at Washington, it happened, in a company in a private house, that some gentleman was relating a strange story to others. I was there with the interpreter. During the recital there was another man present, who, on several occasions, had manifested his bad heart, and on this so far forgot himself as to call the other a liar. The gentleman said nothing at the time, but promised to convince him as soon as the company adjourned, which shortly afterward they did to a bar-room of a public house, when the guest who told the story took the one who called him a liar by the arm thus and caned him most unmercifully." And suiting the action to the word, he broke it over him and belabored him around the circle, much to the amusement of the lookers-on.

The company then dispersed to their several lodges, and the one who got the caning to the lodge where some of his relatives lived. In a short time most of the camp was sound asleep, but one individual slept not. The stranger was busy and employed in filing down a piece of iron about an inch long to fit the size of the calibre of his gun. This completed, he wakened up one of his relations, and told him of the disgraceful punishment that he had re-

ceived, adding that he was now about to revenge himself and leave the camp. He stated that as his enemy, Jackson, was supposed to be ball-proof, he would try the virtue of an iron slug, and showed the other his bolt. He loaded his gun with care and went to the lodge of Jackson. That individual was sitting on his mat smoking his pipe and perhaps thinking of his visit to Washington. The other, seeing the shadow of his head through the skin tent, placed the muzzle of his gun within a few inches of his head, drew the trigger, and all that remained of our gallant chief was a mangled corpse. The slug tore away the whole of the upper part of the head. The camp took the alarm and searched for the murderer, but he had fled and in the darkness it was useless to pursue.

Jackson left several children, all of whom turned out as brave as he. Some have of late years been killed in battle.

The next of the brothers was Le Sucre, and as soon as the body was mourned over and put in the forks of a tree, according to their custom, he began to make inquiries in the neighboring camp for the murderer, and after some trouble succeeded in finding him out, though in a place dangerous for him to venture, as the whole of his relations were there. He, however, nothing daunted, walked into the lodge and killed the man on the spot, but in his turn was literally cut to pieces by the rest of the Indians.

The regulation of affairs now developed upon the third brother, called Broken Cloud. He was a good man for the whites and well liked by them. He had the same unruly temper as the rest of the family, though more politic with his people. He was a long time soldier at Fort Union and regretted by all when he died. However, Broken Cloud, although determined to punish the murderers of Le Sucre, also chose his time for doing it, and with this view, he on several occasions spoke kindly and appeared to be on good terms with them. One winter evening, about two years after the death of his brother, one of the fellows concerned in it happened to turn up at the camp of Broken Cloud alone.

He immediately called the Indian in, gave him his meal, smoked the pipe with him, and to all appearances had forgot all old scores, but, in a few hours, when the man least expected it, clove his skull with his tomahawk and threw his body outside the camp.

For a year or two things went on as usual, when some of the relations of the dead man began to look around for an opportunity of revenging. This, however, was not an easy matter, and by some means or other they made out to get his brother, La Main, to aid them in bringing about his destruction. This Indian, La Main, was a son of Gros François by a different wife, and was also one of the worst Indians then in the nation and had at this time, by his bad conduct, incurred the displeasure of the rest of his family. This being favorable to the enemies of his brother, Broken Cloud, they at length by payment and promises engaged him on their side, choosing the time when Broken Cloud's camp was far off, and learning that he, with a few women, had gone to the fort to trade, they arrived also in the same evening, about twelve in number, apparently as a war-party going to the Blackfeet. It was then the custom for trading and war-parties to sleep in another set of buildings about a hundred yards distant from the fort, in which both the parties encamped for the night, apparently as friends with each other. Nothing was heard by the people of the fort during the night, but on awakening they were informed that Broken Cloud had been murdered in the night by La Main and his party. One of the traders proceeded to examine the body and found it pierced with twenty-three stabs and arrow shots. He was decently interred at Fort Union.

In consequence of this act La Main was declared an outlaw by the rest of his brothers, but he could never be got at with any degree of safety. He remained for the most part with the gang with whom he was concerned, leading them in various war expeditions, in which his desperate bravery gained him credit of power amongst the others, though for his numerous acts of rascality he was despised

and somewhat feared both by whites and Indians. On one occasion he went to war upon the Crows with nineteen young men, most of whom were boys of fifteen to eighteen years. They met the Crow camp traveling, and hiding themselves, killed and scalped two Crow Indians. The rest of the camp coming up and perceiving the dead bodies of their people made search and found the whole party of their enemies concealed in an island of timber and brush on the prairie which extended to the waters of the Yellowstone River.

The Assiniboins had made a small barricade of logs and branches and awaited the attack of the Crows, determined to make a desperate resistance. The whole Crow nation surrounded the place and made repeated charges against the barricade, firing in upon the Assiniboins, who returned their fire at close quarters and drove them back many times with loss, though at each discharge from the Crows some of the others were killed. Those remaining, nothing daunted, seized the guns of their dead comrades and continued the conflict. In this way they kept about 600 Crows at bay the greater part of the day, killing ten and wounding twenty or thirty others. To get them out of this shelter the Crows set fire to the timber and underbrush, which, though sometimes a good plan, at this time enabled La Main and three others to escape through the smoke to the timbers of the Yellowstone, whence they found their way to Fort Union. These four and one woman were all that were saved from the battle. The rest had fallen. La Main had his powder-horn shot off, two guns shot out of his hands, his cap and coat riddled with balls, but not a scratch on his skin.

Shortly after this affair another company of traders [Sublette & Campbell] in opposition to the American Fur Company, came on the Missouri and establishing themselves at the mouth of the Yellowstone, commenced their traffic. During the first winter of their trade La Main came alone to Fort Union and in the night, understanding that a party

of his people had gone to the other fort to trade whisky, he went down to drink with them.

In the course of their frolic a quarrel sprung up amongst them in regard to La Main, the whole of the party agreeing to kill him. Some of them barred the door of the room in which they were and stood against it. Others advanced upon him with knives, lances, and tomahawks; but such was the activity of this man that for some time he contended alone with twenty-five or thirty Indians, with nothing but a battle-axe. This instrument he wielded in every direction, knocking down some and killing one man. He forced his passage to a window, then leaping through the glass, scrambled on top of the house and cleared the pickets at a single bound. Although at this juncture arrows and guns were fired at him in abundance, yet he got off again without a scar and ran up to Fort Union, three miles above, perfectly naked, on an extremely cold winter's night. The gate was opened for him and after having warmed himself, he told the story of his escape, laughing and in great glee, apparently regretting he had left the place when so much fun was going on.

In a year from this time it happened that the rest of the family of Le Gros François, headed by Le Premier qui Volle, La Main's half brother, came to Fort Union to trade and were put into the usual reception-room for Indians, which room, when the gates of the fort were closed, had no communication with the interior. In the night La Main also came and was let inside of the fort. When he found out who had arrived, instead of making his escape, which he could easily have done, he requested to be let in amongst the others and the gate was opened for him. He promised to smoke and talk with Le Premier qui Volle and his party for some time, when the latter, watching an opportunity, shot La Main through the body. He fell and they finished him by firing five or six shots through him. In the morning, Le Premier qui Volle, as soon as the gates of the fort were opened, tumbled in the dead body of La Main, say-



ing, "Here is the dog who killed my brother, Broken Cloud. Do what you please with him."

Le Premier qui Volle is now at the head of the *Gens des Roches*, about forty lodges, and has turned out a good man for the whites; but his people are afraid of him, the more so because he is surrounded by a large band of relations.

I have made a trip with him from Fort Union to the Platte and have had an opportunity of getting some knowledge of his character. The rest of the family are all of the same disposition and in all probability the same quarrels will be the occasion of their deaths from time to time.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE INDIAN QUESTION.

Melancholy future of the tribes — Game disappearing — Enforced migration of the natives — Misery, destitution and bloody wars — Difficulty of introducing agriculture — Catholic missions needed — Kansas and Nebraska — Tragic end of Father Duerinck — Rapid decrease of the Indians — Their critical position — Attitude of the Republic — Rascality in execution of treaty provisions — Approaching extermination of western tribes — Self-government — Regarding mixture of races — Treaties of 1854 — Progressive invasion — Bad faith of the whites — Indians at their mercy.

*Gentlemen:*<sup>1</sup>

**I**N order to complete the observations which I had the honor of offering you in my late letters on the western tribes of Indians of the United States, I purpose submitting to you certain facts touching the present condition of the Indians of the upper Missouri and among the Rocky Mountains.

The facts — such is, at least, my opinion — reveal clearly the melancholy future which at no very remote epoch awaits these nations, if efficient means are not employed for preventing the woes with which they are threatened. My visit to several tribes, and above all that which I lately paid to the great Sioux nation, have only confirmed the sad forebodings to which my experience, during a prolonged residence among these forsaken children of the forest, had given birth. I have communicated these views, in substance, to an honorable agent of the United States Government, who is labor-

<sup>1</sup> Letter addressed to the directors of the association at Lyons, dated St. Louis, June 10, 1849. Forms Letter V, *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres*, VI, *Western Missions and Missionaries*. The latter text is here followed.

ing with ardor and constancy in the amelioration of the condition of the Indians, and who joins, as much as is in his power, the use of means to the laudable wishes of his heart.

I have traversed at several different times the vast plains which are watered by the Missouri and its principal tributaries, such as the Platte or Nebraska, Yellowstone, the Mankizita-Watpa, the Niobrara, Tchan Sausan, called James river by the whites, the Wasécha or Vermillion and the three great superior forks that constitute the source of the Missouri, viz., the Jefferson, the Gallatin and the Madison. Coasting along the north and south branches of the Saskatchewan, I penetrated 300 miles into the interior of the forests and plains watered by the Athabasca. In every place the whites, half-breeds and natives who inhabit these regions, agree in saying that the buffalo, moose, or American elk, and deer of all kinds, diminish in an alarming manner, and that in a few years these races of animals will have wholly disappeared. The territory traversed by the Athabasca furnished, some years ago, abundant game to the greater part of the nations of the Crees, and to a tribe of Assiniboins, which, sixty years previous, had detached themselves from the main body of their nation.

Well, over this vast extent of territory I met but three families, viz.— an old Iroquois with his children and grandchildren, numbering about thirty-seven; a family of half-breeds, composed of seven persons; and a Sioux with his wife and children. The Crees and the Assiniboins, hitherto the occupants of this land, have been forced to follow the track of the buffalo, and are beginning to intrude upon the territory of the Blackfeet. I resided a long time among the Flatheads and the Kalispels. I have visited at different epochs the Kootenais at the North, and the Shoshones or Snakes at the South. Their vast territories, watered by the principal branches of the upper Columbia and the Rio Colorado of the West, were formerly abundantly provided with

every variety of game, which furnished them with clothing and nourishment.

But now that the buffalo has disappeared from these lands, the poor Indians are obliged to go and pass a portion of the year east of the Rocky Mountains, in search of their only means of subsistence. Often, too, in pursuit of their prey, they are drawn into the regions claimed by the Crows and Blackfeet, and are thus obliged to open their way arms in hand. The Yanktons and the Santees, Sioux tribes, are beginning to make inroads on the hunting grounds of the Brûlés, a portion of the Sioux nation. The Poncas are often driven to the necessity of hunting in the lands of the Sioux and of the Cheyennes. Formerly the Iowas, the Omahas and the Otoes subsisted principally on the product of their buffalo hunts; at present they are reduced to the most pitiful condition, having nothing for food but a small quantity of deer, birds and roots. Such is their misery that they are forced to scour the country in every direction, and in little bands, most happy if they escape the ambush of an enemy more powerful than themselves, and who frequently massacre the old, the women and children. It is not rare here to have to deplore similar cruelties. Each year shows an increase of these revolting scenes — melancholy forerunners of an approaching and tragical issue.

The Pawnees and the Omahas are in a state of nearly absolute destitution. Surrounded by enemies, where shall they go to hunt the wild animals which often fail them, having retired to other sections? It is true that for a considerable time it has been customary among them to cultivate a little field of squashes and corn; but often, also, when the harvest appears to meet their expectation and their toil, the enemy comes suddenly and wrests from them this last pitiful resource.

The buffalo is disappearing and diminishing each successive year on the prairies of the upper Missouri. This does not, however, hinder them from being seen grazing in very numerous herds in particular localities; but the area of land

that these animals frequent is becoming more and more circumscribed. Besides, they do not remain in the same place, but change pasturage according to the seasons.

Thence arise the incursions which the Sioux make into the territories of the Aricaras, the Mandans, the Minnetarees, the Crows and the Assiniboins; thence also the mutual invasions of the Crows and the Blackfeet in their respective hunts. These depredations are committed by all the wandering tribes of the desert, and give birth to dissensions, and to incessant and bloody wars, which annually revive and multiply, to their great detriment and misfortune. It is not, therefore, astonishing that the number of these savages is gradually decreasing. In the plains, war and famine lend their aid; on the frontier of civilization, liquors, vices and maladies carry them off by thousands.

I have visited the Blackfeet, the Crows, Mandans, Assiniboins, the Aricaras, the Minnetarees, etc., who possess the whole region of the upper Missouri and its tributaries. The condition of all these savages, far from the influence of all religious and moral principles, renders them much alike — *ejusdem farinae*. Among them all are met the same cruelty, the same barbarity, the same sloth and supineness, in fine, the same degrading and revolting superstitions, pushed to the most remote limits which the human mind abandoned to itself, and under the empire of vile passions, can reach.

It is quite a common observation, and I have myself heard it offered by several persons, that the “religious as well as the social condition of the Indians of these regions, is in nowise capable of amelioration.” I am far from participating in this opinion. Let the obstacles arising from the people who style themselves civilized, be removed; let all trade in ardent spirits, that deadly scourge of the Indian, be prevented; let missionaries be sent, whose zeal is prompted only by the love of our divine Master, and with no object but the happiness of the poor souls intrusted to their care, and I am confident that in a short time we should have the consoling spectacle of a sensible improvement among them.

My personal observations serve as a foundation for these hopes. I have had frequent interviews with the Blackfeet, the Crows, the Assiniboins, the Aricaras and the Sioux. They have always lent the most marked attention to all my words; they have ever listened to the holy truths which I preached to them with extreme pleasure and a lively interest. They entreated me with the most captivating ingenuousness to take compassion on their miseries, to establish myself among them, promising to join a faithful practice to the knowledge of the truths I should impart to them. Among the Indians of the great American desert, I never found even one who presumed to rail against our holy religion.

To put an end to the cruel wars which decimate these nations; to rescue so many souls from the baneful consequences of the idolatry in which they are buried; to prevent the total destruction of these tribes already so wretched, and yet redeemed like ourselves by the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, is it not an enterprise worthy of inflaming the zeal of a minister of the gospel? a work worthy of claiming the efficient co-operation and assistance of a government as powerful as is that of the United States?

As to agriculture, considered as a means of civilization, its introduction will always be difficult among the Indians, as long as there remains to them a hope of procuring buffaloes or other wild animals. It would prove, in my opinion, a chimera to pretend to introduce this branch among them on an extensive scale in the beginning. We know, however, by experience, that, although little habituated to the fatigue of the assiduous labor that farming requires, some tribes have already attempted to cultivate their little fields. This step taken, each year, according to the abundance of the increase, the limits of these little fields might be extended. Like their brethren who reside west of the Rocky Mountains, they would become more and more attached to the soil whose productions would be the result of their toil. Their roving habits, the wars which often spring from them, would insensibly give place to a more peaceable and domestic life.

The animals which they would raise, replacing the buffalo, would insensibly efface its memory amid surrounding plenty.

During the last ten years, a great part of the disposable funds of the vice-province of Missouri have been employed in the relief of the Indians. The liberality of the Association for the Propagation of the Faith established at Lyons, and that of our friends, have assisted us powerfully in converting and civilizing the tribes beyond the Rocky Mountains. Several of our fellow-members still pursue there the same work of charity, and many of our Fathers and Brothers desire to visit the tribes which I visited last year. An establishment founded among them east of the Rocky Mountains would be most desirable; but the pecuniary means which they have at their disposal are very far from answering to the work which they contemplate. The lively interest which you take, gentlemen, in the salvation and civilization of so many thousands of men in the wilderness, inspires me with confidence to appeal to your generosity, which alone can furnish the means of conducting to a happy conclusion an enterprise so vast and so eminently Catholic.

There are among these Indians several hundreds of children of mixed blood, whose parents are anxious that means of instruction should be afforded them. To attain this, schools and establishments would be necessary, in which agriculture could be learned; and also many children of pure Indian blood could be received, as the heads of families are desirous of confiding them to the care of the missionaries. A short statistic will give you an idea of the good which might be done among these Indians. Among the Blackfeet, Father Point and myself baptized more than 1,100 children; among the Blood Indians, a tribe of Blackfeet, Monseigneur Thibault baptized sixty; the Reverend Monseigneur Bellecourt, of Red river, visited Fort Berthold, on the Missouri, and baptized a good number of the children of the Mandans; all the savages presented him their children for baptism. Father Hoeken, in an excursion made among several tribes on the Missouri, baptized over 400

persons. Monseigneur Ravoux, who visited some tribes of Sioux in 1847, and penetrated as far as Fort Pierre, was listened to everywhere with a consoling eagerness, and baptized a great many children. In my late tour among the Sioux, the Poncas, etc., I baptized more than 300 children and several adults.

From all these facts, may we not conclude, with sufficient certainty, that these poor souls seem ripe for a more peaceable life, and for a blessed eternity?

I have the honor to be, etc.

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*Reverend and Dear Father.*<sup>2</sup>

I send you a copy of a letter that I addressed to Mrs. P [armentier], a Belgian lady, residing at Brooklyn, near New York. She is a great benefactress of the missions. My letter contains some details concerning my recent visit to the Potawatomes, on the present very critical state of those Indians, and of all the nations and Indian tribes in the two new Territories of Kansas and Nebraska.

What I wrote to you in December, 1851, and you published in the *Précis Historiques*, of 1853, pages 398, etc., has been literally verified. A great number of towns and villages have sprung up in it as if by enchantment. The principal towns of Kansas are: Wyandot, Delaware, Douglas, Marysville, Iola, Atchison, Fort Scott, Pawnee, Lecompton, Neosho, Richmond, Tecumseh, Lavinia, Lawrence, Port William, Doniphan, Paolo, Alexandria, Indianola, Easton, Leavenworth, and many others. They differ in population and improvements. Lawrence and Leavenworth are the most considerable. This latter, which

<sup>2</sup> Letter addressed to the editor *Précis Historiques*, Brussels, dated University of St. Louis, February 26, 1858. Forms Letter XLV, Second Series, *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres*, and XXVII, Second Series, *Western Missions and Missionaries*. The latter text is here followed.



is now an episcopal city, contains already more than 8,000 inhabitants. They project building a territorial university in the town of Douglas. A medical college is established at Lecompton. The University of Kansas is incorporated and established at Leavenworth. Funds are set apart for the erection of schools, on a vast scale. They accrue from the sale of lands granted by the United States, which are extraordinarily extensive. All fines, pecuniary penalties, escheats, ordained by law, are also to be poured into the treasury of the schools and colleges.

Two months from this, the Territory of Kansas will be admitted as an independent State, and will form a portion of the great confederation of the United States. There exists little doubt, at present, but that Kansas will adopt the laws of the free States — that is to say, there will be no slavery.

Good Father Duerinck left a manuscript concerning all that passed in the Mission of St. Mary's. If it would give you pleasure, I will send it to you, according as my time will admit.

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University of St. Louis, February 24, 1858.

*Mrs. S. P [armentier], Brooklyn, N. Y.:*

Madam.—I have just terminated a journey of over 800 miles, going and returning in the midst of ice and snow by the most miserable roads and in wagons, which increased the inconveniences of the way. On my return to St. Louis, your kind letter and charitable donations were remitted to me. Accept my most humble thanks, with my heartfelt gratitude. I will assign the vestment to the mission of the Flatheads, which is very poor in church furniture. I hope to find, in the beginning of spring, a good opportunity of dispatching it by the boats of the Fur Company. The marine plants will be most acceptable to Fathers B. and H. in our colleges of Namur and Ant-

werp, in Belgium, and will be admired, I am sure, in the collections of those two establishments. Once more, Madam, receive my sincere thanks for the new benefits that you have just added to the long list of numerous others, commenced many years since; and for which we have naught but poor prayers to render. We shall not cease to address them to the Lord, for the happiness of your family; and I will appeal to our pious Indians, that they continue to pray for their kind Mothers — their good benefactresses.

The occasion of the voyage, which I have mentioned in the beginning of my letter, was a glimmer of hope of being able to discover the body of our dear brother in Jesus Christ, the Reverend Father Duerinck. Some days after the unfortunate accident, the captain of a steamboat had seen a dead body on a sand-bank, near the place of the accident, and had buried it. At this news I started to visit that solitary grave, on the bank of the Missouri, near the town of Liberty. He whom this grave contained was not the brother, the cherished friend and relative I sought. His dress denoted a hand on some boat. I was very much grieved. Our petitions so far have not been heard. We hope, however, that the great St. Anthony of Padua, implored by so many pious souls, will be propitious; and I beg you to be so kind as to join your prayers with these fervent invocations. It would be a source of consolation could we find the lost remains of Father Duerinck, and inter them in consecrated ground, beside his brethren who have preceded him.

From the town of Liberty I repaired to St. Mary's, in order to regulate some affairs there. I began the mission of the Potawatomes in 1838. My heart seemed to dilate among these good children of the plains, where in former days I had found so many consolations in the exercises of the holy ministry. I had the happiness of seeing a great number of Indians approach holy communion, with the deepest recollection. From the altar I addressed them

some words of consolation and encouragement in the service of the Divine Pastor. They have great need, especially at present, for the whites have surrounded them on all sides; and they will soon hem them in more closely on their own little reserves, or portions of earth that the Government has granted them.

I am aware, Madam, that you take a deep interest in the welfare of the poor Indians. Allow me, therefore, to converse with you some moments on their position in general, and in particular of what concerns the Indians of St. Mary's among the Potawatomes.

At the period of my arrival among the Potawatomes (in 1838), the nation numbered beyond 4,000 souls. It is now reduced to 3,000, of whom 2,000 are Catholics. All the surrounding tribes have diminished in the same ratio.

To what are we to attribute this rapid decrease of the Indian race? This is one of those mysteries of Providence that all the sagacity of philosophy has in vain endeavored to penetrate. The immoderate use of intoxicating liquors, change of climate and of diet, vices, pestilential maladies (all these evils which contact with the whites produces among savages), improvidence and want of industry, all, united or singly, give, it appears to me, but an imperfect solution of this great problem. Whence is it that the red-man bends with such difficulty to the manners and customs of the European race? Whence is it again, that the European race refuses so obstinately to sympathize with the red race; and notwithstanding its philanthropy, or love of mankind, seems rather disposed to annihilate than to civilize these poor children, offspring of the same Father? Whence springs that insurmountable barrier between the two races? Whence is it that the stronger pursues the weaker with such an animosity, and never relents until the latter is overthrown? There is involved in this, perhaps, a secret that none but the Judge Supreme can explain.

Often when I reflect on the position of so many barbarous nations, who formerly were the owners of so immense

countries, and which are at the present day in imminent danger of being totally dispossessed by another people, I call to mind the primitive inhabitants of Palestine, who, masters also of one of the most beautiful countries in the world, saw themselves deprived of it by a severe but most just judgment of the Creator, whose menaces they had despised and whose glory they had profaned. Like the Canaanites, the savage tribes, taken in general, have been punished gradually. Perhaps they, like them, have been too long deaf to the divine voice, inviting them to quit their gross errors and embrace the doctrines of truth. Who has entered into the councils of eternal wisdom? Who can accuse his judgments of injustice? Cannot God, to whom the whole creation belongs, dispose of his property according to his own good pleasure? But in displaying his justice, he forgets not his mercy. Here below he strikes only to heal. His divine heart is ever open to those even whose iniquities he punishes.

The melancholy changes to which the condition of the Indian has been subjected within a few years, have led me to these mournful reflections. Under the administration of President Pierce, the whole vast Indian country within the Rocky Mountains, comprehended in the vicariate of Bishop Miège (except a little portion situated toward the south), has been organized into two Territories, known under the names of Kansas and Nebraska; that is to say, the Congress has decreed that this country is incorporated into the Union and open to the whites who are willing to settle there, in order to form, after a lapse of time, two States, similar in all respects to the other States of the Great Republic. Although, for the moment, the new colonists have orders to respect the territories or the lands reserved to the savages, we may nevertheless say that this decree has virtually destroyed all the Indian nationalities. Scarcely was the law known when the emigrants, like the waters of a great river which has overflowed its banks, impetuously passed the barrier and inundated the country.

Now see the poor Indians surrounded by white men, and their reserves forming little more than islets amid the ocean. The savages who before had vast countries for their hunting grounds, are at present restricted within narrow limits, having naught for subsistence but the product of their farms, which few of them know how to cultivate properly. Again, this state is only precarious. Unless they hasten to divide their lands and become citizens, they are in danger of losing all, and of being naught but vagabonds. How replete with difficulties is such a change! What a stormy and tempestuous future for these unfortunate tribes! The evil is great, but it is one that must be encountered, since there is no remedy. The Indians, even the most advanced in civilization, seem to us ill-prepared to meet all the exigencies of their situation.

In order to form a just idea of their critical position, and of the melancholy consequences which will be the result, unless restrained by a special protection of divine Providence, imagine two societies — one representing the manners and customs of barbarians, the other all the splendor of modern civilization — coming in contact. How many years will elapse before there will be a perfect fusion between the two societies, before unison will exist, before they can dwell together in complete harmony? Much time will be required ere the barbarous state will attain the height of the civilized! Neither the first, nor the second, nor the third generation, notwithstanding untiring efforts, would obtain that happy result, such as the thing is understood in our days. Hence, previous to a perfect fusion between the societies, the civilized society will have the advantage over the barbarous; it will have it entirely at its mercy, to make it subservient to its will and pleasure. In a word, the barbarian can no better sustain itself in presence of civilization, than the simplicity of childhood can contest against the malicious prudence of mature age. This, in my opinion, is what will be realized in the Great Desert, when the copper-colored race will come in contact with the

white. The judgment of the savage is not sufficiently ripe to be able to compete with the wisdom of man born in the bosom of civilization. It is this conviction which fills us with anxiety for the future of our dear neophytes in the different missions. We confide solely in divine goodness, which, we hope, will not fail to come to the help of his children.

It was not difficult to descry from afar that grand event which must engulf in one common wreck all the Indian tribes. The storm which has just burst forth over their heads was long preparing; it could not escape the observing eye. We saw the American Republic soaring, with the rapidity of the eagle's flight, toward the plenitude of her power. Every year she adds new countries to her limits. She ambitioned nothing less than extending her domination from the Atlantic to the Pacific, so as to embrace the commerce of the whole world, and dispute with other mighty nations the glory of pre-eminence. Her object is attained. All bend to her sceptre; all Indian nationality is at her feet. Far be it from us, however, to accuse the noble Republic of injustice and inhumanity in her late treaties. It seems to us, on the contrary, that no nation has ever furnished them more means of civilization. If any one must be blamed on this point, it is rather private persons, new colonists, who act and place themselves in direct opposition with the good intentions of the Government in behalf of the savages.

But though the future appears sombre and melancholy, the past, at least, leaves not the missionaries comfortless. In the space of the last ten years, our Fathers at Saint Mary's have baptized beyond 400 adults, and a great number of children. The gospel seed has not fallen on sterile soil. The greater part of these neophytes have always given proofs of a strong faith and of a tender piety. The heart of the missionary is soothed with an unspeakable joy, on witnessing their assiduity in the church, their ardor in approaching the sacraments, their resignation in sickness,

their natural charity, exercised especially in regard to the poor, the orphans and the sick; and above all, their zeal for the conversion of unbelievers. They are styled savages, but we may boldly assert that, in all our great cities, and everywhere, thousands of whites are more deserving of this title.

A great number of Potawatomes have made considerable progress in agriculture, and live in a certain degree of affluence. The whites who pass by, and visit the little territory of the Potawatomes, especially in the environs of St. Mary's Mission, are agreeably surprised. They find it difficult to believe that they are among Indians.

It must be acknowledged that the Potawatomes have been specially favored by heaven. During the last quarter of a century, they have had the happiness of having Black-gowns among them; and, during sixteen or seventeen years, they have Ladies of the Sacred Heart, for the education of their girls. The mission, on its present footing, with its two schools, for girls and boys, is a double advantage for those good people. The children acquire there, with religious instruction, the love of industry; the adults find employment in it, and hence a means of subsistence. They see, by the manual labor of our brothers, what man can acquire by diligence.

We may add that God has treated the Potawatomes with great predilection. He has willed that several nations should contribute to their salvation. Such are, among others, Belgium, Holland, France, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Canada and the United States. Each of these countries has offered them material aid and missionaries. Monseigneur Miège has resided among them four years; hence their humble temple, constructed of logs, has been exalted to the rank of cathedral.

In the critical conjuncture in which they stand at present — on the eve of forming a last treaty with the Government of the United States, a treaty of life or death for this poor tribe — they have, in the person of Colonel Murphy, the

agent of the Government, an advocate, a protector, and the best of fathers. This, Madam, leads me to hope that God has very particular designs of mercy over them, and that he will never forsake them. In the moment of danger, you, I am confident, will not forget them in your charitable prayers.

Be so kind as to recall me to the kind remembrances of Mr. and Mrs. Bayer, and of Miss Rosine, and believe me, with the most profound respect and esteem, Madam.

Your most humble and most obedient servant, etc.,

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The aborigines,<sup>3</sup> or first inhabitants of the soil, are forced ( *nolens volens* ) to sell and cede their lands, with the ashes of their ancestors, so dear to their hearts and to all their recollections, in order to make room for the strangers who come in to settle the new States and Territories, and to go and occupy some new reserve, unknown and limited, which in turn they must abandon later; and so on from one reserve to another, until there remain only arid, sterile lands, uninhabitable for white men, and without game, where they drag out a miserable existence, dwindle away and disappear. The payment of their annuities, for the millions of acres of land that they have ceded to the Government, are often overlooked or deferred, though they are the Indians' only means of support; and often, too, when these annuities get through to their destination, there are rascals following or accompanying them who extort the pittance from the Indians, exchanging it for barrels of "fire-water," or useless trinkets. The terms of the treaties are often transgressed, and the Indians overwhelmed with injuries and insults. Woe to them, if they resist the unjust and wicked aggressors, for then they are driven out or massacred like

<sup>3</sup> Extract from a letter in French, dated On Board the Steamer *Ontario*, Fort Benton, Montana, June 10, 1866. See page 856.



wild beasts, without pity, or the least remorse, or any thought that the killing of a savage comes under the head of murder. A certain C———, a Methodist minister, transformed into a colonel of militia and placed at the head of a fort, ordered the massacre (children, women, and old men included) of several hundred Indians, who had come to make a friendly visit to the post, according to their habit of many years' standing. All the papers were full of it and the frightful atrocity was fully exposed; still the monster found admirers and defenders, and still wears his epaulets. This is one case among a thousand. Is it surprising that the victims of such cruelties and oppressions, having no recourse to any laws for justice, rise furious, dig up the tomahawk and make their appeal to their quiver and scalping-knife, as their last and only resort for the remedy that is denied them elsewhere?

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University of St. Louis, December 30, 1854.

*Reverend Father:*<sup>4</sup>

The "Indian Question" has been much agitated in the United States during the course of this year. Two great Territories, Kansas and Nebraska, will henceforth form a portion of the great confederation. They embrace all that part of the wilderness included between the confines of the State of Missouri and the forty-ninth degree of north latitude, and extend westward to the summit of the Rocky Mountains.

Questions concerning the future of the Indians have frequently been laid before me by persons who appear interested in the destiny of these poor creatures. Knowing the

<sup>4</sup> Letter addressed to the editor *Précis Historiques*, dated St. Louis, December 30, 1854. Forms Letter XIV, Second Series, *Cinquante Nouvelles Lettres* and *Western Missions and Missionaries*. The latter text is here followed. Father De Smet made numerous copies of these questions and answers, in French and English, for various correspondents.

affection and the interest which you, Reverend Father, entertain for them, I propose giving you my views and apprehensions in regard to them—views and apprehensions which I have long entertained. I have already said a few words on the subject, in a letter written in 1851, and inserted in the fortieth number of your *Précis Historiques*. In the course of that same year I received a letter from a much-respected gentleman<sup>5</sup> in Paris, who requested me to give him some details of the condition and present state of the Indian tribes of North America. I will give you in this letter the questions of that correspondent, and my replies. I will add what has passed since; above all, the resolutions taken and the treaties concluded, from 1851 till December of the year 1854, between the American Government and the aborigines.

*First Question.*—Do you think that the aborigines west of the Mississippi will be exterminated like those east of that river? In other words, will the Indians west of the Mississippi share the same fate as their brethren east of it?

*Reply.*—The same lot that the Indians east of the Mississippi have experienced, will at no distant day overtake those who dwell on the west of the same river. As the white population advances and penetrates into the interior, the aborigines will gradually withdraw. Already, even (in 1851), it is perceptible that the whites look with a covetous eye on the fertile lands of the Delawares, Potawatomies, Shawnees, and others on our frontiers, and project the organization of a new Territory—Nebraska. I should not be surprised if, in a few years, negotiations were entered upon for the purchase of those lands, and the removal of the Indians, who will be forced to retire farther west. The great openings offered to emigration by the definitive arrangement of the Oregon Question, as well as the acquisition of New Mexico, California and Utah, have alone, thus far, hindered any efforts for extinguishing the Indian titles or rights to the lands situated immediately west of the State

<sup>5</sup> René de Semallé.

of Missouri, and those situated on the south side of the river Missouri, between the rivers Kansas and Platte, and probably as high as the Niobrara or *L'Eau-qui-court*.

*Second Question.*— In case the Indians, having formed a constitution for their own government, should find themselves in the territory of one of the United States of America, would there not be reason to fear that these rising communities would be treated with the same barbarity and injustice as were the Cherokees, who, contrary to all equity, were deprived of their territory by the State of Georgia, and transported to the lands of upper Arkansas?

*Reply.*— I answer in the affirmative. In a few years hence (1851), treaties will probably be concluded with those tribes for “reservations,” that is to say, for portions of their lands set apart for their future residences. But, although the letter of the treaty guarantees them such “reservations,” you may rest assured that as soon as the supposed necessities of a thriving white population demand these lands, the whites will find pretexts for dispossessing the Indians. This is accomplished, either by negotiation or nominal purchase, or by rendering their situation so painful that they find no alternative but a transfer or emigration.

*Third and Fourth Questions.*— When the Territory of Oregon is incorporated as one of the States of the Union, could not the missionaries of that region organize the converted tribes into districts and distinct counties, peopled with American citizens of Indian origin? Then the property of the Indians would become inviolable, and the missionaries would have time to persuade them to abandon their wandering, hunter life, and embrace the pastoral; after a time they would cultivate the soil, without being disturbed by the pretensions of the whites.

*Reply.*— When Oregon takes her place as a State in the Union she will follow the same policy that has been hitherto followed by the other States; that is, she will subject all the inhabitants to her jurisdiction and laws. The policy of the United States has ever been to remove the Indians from

each new State as soon as it is admitted as a part of the confederation; and in case portions of the tribes remain on their lands, as was the case in the States of New York, Indiana, Michigan and Ohio, the situation of the Indians is extremely disagreeable, their progress very slow. Comparing themselves with the whites who surround them, and whom they see, ordinarily, so enterprising and industrious, they generally experience a sentiment of inferiority, which overwhelms and discourages them. The Stockbridges (Mohegans<sup>6</sup>), who enjoyed for several years, all the rights of citizens in the State of Wisconsin, petitioned the authorities to relieve them from their obligations as such, and earnestly solicited the Government to grant them an abode, either in Minnesota or west of the Missouri. Even those who live in the "reserves," fine sections of land granted and secured by special treaties, in Illinois, Michigan, Indiana and Ohio, finding themselves strangers on their native soil, sold all they had and rejoined their tribes in the West. The neighborhood of the whites had become intolerable to them. When the lands of the Indians cease to be valuable, and the whites will and can do without them, then only will the Indians enjoy the privilege of retaining them.

*Fifth Question.*— The following is an extract from a law of the 27th of September, 1850: "It is granted to each inhabitant, or occupant of public land, including herein the half-breeds above eighteen years of age, citizens of the United States, or having made a declaration of intention to become citizens, or who shall make such declaration either before the 1st of December, 1851," etc. Remark that this law proves two things; first, that there are half-breeds in Oregon; second, that the half-breeds have the rights of white citizens. Do you not think that at some future day, say in the course of a century, Oregon will be peopled solely by a heterogeneous race, with striking traits of a mixed race of Indian and white blood, and a remnant of the aborigines

<sup>6</sup> Iroquois.

in the defiles or valleys of the mountains, like the Celts of Scotland and the Araucanians of Chile? Then Oregon would enter the category of all the Spanish States of South America, in which the red men, far from being exterminated, have, on the contrary, made efforts to assimilate themselves to the whites.

*Reply.*—I answer to this last question, that in case the missionaries should collect the half-breeds with the most docile Indians, in districts or counties, under this territorial law of Oregon, and give the youth an education, both religious and agricultural, the result would be a greater mingling of Indian and white blood, and thus the future population of Oregon would be in some manner heterogeneous.

The future prospect of the Indian tribes is very dark and melancholy. Placed, as they are, under the jurisdiction of the United States, surrounded on every side by whites, their ruin appears certain. These savages disappear insensibly as the emigrations of the whites succeed each other and advance. In fifty years there will be few traces of the native races in the western portion of this hemisphere. Where are those powerful tribes which, at the commencement of this age, dwelt in the extensive and beautiful region, now divided among the States of the West? Remnants only exist on our western frontiers. In our own day the same causes are in full play, and produce the same effects. And for the last four years, the great tide of European emigration but makes the effect more certain. These emigrations multiply more and more in the present day, and succeed like the waves of ocean. They must find room; that room is the West.

Such are the responses which I gave in 1851 to M. D—. In the space of three years, what was simply an opinion has become a fact. My answer to the second question has been literally verified.

In the course of this year, 1854, treaties were concluded with the Omahas, the Otoes and Missouris, the Sauks, the Foxes of Missouri, the Iowas, the Kickapoos, the Shawnees

and the Delawares, as well as with the Miamis, the Weas, the Piankeshaws, the Kaskaskias and the Peorias. By these treaties, these different tribes cede to the United States the most extensive and most advantageous portions of their respective territories, and retain, as we have already said, but a limited and circumscribed demesne, termed a "reserve," for the wants of each particular tribe, and intended as their future residence.

We remark daily in the newspapers that great numbers of emigrants are spreading already over the territories ceded; yet the conditions precedent of the treaties between the Government and many of the tribes expressly forbid the whites to settle there before the survey and sale of the lands to the profit of the Indians. Notwithstanding these conditions, the whites settle there, and even defy the authorities to deter them.

The new organization of the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska abrogates the protecting "intercourse laws." Thereby it has overthrown the feeble barrier which opposed the introduction of intoxicating liquors, which the inhabitants so expressively define by the term "Indian fire-water." In a few short years these little reservations, or Indian settlements, will be surrounded by a white population; these whites, being for the most part vicious and corrupt, will introduce and furnish liquors in abundance, in order to satisfy the depraved taste of the Indian. In all this the sole object is to deprive these unfortunate men of all that remains to them in land and money. In this position of affairs, I cannot conceive how the Indians can be protected against the dangerous influences which will inevitably surround them on all sides. Ere long (perhaps by the close of 1856) the delegates of the Territory of Kansas will knock at the door of Congress for admittance into the Union. If this request be granted, we may at once bid farewell to the independence of the Indians and the maintenance of their reservations. The new State will directly establish her jurisdiction over all the inhabitants found within her limits.

Although the Indians appear to be necessarily protected by the general stipulations accorded on the part of the Government itself, constant experience demonstrates that they cannot exist within the limits of a State, unless they become citizens thereof. Witness the Creeks and Cherokees in the State of Georgia, who at one time were on the point of bringing the General Government and the State into conflict.

In several of the late treaties that I have mentioned, the Indians have renounced their permanent annuities, and, in exchange, have consented to accept considerable sums for a limited number of years, and payments at fixed terms. However liberal be the annuity, the Indian never lays anything aside for his future necessities; this is his character. He lives from day to day. All is expended in the course of the year in which the payment is made. Let us suppose, therefore, that the amount of the last payment has been poured forth, what will consequently become of those poor tribes? Here, it appears to me, is the solution of the problem: They must either perish miserably, or sell their reserves, or go and rejoin the wandering bands of the plains, or cultivate the soil. But, observe well, they are surrounded by whites who contemn them, hate them, and who will demoralize them in a very short time. If it be asked, to what must be attributed the improvidence of the tribes, which neglect to exchange their permanent annuities for sums to be paid at limited terms, but of greater length? The reason is found in the disparity of the parties who make the treaty. On one side stands a shrewd and, perhaps, unscrupulous Government officer; on the other, a few ignorant chiefs, accompanied by their half-breed interpreters, whose integrity is far from being proverbial.

Adding to these facts the ravages caused every year by the smallpox, the measles, the cholera and other maladies, as well as their incessant wars and divisions, I think I may repeat the melancholy foresight that, in a few years, there will remain but very feeble vestiges of those tribes in the

reserves guaranteed to them by the late treaties.<sup>7</sup> At this moment the agents continue to make new treaties, by which the Government proposes to purchase the lands of the Osages, Potawatomies and several other tribes.

Since the discovery of America the system of removing and of exiling the Indians farther inland or in the interior, has been assiduously exercised by the whites in this portion of the continent. In the early times, they went by slow degrees; but as the European colonies multiplied and increased in power, the system has been pushed with more vigor. At present, this same policy marches with gigantic steps. Resistance on the part of the natives could but hasten their ruin. The drama of population reaches its last scene at the east and west bases of the Rocky Mountains. In a few years the curtain will fall over the Indian tribes and veil them forever. They will live only in history. The whites continue to spread like a torrent over California, over Washington, Utah and Oregon; over the States of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Texas and New Mexico; and lastly, over Kansas and Nebraska.<sup>8</sup>

Within a recent period, and since I have resided in America, all these States and these Territories were still the exclusive domain of the Indians. As the whites settle and multiply in them, the Indians disappear and seem to die out. The immense regions that I have just named include several millions of square miles.

<sup>7</sup> To this point the answers to the foregoing questions and the comments thereon are taken literally from letters dated February 16, 1852, and October 28, 1854, written by John Haverty of St. Louis, to whom Father De Smet had submitted the questions for an expression of opinion.

<sup>8</sup> On the 1st of August, 1854, in the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska, there was not a town or village of whites. On the 30th of December, of the same year, thirty or forty sites had been chosen for building villages and towns without delay. Labor was begun at many points; houses are building, farms laid out. All is life and activity in these virgin territories.—*Author's Note.*



Father Felix Martin wrote me recently from Canada: "The Indian missions are reduced almost to nothing. They follow in the train of those sad tribes which are no more what they once were. It is like a body which gradually sinks in itself. It is losing its grandeur, its force, its primitive forms. They have lost the character of nations; they are individualities, with some ancient traditions, and even these traces are gradually becoming effaced."

If the poor and unfortunate inhabitants of the Indian Territory were treated with more justice and good faith, they would cause little trouble. They complain, and doubtless, justly, of the dishonesty of the whites. These banish them from their native soil, from the tombs of their fathers, to which they are devotedly attached, and from their ancient hunting and fishing grounds: they must consequently seek elsewhere what is wrested from them, and build their cabins in another and a strange clime. But they are scarcely at ease in their new abode when they are removed a second and third time. With each successive emigration, they find their grounds restricted, their hunts and fishing places less abundant. Yet in all the treaties the agents promise them, on the part of the President, whom they call their Great Father, protection and privileges that are never realized. Is it therefore astonishing that the savages give the whites the name of forked tongues, or liars? They say that the whites "walk in crooked paths to attain their objects;" that their declarations of friendship, all beautiful and favorable as they appear, "never entered their hearts," and pass, ever with the same facility, "from the end of the tongue;" that they approach the Indian, "a smile on their lips," take him by the hand, to deceive him more easily, inebriate him and corrupt his children. "Like serpents," said Black Hawk, in his famous speech, "they have glided in among us; they have taken possession of our hearth-stones. The opossum and the deer have disappeared at their approach. We are overwhelmed with misery. The very contact of the whites has poisoned us."

These complaints and lamentations have been a thousand times repeated, in vain, in the speeches of the Indian orators, when the agents of the United States Government endeavor to make propositions for the purchase of their lands. A feeble ray of hope for the preservation of a great number of Indians is left, if the law proposed by Senator Johnson is adopted in sincerity on both sides, by the Government and by the Indians. Mr. Johnson proposes to establish three territorial governments in the Indian Territory inhabited by the Choctaws, Creeks, Cherokees, Chickasaws and other tribes, with the provision of being admitted later as distinct members of the confederated United States. On the 25th of last November, Harkins, chief among the Choctaws, addressed a speech on this subject to his nation, assembled in council. Among other things, he said to them: "I appeal to you, what will become of us if we reject the proposition of Senator Johnson? Can we hope to remain a people, always separate and distinct? This is not possible. The time must come; yes, the time is approaching, in which we shall be swallowed up; and that, notwithstanding our just claims! I speak boldly. It is a fact; our days of peace and happiness are gone, and forever. No opposition, on our part, can ever arrest the march of the United States toward grandeur and power, nor hinder the entire occupation of the vast American continent. We have no power nor influence over the most minute project of this Government. It looks upon and considers us in the light of little children, as pupils under its tutelage and protection; it does with us as seems to it good. Can the Choctaws change the face of things? If the desire of life is not extinct in our hearts; if we would preserve among us the rights of a people, one sole means remains to us: it is to instruct and civilize the youth, promptly and efficaciously. The day of fraternity has arrived. We must act together, and by common consent. Let us attentively consider our critical situation, and the course now left us. One false step may prove fatal to our existence as a nation. I therefore propose that the council take this sub-

ject into consideration, and that a committee be named by it to discuss and deliberate on the advantages and disadvantages of the proposition made to the Choctaws. Is it just and wise for the Choctaws to refuse a liberal and favorable offer, and expose themselves to the destiny of the Indians of Nebraska?"

According to news received recently, through a journal published in the Indian country, the speech of the chief has produced a profound impression, and was loudly applauded by all the counselors. All the intelligent Choctaws approve the measure. The Protestant missionaries oppose the bill, and employ all their artifices and influence to prevent its success. Harkins proposes their expulsion. "It is our money," said he, "that these mercenaries come here to get. Surely, our money can get us better teachers. Let us therefore try to procure good missionaries, with whom we can live in harmony and good understanding; who will give us the assurance that their doctrine is based on that of the apostles and of Jesus Christ."

The Chickasaws are represented as opposed to Senator Johnson's measure. We trust, however, that the vote of the majority will prove favorable, and that the three territorial States will be established. It is, in my opinion, a last attempt and a last chance of existence for the sad remnants of the poor Indians of America.

It is, I will say, if I may here repeat what I wrote in my second letter in 1853, their only remaining source of happiness: humanity and justice seem to demand it. If they are again repulsed and driven inland, they will infallibly perish. Such as refuse to submit, and accept the definitive arrangement, the only favorable one left, must resume the nomad life of the prairies, and close their career with the vanishing buffalo and other animals.

I have the honor to be, etc.







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