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Indians on the Upper Missouri. Message from the President of the United States, transmitting a report in regard to the expedition among the Indians on the Upper Missouri. March 24, 1856. -- Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

United States Congress

US House of Representatives

President of the United States

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Authors

United States Congress, US House of Representatives, President of the United States, Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Alfred Cumming, and Franklin Pierce

INDIANS ON THE UPPER MISSOURI.

MESSAGE

FROM

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

TRANSMITTING

A report in regard to the expedition among the Indians on the Upper Missouri.

MARCH 24, 1856.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE,
Washington, March 24, 1856.

I herewith transmit to the House of Representatives, in obedience to their resolution of the 17th instant, a communication from the Secretary of the Interior, accompanied by a copy of the report of Superintendent Cumming, in regard to his late expedition among the tribes of Indians on the Upper Missouri.

FRANKLIN PIERCE.

HON. NATHANIEL P. BANKS,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Washington, March 21, 1856.

SIR: In compliance with your directions, I have the honor to submit to you, herewith, a copy of the report of Superintendent Cumming, in regard to his late expedition among the tribes of Indians on the Upper Missouri, called for by the resolution of the House of Representatives of the 17th instant.

I am, sir, with much respect, your obedient servant,

R. McCLELLAND,
Secretary.

To the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

OFFICE SUPERINTENDENT INDIAN AFFAIRS,
St. Louis, February 15, 1856.

SIR: I have the honor herewith to transmit a report of my expedition to the Blackfeet country, as one of the commissioners under your instructions, for the purpose of holding a council with the Blackfeet Indians, and other tribes residing near the headwaters of the Missouri.

Very respectfully, I am, sir, your obedient servant,
 A. CUMMING,
Superintendent Indian Affairs.

HON. GEORGE W. MANYPENNY,
Commissoner of Indian Affairs.

OFFICE SUPERINTENDENT INDIAN AFFAIRS,
St. Louis, February 14, 1856.

SIR: I have the honor to report to you, that, on the 24th and 28th of May last I turned over to agents Whitfield and Twiss the annuity goods for the Arkansas and Platte agencies, and furnished those gentlemen with instructions to govern them in the performance of the delicate official duties which devolved upon them, at a time when many of the bands were suspected of disaffection, and the army engaged in active military operations; that service was performed, I trust, to the satisfaction of the department, and by which, no doubt, much suffering among the tribes was averted.

On the 6th of June, I embarked on the steamer "St. Mary," with the annuity goods destined for the various tribes of the Upper Missouri agency, and the merchandise intended for presents to the tribes inhabiting the country on and near the headwaters of the Missouri river, who were expected to assemble in a general council at Fort Benton, near the falls. I was accompanied by Agents Vaughan and Hatch, and the gentlemen employed by me as assistants.

On the 14th I saw many of the Ottoes and Missouriias near the river, seemingly unwilling to abandon their old homes. I am gratified on being able to report that they have since gone to their reservation, where they will soon realize the advantages secured to them by the beneficent provisions of their late treaty.

The Pawnees, it will be remembered, by the treaty of October, 1833, ceded to the United States all their lands on the south side of the Platte. They were subsequently driven from the north side by the Sioux, since which time they have subsisted chiefly by depredations and the contributions (not always voluntary) bestowed on them by travellers on the thoroughfares which they infest. Apart from the question of policy, justice and humanity require that something should be done to better the condition of this depraved and wretched people. They are willing to cede their lands; and if it shall be determined to treat with them, I would recommend that they be finally settled

on the same reserve with the Ottoes and Missourias, or in its immediate vicinity.

The character of the lands selected as the Omaha reserve, at the Black Bird Hills, has not escaped observation, and efforts, I fear, have been made to create dissatisfaction in their minds concerning it. The location has been judiciously selected, and should not be changed. The land will be broken up on this and the Ottoe and Missouriia reserve as early as possible this spring.

The Poncas, who speak the same language as the Omahas, cultivate extensively and successfully. They formerly enjoyed a good reputation, but, tempted to commit depredations and acts of violence on the Laramie route, they have recently become the most troublesome tribe on that frontier. They claim an extensive and valuable tract of country, which will soon be required for settlement; the valley of the L'eau que Cour constitutes not the least valuable part of it. If it be deemed expedient to treat with them, I would advise that they be placed at or near the Black Bird reserve; they would be re-united with the Omahas, and become one people in sympathy and interest, and thereby present an effectual resistance to the incursions of the Sioux. I would recommend the appointment of an additional agent for the Council Bluffs agency. The present agent should be transferred to the Ottoe and Missouriia reserve, on the Big Blue; and the additional agent established at the Black Bird Hills, where he might supervise not only the Omahas, but the Poncas and Yancton Sioux. At Sergeant's Bluffs there are many returned voyageurs, who have selected this spot on which to live and rear their families—many of whom are half-breed Yanctons. They are desirous of permanently settling on the Yancton lands, below the Vermillion river.

On the 21st I arrived at the Yancton village, Derroway Bluffs, and took on board the chief and some of the principal men; the people went up to the other village by land; the name of this chief is "Smutty Bear." We passed the mouth of the L'eau que Cour in the evening, and the next morning arrived at the upper village, (now abandoned,) whose chief is "The Man Struck by the Ree." Both of these chiefs are men of intelligence, and singularly devoted to the interests of their respective bands; yet mutually jealous of the exercise of power by each other. The present seemed a good occasion to bring the two bands together and to reconcile the chiefs. I endeavored to impress upon them the necessity of acting in concert; they promised future friendship, and I placed a medal upon the breast of each of them in the presence of their people, and all parties seemed highly gratified. Agent Vaughan distributed their annuity, and the boat proceeded.

The country claimed by the Yancton Sioux extends from the mouth of the Big Sioux to a point on the Missouri river opposite Fort Pierre, with an indefinite extent northwardly. A portion of this country is a fertile tract sixty by fifteen miles, lying on the Missouri river between Dorion's Bluffs and the mouth of the Sioux; through it run the Vermillion and James rivers, and it is bounded by the Sioux and the Missouri. On the margin of all these rivers is an abundant growth of ash, oak, cotton-wood, and elm. The Yanctons have two villages on this tract—one at Dorion's Bluff, and the other ten miles below

the Vermillion. They evince the greatest desire to have the advantages of instruction in farming. With very little aid from the government they have made some progress in cultivating corn, pumpkins, beans, &c.—enough for their subsistence but for the pillages of the Santees, whose depredations extend to both sides of the Sioux, stealing horses, cattle, corn, and, indeed, everything that they esteem of any value. If they are not controlled in time by the government I fear that an indiscriminate punishment will be inflicted upon them by the indignant and injured people upon whom they trespass. The Yanc-tones are clearly entitled to protection, being industrious, honest, and desirous to live by the cultivation of the soil; and if nothing more be done for them, I recommend that they should be again allowed the benefits provided for in the 4th article of the treaty of 15th June, 1830.

A very large proportion of all the land above the L'eau que Cour, on both sides of the Missouri, as far up as the falls, will, in my opinion, be found utterly unfit for cultivation. The buffalo grass, however, is abundant, and its nutritious qualities render it exceedingly valuable for grazing. Upon many of the tributaries there are excellent sites for grazing farms where wood and water can be procured in abundance, but the unfrequency of rain, and the scantiness of wood, will preclude the possibility of establishing a large population in that region devoted to agricultural pursuits only. The Chien river valleys may be termed habitable; the head waters of this river cut the "Black Hills," and offer inducements to an early settlement in consequence of the fertility of these small valleys, and the extensive forests of pine, oak, elm, &c., of the largest size, which will be rafted to the Missouri river, a distance not exceeding 250 miles. Forty miles above Fort Pierre is the mouth of the Chien river. After the voyager passes the region of the L'eau que Cour, the character of both animal and vegetable life is changed; he no longer sees the raccoon, gray fox, possum, squirrel, turkey, painted grouse, or quail; and the honey bee has not extended his flight beyond the White river. The last sycamore is seen near Council Bluffs; the hickory and almost every variety of oak, except the pin oak, with many other familiar trees, are no longer to be seen. The mouth of the Sioux marks the limit of the region of coal and ledges of rock in place. The course of the Missouri is through several distinct tertiary basins, all of which contain wonderful specimens of extinct animal species hitherto undescribed, petrified and preserved in the chalk deposits of that region. That basin which embraces the great bend near Fort Clark, contains petrifications of trees so numerous as to be almost entitled to the name of forests. Here is also found extensive deposits of lignite or brown coal, but which is quite worthless as an article of fuel.

On the 26th, the boat arrived at Fort Pierre; the Kettle band Sioux and a band of Yanc-tonees were there awaiting the arrival of the annuities; all the other Sioux bands of that region are said to be on a hunt on the head waters of the Chien and other tributaries of the Missouri. The Kettle band manifested great dissatisfaction at the sale of Fort Pierre to the United States, and much trepidation, lest their acceptance of their annuities might involve them in difficulty

with other tribes. I admonished them of the necessity of pursuing an entirely neutral course of conduct in the event that the war should extend to their country; I confirmed the authority of two principal chiefs and presented them with medals; the agent then distributed their annuity.

The Yanctonee band refused to give the usual receipt to the agent for the goods, alleging that one of their men had been killed the previous year because he had signed the papers; it was further alleged by them that the papers would be used as evidence of the sale of their country. The agent with great patience endeavored, but in vain, to remove the false impression from their minds, but not succeeding, ordered the goods to be returned to the boat; before they were put on board, however, they came down, expressed their regret at what had occurred, signed the receipts, and received their annuity.

The annuity goods intended for the Unc Papas, Sans Arcs, and Blackfeet Sioux, not having been delivered the former year to these bands, had been stored at Fort Pierre; they were now placed on board, consigned to Fort Clark, and the boat resumed her voyage.

The character of the navigation above Fort Pierre is materially changed in consequence of the absence of snags in the bends, which are very troublesome below Sergeant's Bluffs. Wood in many places is very scarce, hence we were compelled to burn drift wood, and some small cedar found near the summit of Lofty Bluffs. On the first of July, we saw a small band of antelope for the first time on the trip; passed the site of the old Arickera village, rendered famous as the spot occupied by them when attacked in 1823 by the troops under Colonel Leavenworth, who, after killing the principal chief, permitted them to escape, when they fled to the Pawnees, with whom they sojourned until 1837. The conduct of Colonel L. was much censured at the time; but the shape of the country plainly shows that it was an act of mercy on his part to the poor wretches, as he could easily have occupied a position which would have entirely cut off their retreat, and they must all have perished in their dirt lodges, or been slain in any effort to escape by land or water; they have ever since continued to live at peace with the whites. The occasional exhibition of the military strength of the government seems to be indispensably necessary to insure the respect of the Indians; but I believe that a magnanimous and merciful course is more productive of permanent benefit than wholesale and indiscriminate butchery.

At 10 o'clock, a. m., on the 2d, we were saluted by several volleys from the point of a wood near the "Bardash," fired by a body of Yanctonees, who, clad in their finest apparel, had left their village to greet us by the way; we were soon at the village of the "Little Soldier;" this chief has been placed at the head of a band who are determined not to permit any to settle among them who will not cultivate the soil. This village is not three years old; it is increasing in population; they cultivate small cornfields, and evince the greatest anxiety to be taught the art of farming; they begged me to entreat their Great Father to send them a good white man to live with them and show them how to plough; they are very anxious to have some cows, a yoke of oxen and some hogs; they believe that nearly all the

tribe would cultivate the earth if their Father would help them. With manifestations of pride, they exhibited a large plough with the yokes and chains, all kept in excellent order, waiting, they said, until their Father would send them oxen and a white man to show them how to work; they have very few hoes, and have been compelled to use the shoulder-blade of the buffalo as a substitute. In the centre of their village they have erected a tall pole, upon which they hope, at some future day, to have a bell and a flag; they importuned me to tell their Great Father of all their wants. This is an exceedingly industrious settlement, their dirt lodges are well built and commodious, and if cherished, it will doubtless be a prosperous village. "Little Soldier" is an active, intelligent and industrious man, who says that he does not think himself disgraced by hoeing corn. If this band is properly managed, I believe that the most beneficial consequences will result from it. At the time when I ascended the river nearly all the Yanctonees had gone north on their summer hunt. They claim all the country on the north side of the Missouri river, from Fort Pierre to Apple creek, and to an indefinite distance northwardly. They have long complained that the half-breeds of Red river hunt on their lands and destroy their buffalo, and, with much reason, object that the half-breeds are not satisfied with killing buffalo for their own subsistence, but carry away great quantities, which, as pemican, is sold beyond the territory. These half-breeds make two hunts annually, at which times the whole settlement is employed in killing and curing meat; they are an industrious, brave and honest people; governed by their religious instructors, they are disposed to lead a life of peace and exemplary piety, and are, as such, entitled to the protection of the government. Yet it is a subject of regret that no arrangements have been made to define the line between them and the Yanctonees, beyond which neither party should hunt. During the past season the Yanctonees attacked the half-breeds near Devil's Lake, and while some were engaged, others stole a large number of oxen, mules and horses; deprived of their horses, the half-breeds were unable to overtake the Yanctonees in their flight. Such is the statement made to me by the Yanctonees, who evidently considered it an act of just retribution. This valuable colony of half-breeds will be preserved, and much bloodshed prevented, by negotiating a treaty with the Yanctonees, by which the limits of their country will be definitely fixed. I therefore earnestly recommend the appointment of a commission to negotiate with the Yanctonees a treaty which shall define their boundaries, and at the same time secure to the half-breeds an abundance of land for cultivation and hunting grounds, upon which the Yanctonees shall not trespass. Existing circumstances suggest the propriety of an early attention to this subject.

The great difficulty attendant hitherto upon the communication between the settlements on Red river and a market has rendered the agricultural products of that country of little value, but should a treaty be made with the Yanctonees, as I have suggested, it might be stipulated that a permanent road should be established from the Red river settlements to a point at or near the Big Bend of the Missouri river. The mouth of Knife river (below White Earth) is believed to

be within twenty-five miles of the 49th parallel, where it empties into the Missouri, and the Red river settlements lie due east about 200 miles. It will probably be found more desirable to run that road from a point near Fort Berthold, and down the Mouse river valley, for the benefit of wood and water. I believe that a good road can be established from the Missouri to the Pembina new settlements, which will not exceed 200 miles. This will enable the colonists of the Red river to get their surplus products to a market by travelling by land 200 instead of 600 miles.

On the 5th of July we reached Fort Clark, and I was much disappointed in not finding the two messengers whom I had dispatched on the 26th of June from Fort Pierre to the camp of the Unc Papas, Sans Arcs, and Blackfeet Sioux, inviting them to meet me at Fort Clark. Some dissatisfaction existed in the minds of these bands, and I was desirous of talking with them and learning the cause thereof; the messengers had not returned, and I could gain no information in relation to these bands.

At Fort Clark is the village of the Arickarees, who are a band of the Pawnees, identical in manners and language; they are a sprightly intelligent people, but have the reputation of being great thieves; their morals, I fear, are at a very low ebb; they cultivate corn very extensively, and sell annually several thousand bushels of surplus stock; they have been very peaceable ever since their return from the Pawnees; herds of buffalo and elk are found near their village; hence they have abundant means of subsistence. The village which they now occupy is composed of dirt lodges, and was built by the Mandans, but finding it unoccupied, in 1837, they took possession, and have ever since retained it without molestation. During that year the Mandans were reduced to a number not exceeding thirty individuals by the small-pox. That appalling disease displayed itself on board the steamboat laden with the annual outfit of the American Fur Company; as the boat proceeded on her voyage, the disease was disseminated, and as the infection spread every Indian camp; from the Big Bend of the Missouri to the waters of the Columbia and Puget's Sound was a scene of utter despair. To save their families from the tortures of that loathsome disease fathers slew their children, and in many instances inflicted death upon themselves with the same bloody knife. Maddened by their fears, they rushed into the water for relief, and many perished by their own hands, gibbeted on the trees which surrounded their lodges.

Having finished the distribution of the annuity goods among the Rees we examined their cornfields and conversed for a short time with their principal chiefs; this done we pushed on to the Mandan village, a few miles above. The Mandans, now an inconsiderable band, like the Rees, live in dirt lodges, and cultivate large crops of corn; but, unlike them in moral habits, they enjoy an untarnished reputation and a character for integrity far above the ordinary Indian standard. Devoid of many of the vicious propensities so common with savages, their employments and amusements all seem to be of a respectable character. There is no tribal affiliation between the Mandans and any of their neighbors; neither has their language any

kindred dialect, and although difficult to acquire, is said to be exceedingly copious. Their traditions refer to a former residence far down the river; and perhaps the ruins of old villages constructed like theirs may mark their temporary abodes in their long journey from the Platte to Knife river; they retain a tradition of a deluge, by which the seed of corn was lost, but which was afterwards restored to their ancestors in a miraculous way.

After conversing with the principal men the annuities were distributed. Their respectable and almost polished deportment attracted our attention and quite won our esteem, and we departed from the village with a feeling of regret.

The Gros Ventres of the Missouri, or, as they call themselves, the Mannatures, are a branch of the Crow nation, which is evidenced by their habits and language; their village is at Fort Berthold; they are a fine looking, intelligent, and cheerful people, and successful corn planters. The Gros Ventres, Mandans, and Arickarees, though each a distinct tribe, and differing from the Sioux in almost every feature of character, yet are alike in the manner of exposing the dead upon scaffolds, and in their construction of dirt lodges. These lodges they only occupy from the time they put in their crops until they are harvested; they all use circular bull boats, built in the same manner. After a long conference with the chiefs, during which, like all the other small tribes, they complained of the encroachments of the Sioux, whom seem to be objects of general detestation amongst them, Agent Vaughan distributed their annuities, and we proceeded on our voyage.

Our ascent of the river was now under lofty and dreary bluffs, without a speck of vegetation to enliven the scene, from their base to the summits of the Sand Buttes, by which they are surmounted; and we experienced the sensation of being enclosed by the walls of some mighty prison; but when we came to what is called the "Mauviuse Terre," we found this region to exceed in barren desolation any we had yet seen; immense masses of lignite blacken the face of the hills, whose summits are reddened by internal heat—forests of petrified trees—the knowledge of whose species is only known by their ghastly remains; hills riven by some mighty convulsion, and crumbling to their base, present a frightful picture of loneliness and desolation.

On the eighth we passed the mouth of White Earth river; herds of deer, elk, antelope, and buffalo, now became abundant, followed by bands of large white wolves. On the eleventh we passed the mouth of the Yellow Stone river, and at night landed on the right bank of the Missouri, opposite Fort Union, where the "St. Mary" discharged her cargo.

There was an implied understanding with the owners of the boat that the "St. Mary" should prosecute the voyage as far beyond the Yellow Stone river as practicable; yet the letter of the contract specified Fort Union as the point of delivery; availing himself of its letter, the agent of the boat discharged the cargo, to be transported to Fort Benton in Mackinac boats, assigning as a reason the low stage of the water. As this was in accordance with the letter of the contract I had nothing to say, and made patience a virtue of necessity. My subsequent examination of the river satisfied me that the boat could

easily have proceeded to the mouth of the Muscle Shell river, if not further. Arrangements were immediately commenced to ship the goods on board of two Mackinac boats. At length, on the 17th of July, all the necessary preparations having been made, the men were placed on the cordells, and the Mackinacs left Fort Union for Fort Benton, a distance of seven hundred miles.

We found five hundred lodges of Assinaboins on the plain, near Fort Union; they had begun to assemble on the 11th; they are a gay and joyous people, passionately fond of music and dancing, in both of which accomplishments they far excel any other Indians ever seen by me. They are a brave, intelligent, good looking people, armed chiefly with bows and arrows; they have not many horses, but their camp was supposed to contain at least five thousand dogs. These dogs are of the large Esquimaux breed, with erect and pointed ears, and are covered with long silky hair; as the Assinaboins have, as before stated, few horses, their dogs are made to perform the most essential service as beasts of burden, hauling lodge poles, skins, kettles, meat, and babies. The latter are usually made up into neat packages, with an envelope of wolf-skin, and strapped on to a net work of raw hide, which answers the double purpose of uniting the shafts of the train, and furnishing a convenient arrangement for the deposit of valuables.

In addition to other uses, the flesh of the Esquimaux dog is esteemed the greatest luxury and no feast is complete without it. Eating dogs is universal among the Sioux, and the Assinaboins are Sioux; though in consequence of long separation from the body of that nation, their language has been materially modified. They dress in elk and buffalo skins—the former, when worn by young women, are usually garnished with the tusks of that animal; these dresses are kept clean and white by the use of a white earth. I regret to state that the Assinaboins are not exempt from a custom which universally exists throughout the valley of the Missouri above the L'eau que Cour, which consists in destroying with their teeth the victims of their diligent search among their long jetty tresses. In addition to those Assinaboins who hunt, and for the most part occupy a country south of the 49th parallel, there is a numerous band who live exclusively within the British territory with the Circees on the west, and the Crees and Chippewas on the east. All of the Assinaboins make the summer hunt on foot, and are fleet runners; they are armed with bows, arrows and lances almost exclusively. In addition to the Assinaboins assembled at the Yellow Stone, there were also 100 lodges of Crees, (a band detached from the principal tribe,) to whom I made some presents. After counselling with the assembly, and informing them of the character of my mission of peace, the agent distributed the annuities. The weather continued to be very hot from the 12th to the 31st of July, the thermometer averaged little less than 100 degrees; the atmosphere, however, was very elastic, and the sun, though shining brightly, was not oppressive. On the 26th a dense cloud of grasshoppers commenced passing over from northwest to southeast; as far as the eye could reach, aided by a powerful glass, there seemed to be an interminable flight of these insects; as the bright light touched their extended wings, they pre-

sented the appearance of a snow storm. Their size and general appearance are similar to the small grasshopper usually found in meadows. Great quantities, exhausted by their unaccustomed flight, descended to the earth, and almost literally covered the prairies, and soon commenced the work of destroying the vegetation. The wolves, which abound in this whole region, feed upon these insects most voraciously; their insatiable appetites prompt them to eat every particle of animal food which they find; they not only devour the wounded buffalo and antelope, but they frequently seize upon the strong and vigorous, and after disabling them by repeated attacks, they find them an easy prey to their combined forces. As they are the inseparable companions of the herds of buffalo, the old, the young and the wounded furnish their principal repasts. They may also be frequently seen waiting with the most exemplary patience in the prairie dog villages for the appearance of the cheerful little inmates, who fall easy victims to their insatiable appetites. At all the principal posts on the Missouri the traders succeed in raising excellent cattle and fine hogs; the winters seem to be too severe for poultry, but some chickens are raised, and fed chiefly on meat, as there is little or no corn to spare, and the grasses do not furnish suitable seed; the insects, though often abundant for a brief season, are yet too scanty to supply them with sufficient food.

In April, 1855, some voyagers, sent from Fort Union to the Fur Company's fort, (Sarpy,) on the Yellow Stone river above the mouth of the Rose Bud, returned and reported that they had encountered a large war party of Sioux, Unc Papas, &c., who stripped them all, took their guns and ammunition and, after inflicting some blows upon them, ordered them to return, threatening their lives if they hesitated. Before, however, they were permitted to leave the spot a general fight ensued among the Indians themselves, which resulted in several deaths. This fight arose from a desire on the part of some of the Indians to kill the men, and the wish of another part to save them; they were at length allowed to escape, returned to the fort, and made their report. After hearing these statements, the superintendent of the Upper Missouri outfits determined to abandon the annual expedition to the Crows. Deprived by this circumstance of the means of transporting the annuities, the goods were stored at Fort Union to await a more prosperous state of affairs. After closing his business, and subsequent to my departure for Fort Benton, Agent Vaughan remained a short time at Fort Union for the purpose of having a small boat built for his conveyance. A war party, consisting of twenty-five Unc Papas, came near Fort William, on the Yellow Stone river, and finding Mr. Campbell, who was in charge of the fort, and one of the employes engaged in butchering some buffalo, within half a mile of the fort, the Indians stripped them, and took their horses and guns. Subsequently, Agent Vaughan saw a party of fifteen Sioux of the same bands near Fort Union; he sent his interpreter out to them, and invited them within the fort. They came, received some small presents, and were advised to return to their chiefs, and inform them that he wished to meet them at Fort Clark, which they promised to do, and departed. Five days after eight horses were stolen from Fort Union,

as is supposed, by some of the same party. Prior to the occurrences just mentioned, it had been determined to send a boat to Fort Sarpy, (on the Yellow Stone,) but Agent V. declined to intrust the annuity goods for the Crows on board. The expedition was placed in the charge of Mr. Melldrum, a partner of the American Fur Company, who has resided thirty years in the country, chiefly among the Crows. He had proceeded but a little way up the Yellow Stone, when his hunters reported the approach of large parties of Sioux, who made hostile demonstrations; and as they had told the men whom they encountered in April that they would not permit a boat to pass to the Crows, he considered it unwise to proceed, and returned to the fort. The party who committed the depredations near Forts William and Union, and the outrage upon Mr. Campbell and his employé, was a detachment of the bands seen by Mr. Melldrum's hunters. Upon my return to Fort Union on the 31st October, I saw Mr. Melldrum, who informed me that he believed the party whom he had encountered on the Yellow Stone consisted of the Sioux of that region. Mr. James Kipp, who was in charge of Fort Union, informed me of the hostile feelings of the Sioux in that vicinity; and that being encamped on the south side of the river, near the Yellow Stone, he was apprehensive that they would attack, and perhaps destroy, both Forts Union, and William. It may be well to remark, that I descended the river immediately after in a Mackinac boat, but encountered no trouble from them.

On the 27th of July, after having made my arrangements for a journey to Fort Benton, I councilled with the Assinaboins and Crees for the last time, and recommended them to move their camp. In a few hours five hundred lodges had been struck, and the recent inmates were in motion towards the buffalo, followed by their dogs, loaded with their children and household valuables. The two forts occupied by the trading companies, opposite the Yellow Stone river, are well located on a plateau on the left bank of said river. Opposite these forts are those towering barren bluffs, heretofore alluded to, at the bases and on the summits of which is to be found some good grass, and the plains beyond abound with game. Whatever may be said of it by others, I confess that I consider it a very hard country.

On the 27th I addressed a letter to Gov. I. I. Stevens, advising him of my approach, and on the 28th I commenced my overland journey to Fort Benton. The first day's travel was over rolling prairies. Here, as everywhere in this wild region, may be seen the effect of the wave of drift that at some distant period inundated these plains. Among its deluvial deposits are piles of primitive rocks of every description, tossed about in endless confusion, which may become useful hereafter as materials for building.

Among the birds of this region, between the 48th and 49th parallels, I was surprised to see the buzzard, which I think rarely alights upon these plains. Ducks and geese rear their young below the 48th parallel, yet many are seen as high as the falls; geese, and the larger ducks, take their flight to the more genial climate of the Pacific; teal ducks pass down the Missouri. The larks, varieties of the orials, and

sparrows, with the bob-o-link, constitutes the musical family; a few pigeons and a great many doves are seen; eagles, and a variety of hawks also pass their summer in that delightful summer climate; but with the exception of the sage cock, pintailed grouse, and the prairie sparrow or linnet, the owls, magpies and ravens, are almost the sole permanent feathered occupants of this region in winter. Excepting grasshoppers, insects are not numerous; the rattle-snake, and many other varieties of the reptile kind, unknown to me, are occasionally seen. Fish is not abundant in the Missouri or its tributaries, with the exception of the Yellow Stone, in which are found catfish and a small white herring; the former being good for food, but the latter worthless; pickerel are sometimes found near the falls, and the mountain streams contain the small speckled trout. In addition to the wild sage, and innumerate varieties of the cactus, the country abounds in botanical specimens, which, for beauty and variety, will hereafter, no doubt, attract the attention of the naturalist.

On the 3d of August I arrived at Milk river, whose mouth is about 130 miles, by land, above that of the Yellow Stone; during the succeeding twelve days, we travelled along the margin of this river, which, like all the streams in this region, abounds with beaver, which are now seldom trapped or hunted. The valley of Milk river is low, flat, and subject to be overflowed; the wood, which is exclusively cotton-wood, is not very abundant; grass is scarce, and the water execrable; the earth appears as if saturated with salts. The Milk river, and all its tributaries, are turbed. On the 15th we arrived at the last crossing of this river, and, on the same day, I met my associate commissioner, I. I. Stevens. Having organized the commission, we proceeded towards Fort Benton, distant about seventy miles. On the 17th we arrived at Fort Benton, where the commissioners immediately proceeded to business, for the details of which I beg to refer to our joint report heretofore forwarded; and here, as an act of justice, I will state that, to the exertions and influence of Mr. Alexander Culbertson, the superintendent of the American Fur Company's trading post at this point, the commission is mainly indebted for the facility with which the negotiation with the Blackfeet was conducted and terminated. On the 6th of October, all the preliminary business having been disposed of, the commission determined to assemble the various tribes at the mouth of the Judith river, and then adjourned to meet there on the of the same month. My co-commissioner having politely consented to supervise in person some minor details, I proceeded to the falls of the Missouri. After travelling about 30 miles, I descended some 300 feet to the river opposite the "Fountain," which consists of the waters of a subterranean river bursting through chasms on the ledges of sandstone. This pent up torrent, in its efforts to escape, forms beautiful jets, and below innumerable silvery rills gliding over the face of a semi-circular table of rock into the Missouri. Two miles above the "Fountain" is the upper fall, called the "Cascade;" here the ledge of sandstone has been cleft in a straight line across the river, and separates the tranquil stream above from the foaming cataract below; the river at this point is hemmed in by dark

high cliffs, which impart an air of gloom to the scene. From the foot of the Cascade, the Missouri rushes in a torrent over its stony bed for seven miles, then dashes over a precipice of 89 feet into a dark chasm 360 feet below the summit of the Cascade. Upon my return to Fort Benton, I found my colleague preparing to proceed to the "Judith;" the evening being boisterous, I deferred my departure until morning, as I had determined to descend the river in a skiff for the purpose of ascertaining the depth of the water. Mr. Vaughan, jr., and Mr. Kennedy accompanied me on my trip down to the "Judith;" I found the navigation above to be much better than below that river; thousands of ibex or big-horn may be seen on its banks, and the scenery is of a most interesting character. Previous to my departure from Fort Benton, I gave permission, in writing, to A. Culbertson and Mr. Roché, the superintendents of the two rival trading companies at this point, to go to the Indian camps, on Milk river, and purchase a supply of meat for the additional laborers who were expected with the boats, limiting this trading permission to the purchase of meat only. After my arrival at the council ground, I found that the western Indians had a considerable quantity of beaver which they were desirous of selling, as they would be loaded with merchandise after the close of the council, and as they were anxious to cross the mountains without delay, in consequence of the advanced season of the year. Influenced by these considerations, I assumed, as superintendent of Indian affairs, the responsibility of authorizing the above named Messrs. Culbertson and Roché to trade for the beaver.

Two of the Blackfeet bands, the Bloods and Pi-e-grounds, are a sprightly people, smaller than the Sioux in person, and with lighter complexions; they seemed both tractable and intelligent; the Blackfeet proper, are ferocious in appearance, with countenances indicative of less intellect, and of darker complexions. The three bands speak the same language, which is musical, and said to be copious. The fourth band, consisting of the Gros Ventres of the prairie, are properly Arrapohoes, speaking a language little known to the neighboring tribes, or to the traders; they appeared to me to be cunning, but of low intellect, and enjoy no enviable reputation for morality; they are said, however, to have and to express a desire to be instructed in the art of raising corn, of which, as an article of food, they are fond.

After concluding all the business connected with the council held at the mouth of the Judith, with the Blackfeet and western Indians, I proceeded, on the 22d October, in a Mackinac boat, to the Yellow Stone river. Immediately below the Judith are several rapids, the most difficult of which are the "Dauphine" and "Byrd's" rapids. I estimated the current through these rapids at 6 miles per hour; the water is perfectly clear, and the bottom covered with pebbles. There are some few rocks which, if removed from the channel, would improve the navigation; their removal could be easily effected by proper appliances. The water of the Missouri retains its brilliant and transparent character until it reaches a point near the Muscle Shell, where it suddenly acquires that turbid appearance which marks it to its mouth. This change of color in the water must not be ascribed to

the "Muscle Shell," as there was no water in its channel when I passed its mouth, it having been dried up by the recent drought. When I reached the mouth of the "Big Muddy," about 30 miles above the Yellow Stone, I found a very large encampment of Assinaboins, and the entire band of the lower Crows, who inhabit the lands on the Yellow Stone below the "Big Horn," but who had come to winter on the north bank of the Missouri with their friends, the Assinaboins. The principal chiefs of both of these tribes, accompanied by many of their people, followed me to Fort Union, and after referring to the hostile demonstrations of the Sioux, who are said to be in the neighborhood, near the junction of the Yellow Stone and the Missouri, they earnestly besought me to allow the traders to visit them in their camps, alleging that if they were compelled to come in small parties to the fort to trade, it would invite attacks from the disaffected Sioux. After due consideration, and in the exercise of what I deemed a sound discretion, I gave permission to the traders to send out to their camps until otherwise ordered. I selected and arranged, at the request of Agent Vaughan, the portion of the annuity goods due this band of Crows, and placed them in the hands of a special agent for distribution, with instructions to have the receipts taken in favor of Agent Vaughan.

On the 1st of November, finding the Missouri still open and the weather mild, I resumed my voyage by the Mackinac boat, after having placed in the charge of four experienced voyagers six mules turned over to me by Governor I. I. Stevens as property of the Indian department, and two mules purchased from Alex. Culbertson, with instructions to drive them to Fort Pierre, unless I should require them at some intermediate point. The animals were driven in safety to a point below Fort Clark, when, on the night of the 6th of November, seven of the eight mules, I regret to report, were stolen by some persons unknown, in the vicinity of a Yanctonee camp; I subsequently made all the arrangements in my power to secure their recovery and delivery at Fort Pierre.

And here I earnestly desire to urge upon the consideration of the department the necessity of placing restrictions upon the trade in horses between the Indians and the licensed traders, as I believe many depredations are attributed to the unrestricted character of that trade.

On my arrival at Fort Clark, Agent Vaughan reported to me verbally (his formal report miscarried) that, on the 27th September, 1855, a large encampment of 400 lodges of Unc Papas, Sans Arcs, and Blackfeet Sioux was established in the rear of the fort; that they refused to receive their annuities, and heaped upon him great personal indignities; and that after repeated acts of violence they demanded a supply of powder and lead; believing that an acquiescence with their demand was the only means by which the lives of those who were in the fort, and the property could be saved, he assumed the responsibility of complying with their wishes, though in violation of the positive orders of the department. Anticipating such a state of things, in his entirely unprotected position, he had solicited the military officer in command at Fort Pierre to send a detachment of soldiers

to that point, but the request, I regret to say, was not complied with. I made a formal report of these circumstances to General Harney whilst in the neighborhood of Fort Pierre.

Having hired some animals near Fort Pierre, I proceeded to St. Louis by land, where I resumed my duties in this office, on the 5th of January, after an absence of seven months.

With great respect, I am, sir, your most obedient servant.

A. CUMMING,
Superintendent Indian Affairs.

Hon. GEO. W. MANYPENNY,
Commissioner Indian Affairs.