Powder river close column was formed and everything was conducted with military strictness and precision. At the head of the column was Father De Smet's banner. The Indians were decked out in the ultra style of the wild warriors, to a degree, in fact, rarely witnessed at that late day. It was an impressive and awe-inspiring scene. "Nevertheless," says Father De Smet, "my heart was as tranquil and my mind as calm as if I had been in the midst of you."

They found the main camp to consist of some four or five thousand Indians who received them with every demonstration of joy. A large lodge had been prepared for Father De Smet by Sitting Bull, the leader of the hostiles. The Father was weary with his long journey and after a little luncheon lay down in his lodge and went to sleep. When he awoke Sitting Bull was beside him, and with him were three other leading chiefs. Sitting Bull at once addressed Father De Smet: "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) "of six or
p.98 seven hundred 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. Today 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 as good am I ready to become toward them."

The chiefs and Father De Smet then conferred about the great council which it was proposed to hold on the morrow to determine what should be done about going to see the commissioners. The rest of the day until late at night was spent in visits and conversations with the leading men of the camp. Here occurred one of those striking incidents with which Father De Smet's intercourse with the Indians was so full. We give it in the Father's own words: "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 eagerly and with interest, to know from whom he had received it. After a moment's thought, and counting upon his fingers, he answered, 'It was you, Blackrobe, who gave me this cross. I have never laid it aside for twanty-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 whiskey 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
p.99 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 w 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.'"

Father De Smet was deeply touched by the incident and endeavored to instill into the mind of the Indian the deeper truths of the Christian life. The old man was so enraptured with the venerable apostle that when Father De Smet left the council he followed him over three hundred miles.

The 20th of June was the day set for the council and great preparations were made for it. A circular space of about 170 feet in diameter was inclosed by a high wall composed of large skin tepees of some twenty robes each, spread out flat and hung from pine poles set around the circumference of the circle. Father De Smet's banner was hoisted on the side of the circle opposite the entrance and a seat was prepared for him near it. When the Indians had taken their places, Father De Smet "was solemnly introduced into this salon champetre, which was improvised for the occasion by the two head chiefs,