

Notes

The Plains tribes ranged between the Rockies and the Missouri River on that great carpet of grass which extended from the Colorado River in Texas northward clear to the Saskatchewan River in Canada. Or rather, they lived in that area, though ranging ^{far} beyond its borders. There were, all together, nine tribes of true Plains Indians, who lived in tipis, hunted buffalo, danced the Sun Dance, and camped, when all together, in a circle. Their social organization consisted of bands of relatives forming tribes, and sometimes of tribes combining in a confederation. Politically they were ruled by societies of warriors, whose mouthpieces and leaders were chiefs. Each of these tribes had its own language, its own religion, its own form of government, and different customs. Each tribe also had a character as readily recognizable as were the footprints of their characteristic moccasins.

Along the Canadian border we find the Blackfoot confederacy, consisting of the Siksika (true Blackfeet), the Piegans and the Bloods -- numerous, powerful, implacable enemies of the white men, great fighters. The Blackfeet were ruled by a combination of twelve warrior societies known as the All-Comrades. They worshipped the sun, had a great number of medicine bundles and elaborate ceremonies, and delighted in tales of the mythical Old Man. They had no friends but the Atsena, the Sarsi, and the Hudson's Bay Company. But their enemies abounded. They fought with all the neighbors around their vast domain, hating the Crees, the Assinaboine, the Dakota, the Crow, Flatheads and Kutenai. Decimated by smallpox and measles again and again, they ^{nevertheless} remained numerous, restless, aggressive, predatory to the end.

Closely allied with them were a handful of Atsena or Gros Ventres of the prairie, an offshoot of the Arapaho. These Big Bellies or Gut People were called Beggars or Spongers by their relatives, the Arapaho, who looked upon them with contempt. Their foes were those of the Blackfeet; they had no other friends.

Next them ranged the Assinaboine, the Stone Boilers, hardly more than a thousand souls, too few to hold their own against their powerful enemies -- Dakota, Blackfeet, Cheyenne, ^{the Arapaho} allied with the Crees. They fought when necessary and eked out