

A Winter in the St. Croix Valley, 1802-03

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HEREWITH appears the third and final installment of the reminiscences of George Nelson, who engaged in the fur trade for the X Y Company near Yellow Lake, Wisconsin, in the early years of the nineteenth century. Earlier sections, telling of his journey westward and of his life among Indians and voyageurs, appear in the March and June issues of this magazine. Ed.

Early in January, 1803 I had another adventure. Boisverd, the little indian & myself went to Lac La Coquille to see a few families of indians. There was a path, for both our people & the N. W. had lately been there. As it was only 10 or twelve miles, we only took each a glass of rum in the morning, so as to have a better appetite. All of us young, we soon scampered over the ground. We found their old tents indeed, but they had pitched off. We saw two well beaten paths on the ice, leading different ways; but at less than a hundred yards off they were so completely covered up with the drifted snow, it was utterly impossible for us to follow them. Boisvert & the indian went out to search. They returned, having decided it was useless for us to try to find them. The indian was sure they were killed by the Scioux. "Let us return." we did not dare take our road back, "for the Scioux were certainly in ambush for us"! For a little dog that followed us was snuffing the wind, whining, scratching in the snow running here & there. These were indubitable signs. "What shall we do?" We at length decided upon returning by the river, a long & circuitous route. The weather was clear, very cold & blowing very hard. About sun set we passed the old houses where Laprairie had wintered the year before (1801-2) and where the Scioux had taken him prisoner. "We cannot sleep there, for since they came once they may come again." We put up at dark in a handsome low point—we had but a small tomahaw. But we did not require much fire lest the enemy should see it. We

lit one however at the foot of a large dry elm, the bark of which was hung down in long strips from the very branches. Some of these caught, & in a moment the whole tree was in a blaze! Here we were in a "regular fix." We were running from our enemies, & we give them the best sign imagineable of our retreat! There was no choice. We retreated a few hundred yards off, & finding a thick cluster of wild rose bushes we beat them down, & passed the night upon them; each one taking his turn in the middle, to keep from freezing; for we had no blankets, & had only taken a glass of rum in the morning, so as to have a better appetite! The next morning we Scampered off in first rate style & early in the afternoon got home.

I have often thought of that night. It was very cold & windy—nothing to cover us, no fire & empty Stomachs, with only a few rose bushes to keep us from the Snow which it was impossible for us to get the Snow away. Surely providence preserved us. But we were all young & thoughtless—no such thing entered our mind.

In the last days of February we received frequently news of the Sioux being in our neighborhood. We finally decided that it would be better for us all to be together. We accordingly pulled down our house & built up a shed in the N. W. fort. On the 2^d March Morrin one of Laprairie's men, to *run out* some makeril line for their nets, went to "Yellow Lake." At the upper end he found a large road, quite fresh. He followed it some distance thinking it might be some of our indians. But after a time he began to consider that all our indians were on the North Side of the river S^t Croix. His fear made him fancy he saw several men walking before him: he turned back instantly, & filled us all with alarm. We watched the whole night in the Bastions; & fear & fancy made us imagine we heard them whisper, & could Smell the Smoke of their pipes. We were sure they were hovering around us. About 2 o'clock in the morning we heard a gentle Scratch at the door. It was Laprairies wife coming in with an indian for provisions to make their Sugar. He gave her what she required, & they hurried themselves off immediately.

On the 3^d at night, one of our indians came in. We told him our state. He left in the course of the night to go a "Scouting." The 3^d day he returned, a little before day light. He confirmed the whole. He had been to their camp; & from their way of encamping he said there must be upwards of 200 men. Other of our indians said they counted 410 Sticks, as it [was] customary with them that each man leaves a Small stick by his fire.

We had many alarms as may be supposed. Our widows had left us long before. We were, in all, eleven men. We framed, rather agreed upon verbal regulations, but there being no suborning they were broken & resumed as fear or instinct impelled. One of them was: that if any one was taken prisoner, the door should not be opened to him, even tho' he should be butchered before the door in consequence. This resolution, from the terror that pervaded us all would have been rigidly obeyed, I am certain.

There was great cause for fear, from what had occurred in the Spring of 1802 (the year before I went to that place) It was as follows. There were rumors that the enemy was in the neighborhood of *Lac la Coquille*, where Laprairie then was wintering (See p 32)⁸⁷ The people, as usual, soon got tired of restraint & became less careful. One morning Laprairie went to visit his marten traps, contrary to the wishes of the people. Every one, as usual, had had awful dreams the preceeding night, & was now full of his prophetic impressions. Laprairie would not hear. He crossed the lake, & in leaping down a bank into a Small creek, he found himself surrounded by several strange indians in warlike attire that were lying in ambush for him. He had to take them home!

He treated them kindly, as may be supposed, & they behaved extremely well. There we[re] several hundred of them but the chief would allow but 20, or 30 to enter. They said they regretted very much the war & would gladly be at peace. "To prove our intentions here a "*Pipe*["]—the "Pipe of Peace" I give you with tobacco; present it to them in our name, and say how desirous we are to be

⁸⁷ This is Nelson's own insertion and refers to the statement on p. 225 relative to the old houses which Nelson and others passed about sunset on their Clam River expedition, when they were obliged to spend the night sleeping on rose bushes.

[at] Peace. But if all I have said has no effect, & that they will have war, Here is this Crow Skin (a Warrior's head dress) & a tomahaw, & you will tell them, it is not fear that makes us solicit their friendship, & they are too brave themselves to suspect us of cowardice, — let them chuse, & decide whether they will accept the Pipe & Smoke with us as friends, or take the tommahawk. We are ready for either, but we would much rather have them be our friends." They returned, after staying a few hours, urging him to present their visit & their discourse in a friendly light.

Some of the Sauteux's (our indians) soon after came in. La-prairie told them what had occurred; gave the Crow Skin & tomahawk, repeating what the Scioux's had said, but *Kept the Pipe for himself*. The Sauteuxs consulted: & at last came to the conclusion that the whole speech was intended as an insult, the more aggravated as there was no "Pipe" with the Crow Skin & tommahawk. They also decided upon revenging the insult. This was in April, 1802, & in the beginning of June their Scouters discovered a large camp of Scioux's encamped on the edge of a handsome lake, below a high hill at the further end of an extensive plain. At night, that same night we had that awful storm at Sault S^t Marys, they approached, about 60 in number, & laid in the woods all round the Sioux lodges, waiting for the Signal of their Chief. The Scioux's were collected in a large tent, to a ball, & were dancing. When the chief, seeing he was discovered by some of the Scioux that were not at the Ball, rose up, uttered his frightful war whoop saying "Such a one, naming himself, fights you" and fired in among them. It was all done in *an instant*. The [night] was excessively dark with a terrible wind & rain pouring down. They could fire but few shots, it was raining so hard, but with their tommahawks & knives rushed into the tent striking & stabbing whoever they met. The Scioux's of course did not offer any great resistance, tho' a few fought desperately: their women & children took flight in their small canoes, but the violence of the wind upset their canoes & many were drowned. I forget now the number kill[e]d but there [were] many. None of the Sauteux were killed tho' a few had very narrow

escapes, especially two. one of them saw the muzzle of a gun so near his face that he raised it with one hand just as it went off, & a tomahawk in the other knocked his [enemy] down dead at his feet. The other saw an enemy just as he was firing—the ball cut a little relic hanging to his breast & merely grazed the Skin. The Sioux camp being very numerous, the Sauteux had to fly immediately after the battle.

Such then being the Sequel of the Sioux visit, it is not to be wondered if we felt rather uneasy. The people were very much displeased with Laprairie, imputing the whole blame to his covetousness in Keeping the "Pipe." But I think that even if he had given it, the Sauteux's are so proud, haughty & insolent, & vain to show off their bravery though at the expense of their lives, it would not have stopped the war, however it might have put off a battle. But this indiscretion of his certainly increased the animosity, & rendered our situation the most critical.

Thus we continued living in the utmost anxiety, every hour dreading an attack. The N. W. Co, having arrived early in the Season, had collected all the rice long before we arrived, & with the meat they occasionally got from the indians they *lived well*. It was not so with us: we were often sore pinched. Laprairie commiserated my situation, I often eat with him. At last we made a *bargain*. I was to provide the eatables & he, the *tea*! Yellow lake was connected with the river below, by three other, but Smaller lake[s], two below us, very much in shape to the float of a fish, in which there were always ducks. In the morning early I would steal out after taking "a careful survey of the coast," go to the river & firing one or two shots killing 3 or 4 ducks. I would run into the river often up to my arm pits, secure my hunt & run home. A quarter of an hour every morning was frequently more time than required to bring in the daily meat of us two. Laprairie in the mean time would gather wild tea—he had plenty of his own Sugar: and all was right.

One day it was snowing hard, and as at those times all fowls keep very still I thought it a good opportunity to make a little

excursion below, to lay in a stock for two or three days. I waded over the river & fired on [a] large flock of divers—killed 5—the water being too deep in the lake I could not get 4 or 5 more that in the struggles of death had got beyond my depth. On my return I found others perched on trees that had fallen in the water. I crawled up & was going to fire, when a thought struck me that I had better not, “who knows if there be not a Scioux near.” I reluctantly retired. At a few paces further on I discovered the track of a man! I thought, after all it is perhaps Savoyard. The track came down to the water & went up again into the woods. I had a feeling that it must be one of our men. But a little after I again saw it coming down to the water edge in such a suspicious way I thought it must be an enemy, especially as there were quite a number of ducks sitting upon a tree with their heads under their wings; for had it been any of our people, or one of our indians they surely would not have let slip so excellent a Shot. The track again returned into the woods, & I followed it “to ascertain who it might be”! Prudence bid me return. I had scarcely reached the low brush of the river, when I again saw it, looking seeming to me more suspicious than ever. It was so very recent that there were but few grains in the foot mark, tho’ the snow was falling very heavy in large flakes at the moment. I almost saw “him.[”] I became afraid. I lagged purposely to let him get ahead and walking with the utmost caution, looking intently ahead, I again fell twice upon the track, & each time there was a little more snow in the foot print. I thus walked slowly & cautiously untill I came to the ford. I waded over at no small rate & ran home. I found all the men in. I told my Story: another alarm, & another warning that whoever should be taken prisoner would not be let in.

In this manner we continued ’till the 4th April 1803, when every thing being ready, we all embarked at day light & paddled off, glad to escape from danger & be relieved of so much anxiety. When [we] had got about half way over the last of the 2 lakes below the houses & out of reach of call from either shore, we stopped to eat our breakfast before entering the rapids. Morrin in coming to the middle of the canoe to dip out of the Kettle, saw Smoke; he turned pale—

"The Scioux have set fire to our house"!—"thank God we are safe."

There was no more eating: each one seized his paddle & off we set again as hard as we could. About noon we encamped on one of those beautiful islands in the S^t Croix. Here we remained until the 10th when another alarm seized us. One of our men dangerously ill of a scrofula, unable to sleep, heard the walking of a man in another island, not⁸⁸ separated by a deep channel not 25 [feet] from ours, for it froze hard that night. Every one also had his dreams & *prophetic impressions*. We finally decided upon starting.

The 2^d day after being quite out of danger of the enemy, we encamped early & slept comfortably & without fear, the first time since February.

Here I fell very sick, owing to a Sprain in the right groin by endeavoring to keep myself from fall[ing] overboard, on [my] back in the rapid. My water was red—indeed bloody, & my right leg contracted so that the heel pressed on the ham; I could not straighten it nor could I walk.⁸⁹ The men got me some "Pembinat sticks, what the americans call "High bush cranberries," the bark of which they Scraped & put into a quart of water on the coals to boil. I drank it all & purged me copiously. The next day I infused another quart full, & drank it. It operated powerfully, bot[h] up & down. Fortunately there were many fallen trees near my tent. I crawled to, & roosted upon one & rested my head upon another. I had a great, but very easy & free scouring. I felt much better, the pain in passing water much less, but the leg still contracted, very stiff & painful. Our old widow who had left us in February, joined us here. She scarrified the groin with a piece of flint, after moistening the skin, scraped off the blood with a knife many times, & then rubbed in some gun-powder. The old dame laughed heartily at my antics when she applied the powder: it Smarted terribly. But

⁸⁸ Nelson seems to have forgotten to delete this negative when he altered his sentence structure.

⁸⁹ From the physician's point of view it is interesting to speculate on the real nature of Nelson's illness. It may well have been an injury to a kidney, or, more likely, a kidney or ureteral stone. Even a ruptured appendix could have produced the same symptoms.

it was of no use. Laprairie, who had encamped some distance below us, was kind enough to send me some tisane⁴⁰ — for he was expert in the use of roots.

After sometime we reached the Portage S^t Croix, on our way back to "Grand Portage." And while the men were carrying the things over, I also crawled on. Sometimes with a stick, sometimes on my hands & knees, creeping, dragging sometimes on one ham & sometimes on the other. I entered upon the portage just as the Sun was rising, & it was not till about 2 o'clock in the afternoon that I reached the camp! My left foot, hands, elbows & knees painfully sore from the gravel & Stones that covered the whole of the road, about half a mile long. I asked the men to help me, but they refused, cursing me for a damned Englishman and protestant. "It is good for you" would they repeat with oaths & reproaches & sarcastic Sneers. It irritated me a good deal. I could never divine what could possibly be the cause of this cruel feeling towards me. For I was always with them fared the same, & readily & willingly done every thing I could to help & to please them. After many years with them, I at last found it was owing to my nation & my religion. Years have cooled down the rashness & impetuosity of youth, but I am [*sic*] say it with pain & grief that it was my nation & my religion, & their ignorance — nothing else, and they were not bad men; not more so than others.

However, tho' they refused to assist me over the Portage, the[y] made a Vapour bath, after the indian mode. They planted 8 small poles in the ground & bending them over each other about 3½ feet high or perhaps 4 feet forming a little lodge about 3 feet diameter, which was covered with blankets, capots, skins &c. &c. to keep the air (& the wind was blowing Strong) out. Into this I crawled, stripped naked; then they put in our large Kettle full of young cedar pine & Spruce, & covered me up. The Steam of course completely enveloped me. After about 20 minutes they put into the Kettle 2 or 3 red hot stones. I thought the vapour would Scald me. I was at least half an hour in there before they would let me out. I was

⁴⁰ *Tisane* is a French word meaning a concoction of herbs.

gasping for breath, & was nearly suffocated. At last they let me out, & I was whole! I felt neither pain nor stiffness, but very weak from such profuse perspiration. My leg was as strait & as limber as if it had never been affected. O I was glad! But was I grateful—? The Sequel will show.

The N. West Co's people had been very kind & friendly with us. They might occasionally play us a little trick, by slipping off privately to the indians; saying we were beggars & cheats, & had no means of carrying on our trade & that such indians as encouraged us now, were "marked" & should be made to Sweat when we could no longer assist them &c. &c. But they never, that I am aware of, used those abominably infamous means that were so universal in the "North." M^r Réaume who had the charge of all this quarter, was an elderly gentleman, humane, peaceable, & Strictly consciencious, & was loved & revered by indians & all who knew him.⁴¹ He wintered in "Serpent River," a river taking its rise in the highlands near lake Superior, & falling into the S^t Croix some 30, or 40 before it joins the Mississipy, above the S^t Anthony falls. I never Saw him, but from his reputation I loved him.

Being too heavily laden our people took 2 or 3 Kegs of Sugar, to lighten them. Immediately after getting out of my bath, they opened one of the Kegs & took out some 8 or 10, or perhaps 12 lbs. of Sugar, & headed it up. *We* had not finished the business but a few minutes when the N. W. came up with us! "Nous l'avons rászé!" Such was our gratitude: such my acknowledgement to God for having restored me the use of my limbs. This was the *first* I was ever implicated in: the first act of baseness. But unfortunately not the *last!!!* I was terribly abashed, & could scarcely refrain from telling the N.W. Boisverd was also very averse: but we partook of it. Indeed we were greatly reduced, being obliged to eat roots, herbs or whatever we could find.

This portage is at the *height of lands*, the waters, issuing from

⁴¹ This was probably Joseph Réaume, who was in the Red Lake country as early as 1785, and who accompanied Jean Baptiste Cadotte to the sources of the Mississippi River, via Fond du Lac, in 1792. He was in the Fond du Lac department for the North West Company from 1799 to 1804. See *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 20:400 n.

the Small lake (see P. 20)⁴² go, one part to Lake Superior, & the other into the Gulf of Mexico, by the Mississippi, & the estuaries of both these rivers, may be, I suppose, about 100 miles from their Source. The Brulé is, comparatively, but a Creek, Sufficiently deep to admit of Batteauxs, except towards the Portage when the seasons are very dry, & water consequently low. The banks, the whole length covered with the alder & Willow, particularly near the Portage where they are remarkably thick, & the river being here very narrow we always have great difficulty in forcing the Canoe through. There were some fine groves of Pine & other wood, but at a distance. The fire at some very remote period had destroyed all the wood near, hence its name.⁴³ The land, so far as I could see, was a light sandy loam; & except the one small cascade, the waters glided silently through. The fish, whatever they may be can easily go from Lake Superior to the Mississippi, which a few only I dare say do.

It is supposed that there are mines in the mountains on the East of this river. For some 20, or 30 years before, the white people & indians, encamped at its mouth, on Lake Superior, were dreadfully alarmed one evening by reports, which they could not account for, Some reports as loud as the most violent claps of thunder, at regular intervals; then in rapid Succession, intermingled with short sharp reports as of small arms. This continued for the whole night & part of the day. The indians thought it was some furious engagement their friends had with the Scioux who we[re] driving them off their lands. But some others indians happened to be at the Portage, & heard the same. They were all equally alarmed. They then concluded it must be the "Spirits" Manitos, or Gods, as *we* call them. The white people, for some of the Bourgeois, in those days, [were] military officers some of them, & well informed men, said it was the confined Vapour issuing or forcing a vent thro' the rocks.

⁴² Here once more Nelson refers to an earlier statement in his manuscript, namely, the contents of the paragraph printed *ante*, p. 147, 148.

⁴³ Early travelers mention the river, now known as the Brule, as the Bois Brulé, or Burntwood River. However, it may well have been named for Etienne Brulé, one of the first white men known to have explored Lake Superior.

At the Southern end of this Portage was a nice lake, between two & 3 miles circumference, bordered mostly with low land; at the end of which is River S^{te} Croix, not, perhaps 150 feet broad, the water, like that of the Brulé, is dark. There are several rapids, but neither dangerous nor difficult to surmount. Well wooded, chiefly with pine, the Sugaries, or where the hard maple grows is principally towards Lake Superior, where the Indians make a considerable quantity of Sugar. We do not find any island until near the Yellow river. These islands are beautifully wooded with oak, Elm, butternut, hickory, the wild grape-vine, plum & two or 3 sorts of thorn. They seem to have been formed chiefly of alluvials. There are also some very beautiful low points. The soil is in general sandy & gravelly; & most splendid groves of pine which could as easily be floated down the Mississippi as from Chambly to Sorel. There are a great number of Lakes in the whole extent of the Country: some of them beautiful, nay magnificent bodies of water, & well furnished with fish. Many a time in walking over them have I thought: "Whenever this country becomes settled how delightfully will the inhabitants pass their time. There is no place perhaps on this globe where nature has displayed & diversified land & water as here. I always felt as if invited to settle down & admire the beautiful views with a sort of joyful thankfulness for having been led to them. There is nothing romantic about them, frightful rock, & wild & dashing water falls. Nature is here calm, placid & serene, as if telling man, in language mute, indeed,—not addressed to the *Ears*, but to heart & Soul: It is here man is to be happy: a genial & healthy climate—the rigour of winter scarcely three months, & in that time no very severe cold: I have diversified the land with hundreds of beautiful lakes all communicating with each other by equally beautiful streams, full of excellent fish, & ducks of twenty Species, Swans & geese with abundance of rice for you & them. The borders well furnished with grapes, plums, thorn apples & butternut &c. &c. The Woods Swarming with Dears & bears & beavers: not one noxious or venomous animal insect or reptile: come my children, come & settle in this beautiful country I have prepared for you, & be happy." But how does man respond to this Fatherly,

Benevolent invitation? — as if he said, — “*You think* so; but *I know* better. The country is very pleasant indeed, but I will live in it alone, Lord & master I will admit who I will, & on my own conditions & terms only. The land is broad & long enough indeed to admit millions on millions, but I am lord & will roam in Sovereign & pour out the blood of every creature I meet, not that room is scanty, nor that I apprehend want; but it is *my pleasure* so to do; the occupations of peace enervate me, make me dull & languid; my mind (he means his appetites & passions) is active & stirring I must give evidence of my genius. Peace & thankfulness indeed! am not I the Lord of the universe?” But the white man, when he shall have driven off the Savage, what will he do? *He* has all the advantages of education & experience to back him the use of the sciences & the arts, — will he be thankful? He may indeed attend *his* Church in regular order & form, where he will also offer up *his* prayer & thanks; but will it be to the Church of the *Holy one* that he will go? will his prayers & thanksgivings be those of a heart convicted of its numerous & serious shortcomings, of a mind purified, beseeching blessings on his fellow creatures whose sores & pains he pittingly endeavours to alleviate, by his counsel, & comforts with his surplus morsel? — Alas! poor human nature! But “Thou who thus addressest such just reproof to thy fellow man, what hath been thy course? what, even now that thou doth address in the language of truth because thy heart is tender — what are thy ways even now? cease then to blame in others what thou thyself doest!” — Alas! again, poor human nature. Must Reason & judgement & understanding be ever, the toy, the play-thing, the puppet of the Passions? But to resume.

Tho’ the soil is generally sandy & Gravelly, yet are there many tracts of what is called “wheat soil;” & extremely well timbered; with numerous creeks. Deer in great numbers & bears of every colour from deep black to a light brown, nearly yellow, with fine long hair like the finest wool. Beaver & raccons & porcupine. But the fur of the Beaver & the otter is not so fine, soft & thick as those of the North, tho’ very good. In the rivers & lakes no troute nor small cat-fish (Barbotte), Carp of several varieties & good, one

sort particularly, very large, almost enormous, & very fat. Pickerel & Pike a variety of Pike, some of which are very large & excellent. Sturgeon also, I have been told. But there are eels—I never saw any. There are several other sorts of fish, and turtle, some of 18 ins. diameter.

Of the natives, there were not above fifty families. They, at that time, might muster about 60, or 65 warriors, & might have been several hundred but from their perpetual wars with the Sciouxs & very frequent broils among themselves when there were always more [or] less killed. They were proud, & demeanor so lofty & over bearing that even their immediate relatives could scarcely endure it: hence their jealousy (not of their women, but lest another should presume to equality) & in their drunken frolicks their quarrels & fighting: therefore their numbers must of necessity insensibly diminish. They were treacherous, as we call it, but not deceitful; for what they promised they rarely failed accomplishing. A deceitful person whom they put on the same category with a liar, a thief & a coward, they hold in ineffable contempt. Two instances I often heard repeated will show them better than anything I can say.

Some 12 or 15 years before, the white [men] were encamped on an island, where they built for the winter. One day while setting round their Kettle, eating their meal, several of the indians squatted, some cross leg on the ground & some sitting on their hams. One of these *eased* himself while eating; the others remarked the Smell,—this fellow, without altering his posture, leaped back as a frog, “Ah, what is that? said he, a toad I declare,[”] & with both hands shovelled it into the dish & ran off laughing! On another occasion the men were eating under the shade of [a] Butternut tree: one fellow happened to be perched immediately over them & easing himself some of it dropped into their Kettle! Expostulation was ridiculed, & resentment was death. Often would they truss up the nose of the white with their knives in no gentle manner. Passing by, or while talking friendly with one, they would give a sudden jerk of their knife, passing so close to the belly as sometimes to split the shirt, or vest, or brandishing their knife so close to the face

& eyes as almost to be felt. They would often too go to the "baggage" or burst open the Shop door & take out what rum they pleased, & compelled the people to mingle it to their taste, and whenever any of them happened to be Killed in a drunken Scrape then it was that the white had to endure insult & ill treatment. "You are the cause of this blood being shed by bringing *poisoned* rum to us.["] Such things were hard to be endured. At last it was thought that by making a chief of the greatest scoundrel among them would perhaps have a good tendency, and this leads me to the Second trait. There was an old "half-breed," the Son [of] a french man. The two⁴⁴ oldest remarkably brave, cool, determined & insolent, the Second particularly, A tall man, hard features & Stern countenance, Seldom spoke, & when he did it was in short broken sentences as if he thought it was degrading himself: extremely seldom that he Smiled; passionate, & his Short sun-burnt grisly hair whenever really angry, would stand on end like the quills of a porcupine. He, alone, caused as much trouble to the white nearly as all the others put together. From the description of him, the British commanding officer at Mackinac, who was consulted on the occasion, recommended selecting him for chief. Accordingly a fine coat well trimmed with lace, shirt, trousers (!) & a hat also trimmed with lace & a Splendid circular feather were procured for him. The white anticipated wonders.

On their arrival in the autumn, they found the whole tribe collected as usual. After unloading their canoes, arranging the baggages & tents, they were called together. Each one of them bringing his present of rice, meat, Grease & a few furs. In the usual manner, the Trader (I now forget his name) bade them all be seated on a beautiful grass plot before the Tent door, and in a prepared Speech, addressed them as nearly in the following words as interpretation will admit.

[“]My Friends! Our Great Father at Mackinac, according to usual custom again enquired of us into your health & welfare, & the State of your affairs generally. He was well pleased to hear you were all well & in health. He also enquired how you were coming

⁴⁴ Probably the sense here demands that the word "two" be deleted.

on with the Scioux: We told him all we knew. But he was very much grieved to hear there was no appearance of establishing peace between you. He has seen many of the Chiefs of the Scioux & spoke to them also of peace. He found that all the old men & chiefs among them, as among your own selves desire peace very much. But it is the young men who are too ardent:—they are absolutely thoughtless. They think they are not men—they are afraid of being looked upon as cowards if they have not a Scalp to shew; & contrary to the advice of the old & experienced, & to the great injury of all, they make a descent upon their enemies & plunge both nations again into war! They do not consider that a quiet, prudent & peaceable man is always more courageous & shows more wisdom by living peaceably with his neighbors. He is grieved at this State of things.[”]

He then inquired: “who is their chief? What is he doing that he does not exert his authority?” We replied that no one had authority over the others, that you were all men, that you were all warriors, that no one had authority over the others but in your war excursions only. “There is the mistake, *They must have a chief*” said he. Then, after a long talk with us he resumed: [“] although it is a very difficult matter to select one from among so many brave men to be chief over the others; Yet, out of respect to that worthy old man ‘Le vieux François’ who is justly loved by all, I am sure all the others will approve of my chusing his Son, You (naming him). You will put this Coat upon his back (with all the other things I send him) and tell him that it is such a one as I myself wear on particular occasions, & that I am sure he will do honor to it by his wisdom & prudence; you will also put this medal on his neck, & give this pipe & tobacco with it. You will tell his father that I am happy to find his name so respectably written in our books here & that he has children so worthy of him. Salute him for me. You will also Salute all the others & tell them that I am sure both for my sake & for their own they will be well pleased with my choice, & that they will love & assist their new chief. Again, tell them I salute them all.”

They then called him by his name to come & stand up while they

should put the clothes on him. But he rejected the compliment & treated the whole with the utmost contempt in the following language:

“No doubt, you Frenchmen, you think yourselves wonderfully cunning:—no doubt you were very certain that this fine Speech you have been fabricating on your way here would leap at once into my heart & that my eyes would be blinded by that Dazzling stuff you have been Displaying here with so much ceremony before us? Undeceive yourselves. I am born free & independent. I despise those tokens of Slavery. I am not a Slave to wear oth[er]s clothing (livery). My old clothes satisfy me; & when they are worn out I know how to procure others. But the true reason is, *You are all afraid of me*; & you think with sweet words, & all this flummery to bribe me, to purchase or [*MS. torn*] you are too cowardly to procure & too base to deserve. You complain of troubles & dangers—who asked you to come here. If we want any thing we will go to where it is to be had; a people like yourselves indeed, deceitful, thieving & liars—with a smoothe & soft tongue indeed, but still *dogs like yourselves*: we will not be insulted by their cringing presence. If you will persist to trade here, trade fairly as men, & not wait till you think us too far drunk to perceive how you steal from us & insult our females; & when you are called to task say, “Oh! you” you sold those things to us.” This is the reason why we ill treat you; we dont Kill you because it would be polluting our knives. Trade fairly with us & we will treat you as men should be treated by men. Our Father never sent *me* those things: it is a story of your own making; it is another of your Smoothe lies:[]”

Such a compliment as this they were by no means prepared for.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ The manuscript ends abruptly at this point.



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