

did no more than retard their progress. On the 9th of June, having seen no signs of the hostile band, some scouts were sent out to beat up the country. The line of march of the main column was agreed upon and the scouts were to rejoin it as soon as they should gain any definite information. They were given liberal presents of tobacco to present to the hostiles, if found, for the sending of tobacco "is the same thing as a formal invitation, or the announcement of the desire to meet and confer upon important matters. 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."

On the 16th the scouts returned "at the head of a deputation of eighteen warriors, announcing their arrival by 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; and that all the chiefs and warriors were awaiting me with impatience, wishing to hear me and learn the motives of my visit.' Afterwards 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 the 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. There were uproarious reunions, a la sauvage, but harmony and cordiality prevailed."

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Pursuing their march through a most difficult tract of country, they finally came, on the 19th, to the bluffs of Powder river, and beheld from their crest a beautiful panorama outspread before them. In a country where there is not moisture enough to sustain trees, and the eye is rarely refreshed by the sight of the beautiful object in nature, it is an exquisite joy to the weary traveler to come upon a large stream whose banks are lined with forests. Standing upon the lofty bluffs that define the courses of the Powder and Yellowstone valleys, our travelers beheld to the west the broad valley of the latter stream and to the south that of the Powder. Along each were lines of trees that marked the course of the streams as far as the eye could reach, while the glimmering water appeared here and there like quiet mirrors on the landscape.

But Father De Smet saw other sights on this occasion which gave him but little time to admire the beauties of nature. "Some four miles off in the Powder river bottoms," he writes, "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 hold name of Jesus on one side and on the other the image of the 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 calvacade 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 the 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."

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There was much wild noise, and commotion, but all in good spirit, and when they reached the main body, Father De Smet shook hands with all of them and won their hearts at once by the benevolence of his manner and his evident interest in their welfare. It now remained to make the final march of some ten or twelve miles to the main camp. Four head chiefs acted as a bodyguard to Father De Smet to protect him against any treacherous attack. After crossing