

the presents to the sun; and immediately arms, caldrons, skins, in short, the most valuable articles are brought. These preparations must be finished before sun-rise. As soon as his rays begin to gild the horizon, the old men commence the song to the sound of the drum. The youth of both sexes, holding calumets, begin the dance in the cabin, while twelve naked boys dance in the open air, pointing to the sun. One of them holds a calumet adorned with the most scarce and brilliant feathers. The dancers in the cabin sometimes desist to take refreshment; but those on the outside keep pointing to the sun, until he disappears, without any provisions. This festival is sometimes repeated for ten successive days, if the weather continues fine.

When the dances are ended, the presents are divided among those warriors that are in want of them.

I could never learn any precise reason for the first institution of this festival. They imagine that on this luminary depend the strength and courage of their warriors, the health of their children, their prosperity and population; that he alone is able to preserve them from disease, and cure them of their infirmities; and that he provides them with buffaloes, so necessary both for food and clothing.

Gratitude seems first to have given rise to this religious ceremony, the design of which cannot be too much applauded.

Two nations, near to each other, often amuse themselves with the ox-dance, for which there is no determined season or day. If a village wishes to celebrate the ox-dance, fifteen or twenty warriors assemble in a cabin, dress themselves in their war-habits and arms. They place on their heads the skin of a wild ox, to which the horns are affixed, and the whole is fastened on by a piece of skin decorated with porcupine's quills.

In this dress the warriors proceed to the place designed for the dance, accompanied by singers and drums. At one time they bellow and raise the dust with their feet, at another they pursue each other, and at another they push with their horns. These sports are continued with various gestures and attitudes for half a day, and sometimes longer, without the least signs of fatigue; but, on the contrary, they never desist without giving fresh proofs of their activity, swiftness, and suppleness. During the dance, the old men exhort their nation to make presents to the warriors, which are generally very considerable.

All the inhabitants of Upper Missouri, both old and young, go naked during the summer. A deer-skin, which they wear over their shoulders, similar to a Spanish cloak, serves them both for covering and ornament. Those belonging to the