

Salute to a Sioux

THE following tribute to the Sioux chief Wabasha, who was born in 1718 near the head of the Rum River in the Minnesota country and who served the English during the Revolutionary War, was written by Colonel Arent Schuyler de Peyster (1736–1822). This officer was commandant of the British fort at Michilimackinac from 1774 to 1779. The opening words and the meter are reminiscent of the better-known "Hail to the Chief" in Sir Walter Scott's *Lady of the Lake* (canto 2, stanza 19) which was published in 1810, but it is probable that this lyric was conceived earlier. Both may be adapted from the "joram," a Gaelic boat song often composed in honor of a chief. The poem and explanation appear in *de Peyster's Miscellanies* by An Officer, edited by J. Watts de Peyster, and published at Dumfries, Scotland, in 1813.

After Col. D. P. had brought this, the proudest of the Indian [chiefs], over to espouse the English cause, and abandon the

French, &c. he made an annual visit, and stipulated, in his terms of alliance, that he should be saluted with more ceremony than chiefs of other nations, not in number of cannon, but by the cannon being charged with ball, or a shell or two thrown, so as to accustom his young warriors to the English manner; when he, on landing would return the compliment with pistols, fired near the commandant's ears. The Scioux, of whom he is king or chief, inhabit the plains above the fall of St. Anthony, on the Missouri, where the finest buffaloes are bred. Some Ottawas, Chippawas (local Indians), and some Chocktaws and Chickesaws, being on a mission at the Fort, the last day of his arrival, expressed their surprise, (when they beheld the balls and shells flying and bursting over the canoes, and the young men lifting their paddles, as if striking at the balls,) by the ejaculating word *Taya*— This was at Michilimacknack, on the 6th of July, 1779.

Hail to the chief; who his buffalo's back straddles,
When in his own country, far, far from this fort;
Whose brave young canoe-men, *here* hold up their paddles,
In hopes that the whizzing balls may give them sport.
Hail to great Wabashaw!
Cannonier — fire away,
Hoist the fort-standard, and beat all the drums;
Ottawa and Chippawa,
Whoop! for great Wabashaw!
He comes — beat drums — the Scioux chief comes.

They now strain their nerves till the canoe runs bounding,
As swift as the Solen goose skims o'er the waves;
While on the lake's border, a guard is surrounding
A space, where to land the great Scioux so brave.
Hail to great Wabashaw!
Soldiers your triggers draw,
Guard — wave the colours, and give him the drum!
Chocktaw and Chickosaw,
Whoop for great Wabashaw!
Raise the port-cullis! — the King's friend is come.



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