

MINNESOTA AS SEEN BY TRAVELERS

With the development of steamboat traffic on the Mississippi River in the early thirties, Fort Snelling, the northernmost military post on the river, became a Mecca for curious travelers who wished to gain an impression of frontier America. Among the Europeans who visited this outpost of civilization was Captain Frederick Marryat, a British naval officer of wide experience who had retired several years earlier in order to devote himself to literary pursuits. Between 1829 and 1837, when he journeyed to America, he published a number of popular sea tales, including *Peter Simple* and *Mr. Midshipman Easy*. The distinguished soldier and author spent two years touring the United States and Canada. Early in the spring of 1838 he traveled westward by way of the Great Lakes to Green Bay, Wisconsin, accompanied some troops overland to Fort Winnebago, and descended the Wisconsin River in a keel boat to Prairie du Chien. At this point he boarded a steamboat which took him up the Mississippi to Fort Snelling, where he arrived on June 13, 1838.

Upon his return to England Marryat published two works of three volumes each, both under the title *A Diary in America, With Remarks on Its Institutions*. Only about half of the first series is devoted to the actual *Diary*; the remainder of this series and the entire second series are composed of essays on American social life and institutions. It is from the *Diary* in the first series that the following account of Marryat's visit to Minnesota is reprinted.

CAPTAIN MARRYAT IN MINNESOTA, 1838

[Captain Frederick Marryat, *A Diary in America, With Remarks on Its Institutions*, 2: 78-125 (London, 1839)]

I remained a week at Prairie du Chien, and left my kind entertainers with regret; but an opportunity offering of going up to St.

Peters in a steam-boat, with General Atkinson, who was on a tour of inspection, I could not neglect so favourable a chance.¹ St. Peters is situated at the confluence of the St. Peter River with the Upper Mississippi, about seven miles below the Falls of St. Anthony, where the River Mississippi becomes no longer navigable; and here, removed many hundred miles from civilization, the Americans have an outpost called Fort Snelling, and the American Fur Company an establishment. The country to the north is occupied by the Chippeway tribe of Indians; that to the east by the Winnebagos, and that to the west by the powerful tribe of Sioux or Dacotahs, who range over the whole prairie territory between the Mississippi and Missouri rivers.

The river here is so constantly divided by numerous islands, that its great width is not discernible: it seldom has less than two or three channels, and often more: it courses through a succession of bold bluffs, rising sometimes perpendicularly, and always abruptly from the banks or flat land, occasionally diversified by the prairies, which descend to the edge of the stream. These bluffs are similar to those I have described in the Wisconsin river and Prairie du Chien, but are on a grander scale, and are surmounted by horizontal layers of limestone rock. The islands are all covered with small timber and brushwood, and in the spring, before the leaves have burst out, and the freshets come down, the river rises so as to cover the whole of them, and then you behold the width and magnificence of this vast stream. On the second day we arrived at Lake Pepin, which is little more than an expansion of the river, or rather a portion of it, without islands. On the third, we made fast to the wharf, abreast of the American Fur Company's Factory, a short distance below the mouth of the River St. Peters. Fort Snelling is about a mile from the factory, and is situated on a steep promontory, in a commanding position; it is built of stone, and may be considered as impregnable to any attempt which the Indians might make, provided that it has a sufficient garrison. Behind it is a splendid prairie, running back for many miles.

¹General Henry Atkinson was the commandant at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri.

The Falls of St. Anthony are not very imposing, although not devoid of beauty. You cannot see the whole of the falls at one view, as they are divided, like those of Niagara, by a large island, about one-third of the distance from the eastern shore. The river which, as you ascended, poured through a bed below the strata of calcareous rock, now rises above the limestone formation; and the large masses of this rock, which at the falls have been thrown down in wild confusion over a width of from two hundred to two hundred and fifty yards, have a very picturesque effect. The falls themselves, I do not think, are more than from thirty to thirty-five feet high; but, with rapids above and below them, the descent of the river is said to be more than one hundred feet. Like those of Niagara, these falls have constantly receded, and are still receding.

Here, for the first time, I consider that I have seen the Indians in their primitive state; for till now all that I had fallen in with have been debased by intercourse with the whites, and the use of spirituous liquors. The Winnebagos at Prairie du Chien were almost always in a state of intoxication, as were the other tribes at Mackinaw, and on the Lakes. The Winnebagos are considered the dirtiest race of Indians, and with the worst qualities: they were formerly designated by the French, *Puans* a term sufficiently explanatory. When I was at Prairie du Chien, a circumstance which had occurred there in the previous winter was narrated to me. In many points of manners and customs, the red men have a strong analogy with the Jewish tribes: among others, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, is most strictly adhered to. If an Indian of one tribe is killed by an Indian of another, the murderer is demanded, and must either be given up, or his life must be taken by his own tribe; if not, a feud between the two nations would be the inevitable result. It appeared that a young Menonnomie, in a drunken fray, had killed a Winnebago, and the culprit was demanded by the head men of the Winnebago tribe. A council was held; and instead of the Menonnomie, the chiefs of the tribe offered them whisky. The Winnebagos could not resist the temptation; and it was agreed that ten gallons of whisky should be produced by the Menonnomies, to be drunk by all parties over the grave of the deceased. The squaws of the Menonnomie tribe

had to dig the grave, as is the custom, — a task of no little labour, as the ground was frozen hard several feet below the surface.

The body was laid in the grave; the mother of the deceased, with the rest of the Winnebago squaws, howling over it, and denouncing vengeance against the murderer; but in a short time the whisky made its appearance, and they all set too to drink. In an hour they were all the best friends in the world, and all very drunk. The old squaw mother was hugging the murderer of her son; and it was a scene of intoxication which, in the end, left the majority of the parties assembled, for a time, quite as dead as the man in the grave. Such are the effects of whisky upon these people, who had been destroyed much more rapidly by spirituous liquors than by all the wars which they have engaged in against the whites.

The Sioux are a large band, and are divided into six or seven different tribes; they are said to amount to from 27,000 to 30,000. They are, or have been, constantly at war with the Chippeways to the north of them, and with Saucs and Foxes, a small but very warlike band, residing to the south of them, abreast of Des Moines River. The Sioux have fixed habitations as well as tents; their tents are large and commodious, made of buffalo skins dressed without the hair, and very often handsomely painted on the outside. I went out about nine miles to visit a Sioux village on the borders of a small lake. Their lodges were built cottage-fashion, of small fir-poles, erected stockadewise, and covered inside and out with bark; the roof also of bark with a hole in the centre for the smoke to escape through. I entered one of those lodges: the interior was surrounded by a continued bed-place round three of the sides, about three feet from the floor, and on the platform was a quantity of buffalo skins and pillows; the fire was in the centre, and their luggage was stowed away under the bed-places. It was very neat and clean; the Sioux generally are; indeed, particularly so, compared with the other tribes of Indians. A missionary resides at this village, and has paid great attention to the small band under his care. Their patches of Indian corn were clean and well tilled; and although, from demi-civilization, the people have lost much of their native grandeur, still they are a fine race, and

well disposed.² But the majority of the Sioux tribe remain in their native state: they are *Horse* Indians, as those who live on the prairies are termed; and although many of them have rifles, the majority still adhere to the use of the bow and arrows, both in their war parties and in the chase of the buffalo.

During the time that I passed here, there were several games of ball played between different bands, and for considerable stakes; one was played on the prairie close to the house of the Indian agent. The Indian game of ball is somewhat similar to the game of golf in Scotland, with this difference, that the sticks used by the Indians have a small network racket at the end, in which they catch the ball and run away with it, as far as they are permitted, towards the goal, before they throw it in that direction. It is one of the most exciting games in the world, and requires the greatest activity and address.

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The game played before the fort when I was present lasted nearly two hours, during which I had a good opportunity of estimating the agility of the Indians, who displayed a great deal of mirth and humour at the same time. But the most curious effect produced was by the circumstance, that having divested themselves of all their garments except their middle clothing, they had all of them fastened behind them a horse's tail; and as they swept by, in their chase of the ball, with their tails streaming to the wind, I really almost made up my mind that such an appendage was rather an improvement to a man's figure than otherwise.

While I was there a band of Sioux from the *Lac qui Parle*, (so named from a remarkable echo there,) distant about two hundred and thirty miles from Fort Snelling, headed by a Mons. Rainville, came down, on a visit to the American Fur Company's factory.³ Mons. Rainville, (or *de* Rainville, as he told me was

² The village which Marryat visited was that of the Sioux chief Cloudman and his band on the shore of Lake Calhoun. The neighboring Lake Harriet mission was in charge of the Reverend Jedediah D. Stevens from 1835 to 1839. He opened two schools for Indian and half-breed children and taught agriculture to the Indians.

³ For a brief sketch of Joseph Renville see *ante*, 4:416 n. 75. In his journal for June 15, 1838, Major Lawrence Taliaferro, the Indian agent

his real name,) is, he asserts, descended from one of the best families in France, which formerly settled in Canada. He is a half-bred, his father being a Frenchman, and his mother a Sioux; his wife is also a Sioux, so that his family are three quarters red. He had been residing many years with the Sioux tribes, trafficking with them for peltry, and has been very judicious in his treatment of them, not interfering with their pursuits of hunting; he has, moreover, to a certain degree civilized them, and obtained great power over them. He has induced the band who reside with him to cultivate a sufficiency of ground for their sustenance, but they still course the prairie on their fiery horses, and follow up the chase of the buffalo. They adhere also to their paint, their dresses, and their habits, and all who compose his band are first-rate warriors; but they are all converted to Christianity.

Latterly two missionaries have been sent out to his assistance.⁴ The Dacotah language has been reduced to writing, and most of them, if not all, can write and read. I have now in my possession an elementary spelling-book, and Watts's catechism, printed at Boston, in the Sioux tongue, and many letters and notes given to me by the missionaries, written to them by the painted warriors; of course, they do not touch spirituous liquors. The dress of the band which came down with Mr. Rainville was peculiarly martial and elegant. Their hair is divided in long plaits in front, and ornamented with rows of circular silver buckles; the ear is covered with ear-rings up to the top of it, and on the crown of the head they wear the war-eagle's feathers, to which they are entitled by their exploits. The war-eagle is

at Fort Snelling, makes the following remarks concerning the arrival of these visitors: "Mr Jos Renville Sr. arrives with 120 Indians from Lake qui parle on the St Peters. The Indians come without an invitation from the Agency. their presence is only calculated to give trouble to the Agent." The Taliaferro Journals are in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

⁴Dr. Thomas S. Williamson and his assistant, Alexander G. Huggins, accompanied Renville to Lac qui Parle in 1835, and two years later they were joined by the Reverend Stephen R. Riggs. Marryat's statements regarding the success of these missionaries undoubtedly are greatly exaggerated.

a small one of the genus, but said to be so fierce that it will attack and destroy the largest of his kind; the feathers are black about three inches down from the tips, on each side of the stem, the remainder being white. These feathers are highly valued, as the bird is scarce and difficult to kill. I saw two very fine feathers carried by a Sioux warrior on the point of his spear, and I asked him if he would part with them. He refused, saying that they cost too dear. I asked him how much, and he replied that he had given a very *fine horse* for them. For every scalp taken from the enemy, or grisly bear killed, an Indian is entitled to wear one feather, and no more; and this rule is never deviated from. Were an Indian to put on more feathers than he is entitled to, he would be immediately disgraced. Indeed, you can among this primitive people know all their several merits as warriors. I have now the shield of [a] Yank-ton Sioux, a chief of a tribe near the Missouri. In the centre is a black eagle, which is his *totem*, or heraldic distinction; on each side hang war-eagle's feathers and small locks of human hair, denoting the number of scalps which he has taken, and below are smaller feathers, equal to the number of wounds he has received. These warriors of Mr. Rainville's were constantly with me, for they knew that I was an *English* warrior, as they called me, and they are very partial to the English. It was really a pleasing sight, and a subject for meditation, to see one of these fine fellows, dressed in all his wild magnificence, with his buffalo robe on his shoulders, and his tomahawk by his side, seated at a table, and writing out for me a Sioux translation of the Psalms of David.

Mr. Rainville's children read and write English, French, and Sioux. They are modest and well-behaved, as the Indian women generally are. They had prayers every evening, and I used to attend them. The warriors sat on the floor round the room; the missionary, with Mr. Rainville and his family, in the centre; and they all sang remarkably well. This system with these Indians is, in my opinion, very good. All their fine qualities are retained; and if the system be pursued I have no doubt but that the sternness and less defensible portions of their characters will be gradually obliterated.

A half-bred, of the name of Jack Fraser, came up with us in the steam-boat.⁵ He has been admitted into one of the bands of Sioux who live near the river, and is reckoned one of the bravest of their warriors. I counted twenty-eight notches on the handle of his tomahawk, every one denoting a scalp taken, and when dressed he wears eagle's feathers to that amount. He was a fine intellectual-looking man. I conversed with him through the interpreter, and he told me that the only man that he wished to kill was his *father*. On inquiring why, he replied that his father had broken his word with him; that he had promised to make a *white man* of him (that is to have educated him, and brought him up in a civilized manner), and that he had left him a Sioux. One could not help admiring the thirst for knowledge and the pride shown by this poor fellow, although mixed up with their inveterate passion for revenge.

The following story is told of Jack Fraser: When he was a lad of twelve years old he was, with three other Sioux Indians, captured by the Chippeways. At that period these tribes were not at war, but they were preparing for it; the Chippeways, therefore, did not kill, but they insulted all the Sioux who fell into their hands.

The greatest affront to a Sioux is to cut off his hair, which is worn very long before and behind, hanging down in plaits ornamented with silver brooches. The Chippeways cut off the hair of the three Sioux Indians, and were about to do the same office for Jack, when he threw them off, telling them that if they wanted his hair, they must take it with the *scalp* attached to it.

This boldness on the part of a boy of twelve years old astonished the Chippeways, and they all put their hands to their

⁵ Joseph Jack Frazer, the son of a Scotch trader, Alexander Frazer, and a half-breed Sioux woman of the Red Wing band, was born in 1806. He lived as a member of his mother's tribe until he was thirty-five years old, when he "doffed the habiliments of the savage, and became quite a respectable white man in his dress and habits, a position he had anxiously desired to attain from his boyhood." An account of the "Life and Adventures of Joseph Jack Frazer: A Mixed Blood of the Dakota Sioux," by "Walker-in-the-Pines" (Henry H. Sibley), is published in sixteen weekly installments in the *St. Paul Pioneer* beginning December 2, 1866.

mouths, as the Indians always do when they are very much surprised. They determined, however, to ascertain if Jack was really as brave as he appeared to be, and whether he had fortitude to bear pain.

One of the chiefs refilled his pipe, and put the hot bowl of it to Jack's nether quarters, and kept it there in close contact until he had burnt a hole in his flesh as wide as a dollar, and half an inch deep. Jack never flinched during the operation, and the Indians were so pleased with him that they not only allowed Jack to retain his hair, but they gave him his liberty.

The Sioux are said to be very honest, except on the point of stealing horses; but this, it must be recollected, is a part of their system of warfare, and is no more to be considered as stealing than is our taking merchant-vessels on the high seas. Indeed, what are the vast rolling prairies but as a wide ocean, and their armed bands that scour them but men-of-war and privateers, and the horses which they capture but unarmed or defenceless convoys of merchant-vessels? But sometimes they steal when they are not at war, and this is from the force of habit, and their irresistible desire to possess a fine horse. Mr. Rainville informed me that three hundred dollars was a very common price for a good horse, and if the animal was very remarkable, swift and well-trained for buffalo-hunting, they would give any sum (or the equivalent for it) that they could command.

In many customs the Sioux are closely allied to the Jewish nation; indeed, a work has been published in America to prove that the Indians were originally Jews. There is always a separate lodge for the women to retire to before and after childbirth, observing a similar purification to that prescribed by Moses. Although there ever will be, in all societies, instances to the contrary, chastity is honoured among the Sioux. They hold what they term *Virgin Feasts*, and when these are held, should any young woman accept the invitation who has by her misconduct rendered herself unqualified for it, it is the duty of any man who is aware of her unfitness, to go into the circle and lead her out. A circumstance of this kind occurred the other day, when the daughter of a celebrated chief gave a *Virgin Feast*: a young man of the tribe walked into the circle and led her out; upon which the chief led his daughter to the lodge of the young Sioux,

and told him that he gave her to him for his wife, but the young man refused to take her, as being unworthy. But what is more singular (and I have it from authority which is unquestionable), they also hold Virgin Feasts for the young men; and should any young man take his seat there who is unqualified, the woman who is aware of it must lead him out, although in so doing, she convicts herself; nevertheless it is considered a sacred duty and is done.

The shells found in their western rivers are very interesting. I had promised to procure some for Mr. Lee, of Philadelphia, and an old squaw had been despatched to obtain them. She brought me a large quantity, and then squatted down by my side. I was seated on the stone steps before the door, and commenced opening and cleaning them previous to packing them up. She watched me very attentively for half an hour, and then got up, and continued, as she walked away, to chuckle and talk aloud. "Do you know what the old woman says?" said the old Canadian interpreter to me: "she says, the man's a fool; he keeps the shells, and throws the meat away."

The French Canadians, who are here employed by the Fur Company, are a strange set of people. There is no law here, or appeal to law; yet they submit to authority, and are managed with very little trouble. They bind themselves for three years, and during that time (little occasional deviations being overlooked) they work diligently and faithfully; ready at all seasons and at all hours, and never complaining, although the work is often extremely hard. Occasionally they return to Canada with their earnings, but the major part have connected themselves with Indian women, and have numerous families; for children in this fine climate are so numerous, that they almost appear to spring from the earth.

While I remained at St. Peters, one or two of the settlers at Red River came down. Red River is a colony established by Lord Selkirk, and at present is said to be composed of a population of four thousand. This settlement, which is four degrees of latitude north of St. Peters, has proved very valuable to the Hudson Bay Company, who are established there; most of their servants remaining at it after their three years' service is completed, and those required to be hired in their stead being

obtained from the settlement. Formerly they had to send to Montreal for their servants, and those discharged went to Canada and spent their money in the provinces; now that they remain at the settlement, the supplies coming almost wholly from the stores of the Company, the money returns to it, and they procure their servants without trouble. These settlers informed me that provisions were plentiful and cheap, beef being sold at about two-pence per lb.; but they complained, and very naturally, that there was no market for their produce, so that if the Company did not purchase it, they must consume it how they could; besides that the supply being much greater than the demand, of course favour was shewn. This had disgusted many of the settlers, who talked of coming down further south. One of the greatest inducements for remaining at Red River, and which occasioned the population to be so numerous, was the intermixture by marriage with the Indian tribes surrounding them. They do not like to return to Canada with a family of half-breeds, who would not there be looked upon with the same consideration as their parents.

I give the substance of this conversation, without being able to substantiate how far it is true: the parties who gave me the information were certainly to be classed among that portion of the settlers who were discontented.

Fort Snelling is well built, and beautifully situated; as usual, I found the officers gentlemanlike, intelligent, and hospitable; and, together with their wives and families, the society was the most agreeable that I became acquainted with in America. They are better supplied here than either at Fort Crawford or Fort Winnebago, having a fine stock of cattle on the prairie, and an extensive garden cultivated for the use of the garrison. The principal amusement of the officers is, as may be supposed, the chase; there is no want of game in the season, and they have some very good dogs of every variety. And I here had the pleasure of falling in with Captain Scott, one of the first Nimrods of the United States, and who, perhaps, has seen more of every variety of hunting than any other person. His reputation as a marksman is very great; and there is one feat which he has often performed that appears almost incredible. Two potatoes being

thrown up in the air, he will watch his opportunity and pass his rifle ball through them both.⁶

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The band of warriors attached to Monsieur Rainville have set up their war-tent close to the factory, and have entertained us with a variety of dances. Their dresses are very beautiful, and the people, who have been accustomed to witness these exhibitions for years, say that they have never seen any thing equal to them before. I was very anxious to obtain one of them, and applied to Mr. Rainville to effect my purpose; but it required all his influence to induce them to part with it, and they had many arguments and debates among themselves before they could make up their minds to consent to do so. I was the more anxious about it, as I had seen Mr. Catlin's splendid exhibition, and I knew that he had not one in his possession.⁷ The dress in question consisted of a sort of kilt of fine skins, ornamented with beautiful porcupine quill-work and eagle's feathers; garters of animals' tails, worn at their ankles; head-dress of eagle's feathers and ermines' tails, etc. They made little objection to part with any portions of the dress except the kilt; at last they had a meeting of the whole band, as the dress was not the property of any one individual; and I was informed that the warriors would come and have a *talk* with me.

I received them at the factory's new house, in my room, which was large, and held them all. One came and presented me with a pair of garters; another with a portion of the head-dress; another with mocassins; at last, the kilt or girdle was handed to me. M. Rainville sat by as interpreter. He who had presented me with the kilt or girdle spoke for half a minute, and then stopped while what he said was being interpreted.

⁶Captain Martin Scott was an officer in the Fifth United States Infantry stationed at Fort Snelling. Stories of some of the exploits on which his fame as a hunter and marksman were based are given by Marryat, but are omitted in the present reprint.

⁷George Catlin, the artist, exhibited from time to time in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, hundreds of his paintings of American Indians and a vast number of Indian costumes and weapons which he collected during his travels among the primitive tribes after 1832. In 1835 and 1836 Catlin visited Fort Snelling and the Sioux country.

“ You are an Englishman, and a warrior in your own country. You cross the great waters as fast as we can our prairies. We recollect the English, and we like them; they used us well. The rifles and blankets which they gave us, according to promise, were of good quality: not like the American goods; their rifles are bad, and their blankets are thin. The English keep their word, and they live in our memory.”

“ Ho!” replied I; which is as much as to say, I understand what you have said, and you may proceed.

“ You have asked for the dress which we wear when we dance; we have never parted with one as yet; they belong to the band of warriors; when one who has worn a dress goes to the land of spirits, we hold a council, to see who is the most worthy to put it on in his place. We value them highly; and we tell you so not to enhance their value, but to prove what we will do for an English warrior.”

“ Ho!” says I.

“ An American, in the fort, has tried hard to obtain this dress of us; he offered us two barrels of flour, and other things. You know that we have no game, and we are hungry; but if he had offered twelve barrels of flour, we would not have parted with them. (This was true.) But our father, Rainville, has spoken; and we have pleasure in giving them to an English warrior. I have spoken.”

“ Ho!” says I; upon which the Indian took his seat with the others, and it was my turn to speak. I was very near beginning, “ Unaccustomed as I am to public speaking;” but I knew that such an acknowledgment would, in their estimation, have very much lessened my value as a warrior; for, like the Duke of Wellington, one must be as valuable in the council as in the field, to come up to their notions of excellence. So I rose, and said —

“ I receive with great pleasure the dress which you have given me. I know that you do not like to part with it, and that you have refused the American at the fort; and I therefore value it the more. I shall never look upon it, when I am on the other side of the great waters, without thinking of my friends the Sioux; and I will tell my nation that you gave them to me be-

cause I was an English warrior, and because you liked the English."

"Ho!" grunted the whole conclave, after this was interpreted.

"I am very glad that you do not forget the English, and that you say they kept their word, and that their rifles and blankets were good. I know that the blankets of the Americans are thin and cold. (I did not think it worth while to say that they were all made in England.) We have buried the hatchet now; but should the tomahawk be raised again between the Americans and the English, you must not take part with the Americans."⁸

"Ho!" said they.

"In the Fur Company's store you will find many things acceptable to you. I leave Mr. Rainville to select for you what you wish; and beg you will receive them in return for the present which you have made me."

"Ho!" said they; and thus ended my first Indian council.

It is remarkable that the Sioux have no expression to signify, "I thank you," although other Indians have. When they receive a present, they always say, *Wash tay*: it is good.

Of all the tribes I believe the Sioux to be the most inimical to the Americans. They have no hesitation in openly declaring so; and it must be acknowledged that it is not without just grounds. During the time that I was at St. Peters, a council was held at the Indian agent's.⁹ It appears that the American Government, in its paternal care for the Indians, had decided that at any *strike* taking place between tribes of Indians near to

⁸ This pompous and undiplomatic proceeding aroused the indignation of the Indian agent. In his "Auto-biography," written many years later, Taliaferro, after mentioning the visit of "Capt. Marryatt of the Royal Navy, a famous author, a rough, self-conceited John Bull," goes on to relate that Marryat "visited the nearest trading post to see the Indians, announced himself an Englishman to them, through quite willing interpreters; spoke of their great nation; that he was going through their country as their friend; that their great British father had never forgotten them. This interview of the sailor was of course at once made known to the agent, and it was delicately intimated to the captain that his exploration of the country closed at Fort Snelling." *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 6: 240.

⁹ The speeches made by the Indians during this council are fully reported in the Taliaferro Journal for June 23, 1838.

the confines, no war should take place in consequence: that is to say, that should any Indians of one tribe attack to kill any Indians belonging to another, that instead of the tribes going to war, they should apply for and receive redress from the American Government. Some time back, a party of Chippeways came down to a trader's house, about half a mile from Fort Snelling. Being almost hereditary enemies of the Sioux, they were fired at, at night, by some of the young men of the Sioux village close by, and two of the Chippeways were wounded. In conformity with the intimation received, and the law laid down by the American Government and promulgated by the Indian agent, the Chippeways applied for redress. It was granted — four Sioux were taken and shot. This summary justice was expected to produce the best effects, and, had it been followed up, it might have prevented bloodshed: but, since the above occurrence, some Chippeways came down, and meeting a party of Sioux, were received kindly into their lodges; they returned this hospitality by treacherously murdering eleven of the Sioux, while they were asleep.¹⁰ This time the Sioux brought forward their complaint. "You tell us not to go to war; we will not; you shot four of our people for wounding two Chippeways; now do us justice against the Chippeways, who have murdered eleven of our Sioux." As yet no justice has been done to the Sioux. The fact is, that the Chippeways live a long way off; and there are not sufficient men to garrison the fort, still less to send a party out to capture the Chippeways; and the Sioux are, as may well be supposed, indignant at this partial proceeding.

I was at the council, and heard all the speeches made by the Sioux chiefs on the occasion. They were some of them very eloquent, and occasionally very severe; and the reply of the Indian agent must have rendered the American government very contemptible in the eyes of the Indians — not that the agent was so much in fault as was the American government, which, by not taking proper measures to put their promises and agreements into force, had left their officer in such a position. First, the

¹⁰ Reference is here made to the murder of the members of a Sioux hunting party from Lac qui Parle by Hole-in-the-Day, the Chippewa chief, and a group of his followers in April, 1838. For a brief account of the continuous warfare between these tribes see *ante*, 41-45.

Indian agent said, that the wounding of the two Chippeways took place close to the fort, and that it was on account of the insult offered to the *American flag*, that it was so promptly punished — a very different explanation, and quite at variance with the principle laid down by the American government. The Indians replied; and the agent then said, that they had not sufficient troops to defend the fort, and, therefore, could not send out a party; an admission very unwise to make, although strictly true. The Indians again replied; and then the agent said, wait a little till we hear from Washington, and then, if you have no redress, you are brave men, you have arms in your hands, and your enemies are before you. This was worse than all, for it implied the inability or the indifference of the American government to do them justice, and told them, after that government had distinctly declared that they should fight no longer, but receive redress from it, that they now might do what the government had forbidden them to, and that they had no other chance of redress. The result of this council was very unsatisfactory. The Indian chiefs declared that they were ashamed to look their people in the face, and walked solemnly away.

To make this matter still worse, after I left St. Peter's I read in the St. Louis Gazette a report of some Chippeways having come down, and that, in consequence of the advice given by the Indian agent, the Sioux had taken the law into their own hands and murdered some of the Chippeways; and that although they had never received redress for the murder of their own people, some of the Sioux were again taken and executed.¹¹

The arms of the Sioux are the rifle, tomahawk, and bow; they carry spears more for parade than use. Their bows are not more than three feet long, but their execution with them is surprising. A Sioux, when on horseback chasing the buffalo, will drive his arrow, which is about eighteen inches long, with such force that the barb shall appear on the opposite side of the animal. And one of their greatest chiefs, *Wanataw*, has been known to kill two buffalos with one arrow, it having passed through the

¹¹ For an account of this incident see William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1: 151-154 (St. Paul, 1921). In this case the guilty Sioux were not executed, but were flogged by members of their own tribe as a punishment.

first of the animals, and mortally wounded the second on the other side of it. I was about two hundred yards from the fort, and asked a Sioux if he could send his arrow into one of the apertures for air, which were near the foundation, and about three inches wide. It appeared like a mere thread from where we stood. He took his bow, and apparently with a most careless aim he threw the arrow right into it.

The men are tall and straight, and very finely made, with the exception of their arms, which are too small. The arms of the squaws, who do all the labour, are much more muscular. One day, as I was on the prairie, I witnessed the effect of custom upon these people. A Sioux was coming up without perceiving me; his squaw followed very heavily laden, and to assist her he had himself a large package on his shoulder. As soon as they perceived me, he dropped his burden, and it was taken up by the squaw and added to what she had already. If a woman wishes to upbraid another, the severest thing she can say is, "You let your husband carry burthens."

Left St. Peters. Taking the two varieties in the mass, the Indians must be acknowledged the most perfect gentlemen in America, particularly in their deportment. It was with regret that I parted with my friends in the fort, my kind host, Mr. Sibley, and my noble-minded warrior Sioux. I could have remained at St. Peters for a year with pleasure, and could only regret that life was so short, and the Mississippi so long.



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