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Chapter I — A Great Transaction in Land

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The people of the young Republic of the United States were greatly astonished, in the summer of 1803, to learn that Napoleon Bonaparte, then First Consul of France, had sold to us the vast tract of land known as the country of Louisiana. The details of this purchase were arranged in Paris (on the part of the United States) by Robert R. Livingston and James Monroe. The French government was represented by Barbe-Marbois, Minister of the Public Treasury.

The price to be paid for this vast domain was fifteen million dollars. The area of the country ceded was reckoned to be more than one million square miles, greater than the total area of the United States, as the Republic then existed. Roughly described, the territory comprised all that part of the continent west of the Mississippi River, bounded on the north by the British possessions and on the west and south by dominions of Spain. This included the region in which now lie the States of Louisiana, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, parts of Colorado, Minnesota, the States of Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota, Wyoming, a part of Idaho, all of Montana and Territory of Oklahoma. At that time, the entire population of the region, exclusive of the Indian tribes that roamed over its trackless spaces, was barely ninety thousand persons, of whom forty thousand were negro slaves. The civilized inhabitants were principally French, or

descendants of French, with a few Spanish, Germans, English, and Americans.

The purchase of this tremendous slice of territory could not be complete without an approval of the bargain by the United States Senate. Great opposition to this was immediately excited by people in various parts of the Union, especially in New England, where there was a very bitter feeling against the prime mover in this business,—Thomas Jefferson, then President of the United States. The scheme was ridiculed by persons who insisted that the region was not only wild and unexplored, but uninhabitable and worthless. They derided “The Jefferson Purchase,” as they called it, as a useless piece of extravagance and folly; and, in addition to its being a foolish bargain, it was urged that President Jefferson had no right, under the constitution of the United States, to add any territory to the area of the Republic.

Nevertheless, a majority of the people were in favor of the purchase, and the bargain was duly approved by the United States Senate; that body, July 31, 1803, just three months after the execution of the treaty of cession, formally ratified the important agreement between the two governments. The dominion of the United States was now extended across the entire continent of North America, reaching from the Atlantic to the Pacific. The Territory of Oregon was already ours.

This momentous transfer took place one hundred years ago, when almost nothing was known of the region so summarily handed from the government of France to the government of the American Republic. Few white men had

ever traversed those trackless plains, or scaled the frowning ranges of mountains that barred the way across the continent. There were living in the fastnesses of the mysterious interior of the Louisiana Purchase many tribes of Indians who had never looked in the face of the white man.

Nor was the Pacific shore of the country any better known to civilized man than was the region lying between that coast and the Big Muddy, or Missouri River. Spanish voyagers, in 1602, had sailed as far north as the harbors of San Diego and Monterey, in what is now California; and other explorers, of the same nationality, in 1775, extended their discoveries as far north as the fifty-eighth degree of latitude. Famous Captain Cook, the great navigator of the Pacific seas, in 1778, reached and entered Nootka Sound, and, leaving numerous harbors and bays unexplored, he pressed on and visited the shores of Alaska, then called Unalaska, and traced the coast as far north as Icy Cape. Cold weather drove him westward across the Pacific, and he spent the next winter at Owyhee, where, in February of the following year, he was killed by the natives.

All these explorers were looking for chances for fur-trading, which was at that time the chief industry of the Pacific coast. Curiously enough, they all passed by the mouth of the Columbia without observing that there was the entrance to one of the finest rivers on the American continent.

Indeed, Captain Vancouver, a British explorer, who has left his name on the most important island of the North Pacific coast, baffled by the deceptive appearances of the two capes that guard the way to a noble stream (Cape

Disappointment and Cape Deception), passed them without a thought. But Captain Gray, sailing the good ship “Columbia,” of Boston, who coasted those shores for more than two years, fully convinced that a strong current which he observed off those capes came from a river, made a determined effort; and on the 11th of May, 1792, he discovered and entered the great river that now bears the name of his ship. At last the key that was to open the mountain fastnesses of the heart of the continent had been found. The names of the capes christened by Vancouver and re-christened by Captain Gray have disappeared from our maps, but in the words of one of the numerous editors[(1)] of the narrative of the exploring expedition of Lewis and Clark: “The name of the good ship ‘Columbia,’ it is not hard to believe, will flow with the waters of the bold river as long as grass grows or water runs in the valleys of the Rocky Mountains.”

It appears that the attention of President Jefferson had been early attracted to the vast, unexplored domain which his wise foresight was finally to add to the territory of the United States. While he was living in Paris, as the representative of the United States, in 1785-89, he made the acquaintance of John Ledyard, of Connecticut, the well-known explorer, who had then in mind a scheme for the establishment of a fur-trading post on the western coast of America. Mr. Jefferson proposed to Ledyard that the most feasible route to the coveted fur-bearing lands would be through the Russian possessions and downward somewhere near to the latitude of the then unknown sources of the Missouri River, entering the United States by that route. This

scheme fell through on account of the obstacles thrown in Ledyard's way by the Russian Government. A few years later, in 1792, Jefferson, whose mind was apparently fixed on carrying out his project, proposed to the American Philosophical Society of Philadelphia that a subscription should be opened for the purpose of raising money "to engage some competent person to explore that region in the opposite direction (from the Pacific coast),—that is, by ascending the Missouri, crossing the Stony (Rocky) Mountains, and descending the nearest river to the Pacific." This was the hint from which originated the famous expedition of Lewis and Clark.

But the story-teller should not forget to mention that hardy and adventurous explorer, Jonathan Carver. This man, the son of a British officer, set out from Boston, in 1766, to explore the wilderness north of Albany and lying along the southern shore of the Great Lakes. He was absent two years and seven months, and in that time he collected a vast amount of useful and strange information, besides learning the language of the Indians among whom he lived. He conceived the bold plan of travelling up a branch of the Missouri (or "Messorie"), till, having discovered the source of the traditional "Oregon, or River of the West," on the western side of the lands that divide the continent, "he would have sailed down that river to the place where it is said to empty itself, near the Straits of Anian."

By the Straits of Anian, we are to suppose, were meant some part of Behring's Straits, separating Asia from the American continent. Carver's fertile imagination, stimulated by what he knew of the remote Northwest, pictured that

wild region where, according to a modern poet, “rolls the Oregon and hears no sound save his own dashing.” But Carver died without the sight; in his later years, he said of those who should follow his lead: “While their spirits are elated by their success, perhaps they may bestow some commendations and blessings on the person who first pointed out to them the way.”

Chapter II — Beginning a Long Journey

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In 1803, availing himself of a plausible pretext to send out an exploring expedition, President Jefferson asked Congress to appropriate a small sum of money ($2,500) for the execution of his purpose. At that time the cession of the Louisiana Territory had not been completed; but matters were in train to that end, and before the expedition was fairly started on its long journey across the continent, the Territory was formally ceded to the United States.

Meriwether Lewis, a captain in the army, was selected by Jefferson to lead the expedition. Captain Lewis was a native of Virginia, and at that time was only twenty-nine years old. He had been Jefferson's private secretary for two years and was, of course, familiar with the President's plans and expectations as these regarded the wonder-land which Lewis was to enter. It is pleasant to quote here Mr. Jefferson's words concerning Captain Lewis. In a memoir of that distinguished young officer, written after his death, Jefferson said: "Of courage undaunted; possessing a firmness and perseverance of purpose which nothing but impossibilities could divert from its direction; careful as a father of those committed to his charge, yet steady in the maintenance of order and discipline; intimate with the Indian character, customs and principles; habituated to the hunting life; guarded, by exact observation of the

vegetables and animals of his own country, against losing time in the description of objects already possessed; honest, disinterested, liberal, of sound understanding, and a fidelity to truth so scrupulous that whatever he should report would be as certain as if seen by ourselves—with all these qualifications, as if selected and implanted by nature in one body for this express purpose, I could have no hesitation in confiding the enterprise to him."

Before we have finished the story of Meriwether Lewis and his companions, we shall see that this high praise of the youthful commander was well deserved.

For a coadjutor and comrade Captain Lewis chose William Clark,[(2)] also a native of Virginia, and then about thirty-three years old. Clark, like Lewis, held a commission in the military service of the United States, and his appointment as one of the leaders of the expedition with which his name and that of Lewis will ever be associated, made the two men equal in rank. Exactly how there could be two captains commanding the same expedition, both of the same military and actual rank, without jar or quarrel, we cannot understand; but it is certain that the two young men got on together harmoniously, and no hint or suspicion of any serious disagreement between the two captains during their long and arduous service has come down to us from those distant days.

As finally organized, the expedition was made up of the two captains (Lewis and Clark) and twenty-six men. These were nine young men from Kentucky, who were used to life on the frontier among Indians; fourteen soldiers of the United States Army, selected from many who eagerly

volunteered their services; two French voyageurs, or watermen, one of whom was an interpreter of Indian language, and the other a hunter; and one black man, a servant of Captain Clark. All these, except the negro servant, were regularly enlisted as privates in the military service of the United States during the expedition; and three of them were by the captains appointed sergeants. In addition to this force, nine voyageurs and a corporal and six private soldiers were detailed to act as guides and assistants until the explorers should reach the country of the Mandan Indians, a region lying around the spot where is now situated the flourishing city of Bismarck, the capital of North Dakota. It was expected that if hostile Indians should attack the explorers anywhere within the limits of the little-known parts through which they were to make their way, such attacks were more likely to be made below the Mandan country than elsewhere.

The duties of the explorers were numerous and important. They were to explore as thoroughly as possible the country through which they were to pass; making such observations of latitude and longitude as would be needed when maps of the region should be prepared by the War Department; observing the trade, commerce, tribal relations, manners and customs, language, traditions, and monuments, habits and industrial pursuits, diseases and laws of the Indian nations with whom they might come in contact; note the floral, mineral, and animal characteristics of the country, and, above all, to report whatever might be of interest to citizens who might thereafter be desirous of

opening trade relations with those wild tribes of which almost nothing was then distinctly known.

The list of articles with which the explorers were provided, to aid them in establishing peaceful relations with the Indians, might amuse traders of the present day. But in those primitive times, and among peoples entirely ignorant of the white man’s riches and resources, coats richly laced with gilt braid, red trousers, medals, flags, knives, colored handkerchiefs, paints, small looking-glasses, beads and tomahawks were believed to be so attractive to the simple-minded red man that he would gladly do much and give much of his own to win such prizes. Of these fine things there were fourteen large bales and one box. The stores of the expedition were clothing, working tools, fire-arms, food supplies, powder, ball, lead for bullets, and flints for the guns then in use, the old-fashioned flint-lock rifle and musket being still in vogue in our country; for all of this was at the beginning of the present century.

As the party was to begin their long journey by ascending the Missouri River, their means of travel were provided in three boats. The largest, a keel-boat, fifty-five feet long and drawing three feet of water, carried a big square sail and twenty-two seats for oarsmen. On board this craft was a small swivel gun. The other two boats were of that variety of open craft known as pirogue, a craft shaped like a flat-iron, square-sterned, flat-bottomed, roomy, of light draft, and usually provided with four oars and a square sail which could be used when the wind was aft, and which also served as a tent, or night shelter, on shore. Two horses, for hunting

or other occasional service, were led along the banks of the river.

As we have seen, President Jefferson, whose master mind organized and devised this expedition, had dwelt longingly on the prospect of crossing the continent from the headwaters of the Missouri to the headwaters of the then newly-discovered Columbia. The route thus explored was more difficult than that which was later travelled by the first emigrants across the continent to California. That route lies up the Platte River, through what is known as the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, by Great Salt Lake and down the valley of the Humboldt into California, crossing the Sierra Nevada at any one of several points leading into the valley of the Sacramento. The route, which was opened by the gold-seekers, was followed by the first railroads built across the continent. The route that lay so firmly in Jefferson's mind, and which was followed up with incredible hardships by the Lewis and Clark expedition, has since been traversed by two railroads, built after the first transcontinental rails were laid. If Jefferson had desired to find the shortest and most feasible route across the continent, he would have pointed to the South Pass and Utah basin trails. But these would have led the explorers into California, then and long afterwards a Spanish possession. The entire line finally traced over the Great Divide lay within the territory of the United States.

But it must be remembered that while the expedition was being organized, the vast Territory of Louisiana was as yet a French possession. Before the party were brought together and their supplies collected, the territory passed under the

jurisdiction of the United States. Nevertheless, that jurisdiction was not immediately acknowledged by the officials who, up to that time, had been the representatives of the French and Spanish governments. Part of the territory was transferred from Spain to France and then from France to the United States. It was intended that the exploring party should pass the winter of 1803-4 in St. Louis, then a mere village which had been commonly known as Pain Court. But the Spanish governor of the province had not been officially told that the country had been transferred to the United States, and, after the Spanish manner, he forbade the passage of the Americans through his jurisdiction. In those days communication between frontier posts and points lying far to the eastward of the Mississippi was very difficult; it required six weeks to carry the mails between New York, Philadelphia, and Washington to St. Louis; and this was the reason why a treaty, ratified in July, was not officially heard of in St. Louis as late as December of that year. The explorers, shut out of Spanish territory, recrossed the Mississippi and wintered at the mouth of Wood River, just above St. Louis, on the eastern side of the great river, in United States territory. As a matter of record, it may be said here that the actual transfer of the lower part of the territory—commonly known as Orleans—took place at New Orleans, December 20, 1803, and the transfer of the upper part was effected at St. Louis, March 10, 1804, before the Lewis and Clark expedition had started on its long journey to the northwestward.

All over the small area of the United States then existed a deep interest in the proposed explorations of the course

and sources of the Missouri River. The explorers were about to plunge into vast solitudes of which white people knew less than we know now about the North Polar country. Wild and extravagant stories of what was to be seen in those trackless regions were circulated in the States. For example, it was said that Lewis and Clark expected to find the mammoth of prehistoric times still living and wandering in the Upper Missouri region; and it was commonly reported that somewhere, a thousand miles or so up the river, was a solid mountain of rock salt, eighty miles long and forty-five miles wide, destitute of vegetation and glittering in the sun! These, and other tales like these, were said to be believed and doted upon by the great Jefferson himself. The Federalists, or “Feds,” as they were called, who hated Jefferson, pretended to believe that he had invented some of these foolish yarns, hoping thereby to make his Louisiana purchase more popular in the Republic.

In his last letter to Captain Lewis, which was to reach the explorers before they started, Jefferson said: “The acquisition of the country through which you are to pass has inspired the country generally with a great deal of interest in your enterprise. The inquiries are perpetual as to your progress. The Feds alone still treat it as a philosophism, and would rejoice at its failure. Their bitterness increases with the diminution of their numbers and despair of a resurrection. I hope you will take care of yourself, and be a living witness of their malice and folly.” Indeed, after the explorers were lost sight of in the wilderness which they were to traverse, many people in the States declaimed bitterly against the folly that had sent these unfortunate

men to perish miserably in the fathomless depths of the continent. They no longer treated it “as a philosophism,” or wild prank, but as a wicked scheme to risk life and property in a search for the mysteries of the unknown and unknowable.

As a striking illustration of this uncertainty of the outcome of the expedition, which exercised even the mind of Jefferson, it may be said that in his instructions to Captain Lewis he said: “Our Consuls, Thomas Hewes, at Batavia in Java, William Buchanan in the isles of France and Bourbon, and John Elmslie at the Cape of Good Hope, will be able to supply your necessities by drafts on us.” All this seems strange enough to the young reader of the present day; but this was said and done one hundred years ago.

Chapter III — From the Lower to the Upper River

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The party finally set sail up the Missouri River on Monday, May 21, 1804, but made only a few miles, owing to head winds. Four days later they camped near the last white settlement on the Missouri,—La Charrette, a little village of seven poor houses. Here lived Daniel Boone, the famous Kentucky backwoodsman, then nearly seventy years old, but still vigorous, erect, and strong of limb. Here and above this place the explorers began to meet with unfamiliar Indian tribes and names. For example, they met two canoes loaded with furs “from the Mahar nation.” The writer of the Lewis and Clark journal, upon whose notes we rely for our story, made many slips of this sort. By “Mahars” we must understand that the Omahas were meant. We shall come across other such instances in which the strangers mistook the pronunciation of Indian names. For example, Kansas was by them misspelled as “Canseze” and “Canzan;” and there appear some thirteen or fourteen different spellings of Sioux, of which one of the most far-fetched is “Scouex.”

The explorers were now in a country unknown to them and almost unknown to any white man. On the thirty-first of May, a messenger came down the Grand Osage River bringing a letter from a person who wrote that the Indians, having been notified that the country had been ceded to the Americans, burned the letter containing the tidings, refusing

to believe the report. The Osage Indians, through whose territory they were now passing, were among the largest and finest-formed red men of the West. Their name came from the river along which they warred and hunted, but their proper title, as they called themselves, was “the Wabashas,” and from them, in later years, we derive the familiar name of Wabash. A curious tradition of this people, according to the journal of Lewis and Clark, is that the founder of the nation was a snail, passing a quiet existence along the banks of the Osage, till a high flood swept him down to the Missouri, and left him exposed on the shore. The heat of the sun at length ripened him into a man; but with the change of his nature he had not forgotten his native seats on the Osage, towards which he immediately bent his way. He was, however, soon overtaken by hunger and fatigue, when happily, the Great Spirit appeared, and, giving him a bow and arrow, showed him how to kill and cook deer, and cover himself with the skin. He then proceeded to his original residence; but as he approached the river he was met by a beaver, who inquired haughtily who he was, and by what authority he came to disturb his possession. The Osage answered that the river was his own, for he had once lived on its borders. As they stood disputing, the daughter of the beaver came, and having, by her entreaties, reconciled her father to this young stranger, it was proposed that the Osage should marry the young beaver, and share with her family the enjoyment of the river. The Osage readily consented, and from this happy union there soon came the village and the nation of the Wabasha, or Osages, who have ever since preserved a pious

reverence for their ancestors, abstaining from the chase of the beaver, because in killing that animal they killed a brother of the Osage. Of late years, however, since the trade with the whites has rendered beaver-skins more valuable, the sanctity of these maternal relatives has been visibly reduced, and the poor animals have lost all the privileges of kindred.

Game was abundant all along the river as the explorers sailed up the stream. Their hunters killed numbers of deer, and at the mouth of Big Good Woman Creek, which empties into the Missouri near the present town of Franklin, Howard County, three bears were brought into the camp. Here, too, they began to find salt springs, or “salt licks,” to which many wild animals resorted for salt, of which they were very fond. Saline County, Missouri, perpetuates the name given to the region by Lewis and Clark. Traces of buffalo were also found here, and occasional wandering traders told them that the Indians had begun to hunt the buffalo now that the grass had become abundant enough to attract this big game from regions lying further south.

By the tenth of June the party had entered the country of the Ayauway nation. This was an easy way of spelling the word now familiar to us as “Iowa.” But before that spelling was reached, it was Ayaway, Ayahwa, Iawai, Iaway, and so on. The remnants of this once powerful tribe now number scarcely two hundred persons. In Lewis and Clark’s time, they were a large nation, with several hundred warriors, and were constantly at war with their neighbors. Game here grew still more abundant, and in addition to deer and bear the hunters brought in a raccoon. One of these hunters

brought into camp a wild tale of a snake which, he said, “made a guttural noise like a turkey.” One of the French voyageurs confirmed this story; but the croaking snake was never found and identified.

On the twenty-fourth of June the explorers halted to prepare some of the meat which their hunters brought in. Numerous herds of deer were feeding on the abundant grass and young willows that grew along the river banks. The meat, cut in small strips, or ribbons, was dried quickly in the hot sun. This was called “jirked” meat. Later on the word was corrupted into “jerked,” and “jerked beef” is not unknown at the present day. The verb “jerk” is corrupted from the Chilian word, charqui, meaning sun-dried meat; but it is not easy to explain how the Chilian word got into the Northwest.

As the season advanced, the party found many delicious wild fruits, such as currants, plums, raspberries, wild apples, and vast quantities of mulberries. Wild turkeys were also found in large numbers, and the party had evidently entered a land of plenty. Wild geese were abundant, and numerous tracks of elk were seen. But we may as well say here that the so-called elk of the Northwest is not the elk of ancient Europe; a more correct and distinctive name for this animal is wapiti, the name given the animal by the Indians. The European elk more closely resembles the American moose. Its antlers are flat, low, and palmated like our moose; whereas the antlers of the American elk, so-called, are long, high, and round-shaped with many sharp points or tines. The mouth of the great Platte River was reached on the twenty-first of July. This famous stream was then regarded

as a sort of boundary line between the known and unknown regions. As mariners crossing the equator require all their comrades, who have not been “over the line” to submit to lathering and shaving, so the Western voyageurs merrily compelled their mates to submit to similar horse-play. The great river was also the mark above which explorers entered upon what was called the Upper Missouri.

The expedition was now advancing into a region inhabited by several wandering tribes of Indians, chief of which were the Ottoes, Missouris, and Pawnees. It was determined, therefore, to call a council of some of the chiefs of these bands and make terms of peace with them. After some delay, the messengers sent out to them brought in fourteen representative Indians, to whom the white men made presents of roast meat, pork, flour, and corn-meal, in return for which their visitors brought them quantities of delicious watermelons. “Next day, August 3,” says the journal, “the Indians, with their six chiefs, were all assembled under an awning formed with the mainsail, in presence of all our party, paraded for the occasion. A speech was then made, announcing to them the change in the government, our promises of protection, and advice as to their future conduct. All the six chiefs replied to our speech, each in his turn, according to rank. They expressed their joy at the change in the government; their hopes that we would recommend them to their Great Father (the president), that they might obtain trade and necessaries: they wanted arms as well for hunting as for defence, and asked our mediation between them and the Mahas, with whom they are now at war. We promised to do so, and

wished some of them to accompany us to that nation, which they declined, for fear of being killed by them. We then proceeded to distribute our presents. The grand chief of the nation not being of the party, we sent him a flag, a medal, and some ornaments for clothing. To the six chiefs who were present, we gave a medal of the second grade to one Ottoe chief and one Missouri chief; a medal of the third grade to two inferior chiefs of each nation; the customary mode of recognizing a chief being to place a medal round his neck, which is considered among his tribe as a proof of his consideration abroad. Each of these medals was accompanied by a present of paint, garters, and cloth ornaments of dress; and to this we added a canister of powder, a bottle of whiskey, and a few presents to the whole, which appeared to make them perfectly satisfied. The air-gun, too, was fired, and astonished them greatly. The absent grand chief was an Ottoe, named Weahrushhah, which, in English, degenerates into Little Thief. The two principal chieftains present were Shongotongo, or Big Horse, and Wethea, or Hospitality; also Shosguscan, or White Horse, an Ottoe; the first an Ottoe, the second a Missouri. The incidents just related induced us to give to this place the name of the Council Bluffs: the situation of it is exceedingly favorable for a fort and trading factory, as the soil is well calculated for bricks, and there is an abundance of wood in the neighborhood, and the air being pure and healthy."

Of course the reader will recognize, in the name given to this place by Lewis and Clark, the flourishing modern city of Council Bluffs, Iowa. Nevertheless, as a matter of fact, the

council took place on the Nebraskan or western side of the river, and the meeting-place was at some distance above the site of the present city of Council Bluffs.

Above Council Bluffs the explorers found the banks of the river to be high and bluffy, and on one of the highlands which they passed they saw the burial-place of Blackbird, one of the great men of the Mahars, or Omahas, who had died of small-pox. A mound, twelve feet in diameter and six feet high, had been raised over the grave, and on a tall pole at the summit the party fixed a flag of red, white, and blue. The place was regarded as sacred by the Omahas, who kept the dead chieftain well supplied with provisions. The small-pox had caused great mortality among the Indians; and a few years before the white men's visit, when the fell disease had destroyed four hundred men, with a due proportion of women and children, the survivors burned their village and fled.

"They had been a military and powerful people; but when these warriors saw their strength wasting before a malady which they could not resist, their frenzy was extreme; they burned their village, and many of them put to death their wives and children, to save them from so cruel an affliction, and that all might go together to some better country."

In Omaha, or Mahar Creek, the explorers made their first experiment in dragging the stream for fish. With a drag of willows, loaded with stones, they succeeded in catching a great variety of fine fish, over three hundred at one haul, and eight hundred at another. These were pike, bass, salmon-trout, catfish, buffalo fish, perch, and a species of

shrimp, all of which proved an acceptable addition to their usual flesh bill-of-fare.

Desiring to call in some of the surrounding Indian tribes, they here set fire to the dry prairie grass, that being the customary signal for a meeting of different bands of roving peoples. In the afternoon of August 18, a party of Ottoes, headed by Little Thief and Big Horse, came in, with six other chiefs and a French interpreter. The journal says:—

“We met them under a shade, and after they had finished a repast with which we supplied them, we inquired into the origin of the war between them and the Mahas, which they related with great frankness. It seems that two of the Missouris went to the Mahas to steal horses, but were detected and killed; the Ottoes and Missouris thought themselves bound to avenge their companions, and the whole nations were at last obliged to share in the dispute. They are also in fear of a war from the Pawnees, whose village they entered this summer, while the inhabitants were hunting, and stole their corn. This ingenuous confession did not make us the less desirous of negotiating a peace for them; but no Indians have as yet been attracted by our fire. The evening was closed by a dance; and the next day, the chiefs and warriors being assembled at ten o’clock, we explained the speech we had already sent from the Council Bluffs, and renewed our advice. They all replied in turn, and the presents were then distributed. We exchanged the small medal we had formerly given to the Big Horse for one of the same size with that of Little Thief: we also gave a small medal to a third chief, and a kind of certificate or letter of acknowledgment to five of the

warriors expressive of our favor and their good intentions. One of them, dissatisfied, returned us the certificate; but the chief, fearful of our being offended, begged that it might be restored to him; this we declined, and rebuked them severely for having in view mere traffic instead of peace with their neighbors. This displeased them at first; but they at length all petitioned that it should be given to the warrior, who then came forward and made an apology to us; we then delivered it to the chief to be given to the most worthy, and he bestowed it on the same warrior, whose name was Great Blue Eyes. After a more substantial present of small articles and tobacco, the council was ended with a dram to the Indians. In the evening we exhibited different objects of curiosity, and particularly the air-gun, which gave them great surprise. Those people are almost naked, having no covering except a sort of breech-cloth round the middle, with a loose blanket or buffalo robe, painted, thrown over them. The names of these warriors, besides those already mentioned, were Karkapaha, or Crow’s Head, and Nenasawa, or Black Cat, Missouris; and Sananona, or Iron Eyes, Neswaunja, or Big Ox, Stageaunja, or Big Blue Eyes, and Wasashaco, or Brave Man, all Ottoes.”

Chapter IV — Novel Experiences among the Indians

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About this time (the nineteenth and twentieth of August), the explorers lost by death the only member of their party who did not survive the journey. Floyd River, which flows into the Upper Missouri, in the northwest corner of Iowa, still marks the last resting-place of Sergeant Charles Floyd, who died there of bilious colic and was buried by his comrades near the mouth of the stream. Near here was a quarry of red pipestone, dear to the Indian fancy as a mine of material for their pipes; traces of this deposit still remain. So fond of this red rock were the Indians that when they went there to get the stuff, even lifelong and vindictive enemies declared a truce while they gathered the material, and savage hostile tribes suspended their wars for a time.

On the north side of the Missouri, at a point in what is now known as Clay County, South Dakota, Captains Lewis and Clark, with ten men, turned aside to see a great natural curiosity, known to the Indians as the Hill of Little Devils. The hill is a singular mound in the midst of a flat prairie, three hundred yards long, sixty or seventy yards wide, and about seventy feet high. The top is a smooth level plain. The journal says:—

“The Indians have made it a great article of their superstition: it is called the Mountain of Little People, or Little Spirits; and they believe that it is the abode of little

devils, in the human form, of about eighteen inches high, and with remarkably large heads; they are armed with sharp arrows, with which they are very skilful, and are always on the watch to kill those who should have the hardihood to approach their residence. The tradition is, that many have suffered from these little evil spirits, and, among others, three Maha Indians fell a sacrifice to them a few years since. This has inspired all the neighboring nations, Sioux, Mahas, and Ottoes, with such terror, that no consideration could tempt them to visit the hill. We saw none of these wicked little spirits, nor any place for them, except some small holes scattered over the top; we were happy enough to escape their vengeance, though we remained some time on the mound to enjoy the delightful prospect of the plain, which spreads itself out till the eye rests upon the northwest hills at a great distance, and those of the northeast, still farther off, enlivened by large herds of buffalo feeding at a distance."

The present residents of the region, South Dakota, have preserved the Indian tradition, and Spirit Mound may be seen on modern maps of that country.

Passing on their way up the Missouri, the explorers found several kinds of delicious wild plums and vast quantities of grapes; and here, too, they passed the mouth of the Yankton River, now known as the Dakota, at the mouth of which is the modern city of Yankton, South Dakota. The Yankton-Sioux Indians, numbering about one thousand people, inhabited this part of the country, and near here the white men were met by a large band of these Sioux who had come in at the invitation of Lewis and Clark. The messengers from

the white men reported that they had been well received by the Indians, who, as a mark of respect, presented their visitors with “a fat dog, already cooked, of which they partook heartily and found it well-flavored.” From this time, according to the journal, the explorers tasted occasionally of roast dog, and later on they adopted this dish as a regular feature of their bill-of-fare. They do tell us, however, that they had some difficulty in getting used to so novel an article of food.

The Sioux and the white men held a grand council under an oak-tree, from the top of which was flying the American flag. The head chief was presented with a gold-laced uniform of the United States artillery, a cocked hat and red feather. The lesser chiefs were also presented with suitable gifts of lesser value. Various festivities followed the conference. Next day another powwow was held at which the head chief, Weucha, or Shake Hand, said:—

“‘I see before me my great father’s two sons. You see me and the rest of our chiefs and warriors. We are very poor; we have neither powder, nor ball, nor knives; and our women and children at the village have no clothes. I wish that, as my brothers have given me a flag and a medal, they would give something to those poor people, or let them stop and trade with the first boat which comes up the river. I will bring the chiefs of the Pawnees and Mahas together, and make peace between them; but it is better that I should do it than my great father’s sons, for they will listen to me more readily. I will also take some chiefs to your country in the spring; but before that time I cannot leave home. I went formerly to the English, and they gave me a medal and