

was not the first white man to come to their towns, yet that few preceded him.

It is likely that all the Europeans who came to these tribes in the early days were from the Hudson Bay Territory, and that they were mostly traders; but, in 1804, it seems that there were some whites sojourning in their country as hunters and trappers. The British fur-companies held the trade of these Indians until 1807,* when Manuel Lisa, who afterward founded the Missouri Fur Company, ascended the river in keel-boats to the Mandan villages and beyond. Until 1832, goods were brought up the Missouri chiefly in keel-boats or Mackinaw-boats, which were corded or towed by men, with great labor, against the rapid current of the river. Two summers, at least, were always occupied in dragging a boat from Saint Louis to the head of navigation; the crew sustaining themselves chiefly by hunting. In 1832, the first steamer reached the Mandan villages, and after that, for about thirty years, but one or two steamers a year went thus far up the river.

Although these Indians have so long known the whites, it is only within the last twelve or thirteen years that our intercourse with them has been sufficiently extensive to materially modify their customs and ideas. Previously, excepting two or three small military expeditions and an occasional traveler, the only whites they saw were the few connected with the fur-trade; and these persons, as a rule, sought to produce no change in the Indian, but, on the other hand, learned the Indian languages, adopted Indian customs, and endeavored to assimilate themselves to the Indians as much as possible, often vying with one another in their efforts to become amateur savages. Before the period to which I refer, we had traded to them woven fabrics and many trinkets of little value, had taught them the use of fire-arms and iron tools, had given them an opportunity for acquiring a taste for coffee and ardent spirits, but, in other respects, had wrought little change in their minds or manners. Eight years ago, they knew nothing of the use of money, and nothing of the English language except a few oaths and vulgar expressions, which the

* "He set off in the spring following the return of Lewis and Clarke" (Bracken ridge, p. 90).