

.....The inhabitants of the fort had carefully recommended to us to avoid meeting the Yanktonnais, the Santees, the Hunkpapas, the Ogallalas, and the Blackfeet Sioux. Still we had to traverse the plains where they range. On the third day, a party of Yanktonnais and Santees, who were in hiding behind a butte, suddenly surprised us; but they were so far from meaning any harm that they loaded us with kindnesses, and after smoking the calumet of peace with us, furnished us provisions for the road. The next day we met several other parties who showed us the same friendliness and the same attentions; they shook hands with us and we smoked with them.

p.252 On the fifth (Eng. ninth) day we found ourselves in the neighborhood of the Blackfeet Sioux, a detached tribe of the Blackfeet of the mountains. Their name alone and the race from which they descend terrified us; we therefore traveled as much as possible in the ravines, to conceal ourselves from the piercing eye of the savages who were roaming in the plains. Toward noon we stopped near a lovely spring to dine and take a moment's rest. As we were congratulating ourselves on not having yet met those redoubtable Blackfeet, who had been following our tracks in the ravines for several hours, came at us in a gallop. They were armed with guns, bows and arrows, almost naked, and painted in the most outlandish manner. I rose at once and presented my hand to him whom I believed to be the chief of the band; he said coldly, "Why are you hiding in this ravine?" I answered him that we were hungry and that the spring had invited us to take a moment's repose. He looked at me with wonder, and addressing the Canadian, who could speak the Sioux language a little better, said to him, "I have never seen such a man in my life. Who is he?" My long black robe and the missionary's cross that I bore upon my breast especially excited his curiosity. The Canadian answered him (and under the circumstances he was prodigal of his titles) "It is the man who talks to the Great Spirit. It is a chief or Black-gown of the Frenchmen." His fierce look at once changed; he ordered his warriors to put away their weapons and they all shook hands with me. I made them a present of a big twist of tobacco and everybody sat down in a circle and smoked the pipe of peace and friendship. He then besought me to accompany him and to pass the night in his village, which was at no great distance. I followed him, and on coming in sight of the camp, which comprised some hundred lodges, or about 1,000 souls, I stopped a quarter of a mile away in a fair meadow on the bank of a fair river, and there pitched my camp. I had the head chief invited to sup with me. When I said the Benedicte, he asked the Canadian what I was doing. He answered that I was speaking to the Great Spirit to thank him for having procured us whereof to eat. He uttered an exclamation of approval.

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Twelve warriors and their chief, in full costume, shortly afterward presented themselves before my lodge and spread a large and fine buffalo robe. The head chief took me by the arm and leading me to the skin made me a sign to be seated. I had no idea of the meaning of this ceremony, but I sat down, thinking that it was an invitation to smoke the calumet with them. Judge of my surprise when I beheld the twelve warriors seize this kind of carpet by the ends, lift me from the ground and preceded by their chief, carry me in triumph to the village, where everybody was instantly afoot to see the Black-robe. The most honorable place in the chief's lodge was assigned to me, and he, surrounded by forty of his principal warriors, harangued me in these terms: "Black-robe, this is the happiest day of our lives. To-day for the first time we see among us a man who comes so near to the Great Spirit. Here are the principal braves of my tribe. I have bidden them to the feast that I have had prepared for you, that they may never lose the memory of so happy a day." Then he requested that I would speak again to the Great Spirit before commencing the feast; I made the sign of the cross and said the prayer. All the time it lasted, all the savage company, following their chief's example, held their heads raised toward heaven; the moment it was ended, they lowered their right hands to the ground. I asked the chief for an explanation of this ceremony. "We raise our hands," he replied, "because we are wholly dependent on the Great Spirit; it is his liberal hand that supplies all our wants. We