

the whole machinery of the law; and the contact of the Indian with the whites has so far demoralized him as to render it unsafe longer to trust to his honesty.

SKETCHES OF SOME OF THE EARLY TRADERS.

Having indulged in these general remarks, with reference to the Indian traders, I shall proceed to particularize a very few of the class I have described, with whom it was my fortune to become personally acquainted.

Joseph Renville was one of these men, and as a memoir of him has heretofore been published in your annals, I will merely mention the fact that he was the first stock raiser of Minnesota, for more than twenty-five years ago, at Lac qui Parle, he owned sheep by the hundreds, and cattle by the score.

Louis Provencalle was a man of even less education than Renville, but like him, he was gifted with a strong natural intellect. He kept his Indian credit books by hieroglyphics, having a peculiar figure for each article of merchandise, understood only by himself, and in marking down peltries received from the Indians, he drew the form of the animal, the skin of which was to be represented. He had also a mode of indicating the names of his Indian debtors on his ⁴⁶⁷ account books peculiar to himself. Fortunately he had mastered the mystery of figures sufficiently well to express by them the amount he wished to designate, and the general correctness of his accounts did not admit of question.

He it is of whom it is truly related, that when threatened by a band of wild Dakotas with the pillage of his goods, he seized a fire-brand, and holding it within a few inches of an open keg filled with gunpowder, he declared his determination to blow them, with himself.