

tercourse with tribes who previously tilled the soil. There are many circumstances which seem to corroborate this. It may be remarked, too, that the stories from which the above items are taken are believed by these Indians to be true, while many other tales, just as plausible as these, they declare to be purely fictional.

There are two affluents of the Missouri, named Knife River. One of these enters from the north, above Fort Berthold; the other from the west, below Fort Berthold. It was upon the banks of the latter stream that the former homes of this people stood. At least as early as A. D. 1796, there were three villages on Knife River. The first and largest, named Hidatsa, was on the north bank, about three miles from the Missouri, and was the home of a people whom Captains Lewis and Clarke, for some reason, regarded as the Minnetarees proper. The second village, named Amatiha, half a mile above the mouth of Knife River, and on the south bank of the stream, was the home of a people very closely allied to the inhabitants of Hidatsa, who spoke a language nearly but not exactly the same as that of the former, and had a separate chief, who seemed to acknowledge to some extent the authority of the chief of the upper village. The third village, named Amahami or Mahaha, was at the mouth of Knife River, on the south side, and was occupied, as before mentioned, by the Amahamis (see §11), a people allied to those of Hidatsa, but more remotely than the dwellers in Amatiha. The present Hidatsa or Minnetaree tribe of Fort Berthold consists of the survivors of these three villages and their descendants, with, perhaps, representatives of some small wandering bands of allied Indians which no longer exist as organized tribes. Lewis and Clarke seem to speak very positively of wandering Minnetarees, hunting in the neighborhood of Knife River,* and not considered as part of the Crow nation. In 1796, the Mandans were near neighbors of the Minnetarees, living some four miles south of the latter, in three villages, which in 1804 were found reduced to two.

Some forty years before the coming of Lewis and Clarke,

* p. 110.