

The assemblage of Indians was not as large as might naturally have been expected,—a few Sioux as lookers-on, the bulk Otchipwes, and not a great many Crees, who were absent at the buffalo hunt securing their winter's provisions. Still it was in some senses a full camp, fraught with such variety of life as may be found in so large an assembly of so peculiar a people. The Indians were encamped—the Crees and Otchipwes apart—in the centre of the Plain; the half-breeds and others at the foot of the bluffs, from whose summit stretched the range for grass demanded by their animals.

All were awaiting Treaty—the Indians, so far as outward expression went, less interested than any. This indifference is not assumed; children of abundant leisure, the restless fever and hurry of an European may excite their wonder—never their emulation.

The half-breeds, however, were naturally *tristes* and *desolts* at the delay. Who can tell, amid the Talleyrands and Mazarins of the hour, what *coups* were made in imagination, that were destined to oblivion by the prosaic messengers of the Queen, who “came to treat with Indians and not half-breeds!”

The prosaic genii adverted to, however, sent in, about this time, a votive offering each day of a bullock and sundry amounts of flour, tea, &c., to beguile the tedium of the camp, which were received and disposed of without any appearance of feasting or jubilation. Indians can scarcely be expected, however pressed at times in the long winters, to be elated at present plenty, when their life amid the buffalo is a continual feast. They are as patient under want as outwardly indifferent to abundance. Now there was a continual interchange of quiet hospitality. The recipient of many invitations, I can safely say that nothing can exceed their delightful quietude and friendly *empressement*. They “sit at meat” like the thorough gentlemen they are, with a just union of dignity, simplicity, and repose.

I may mention here something anent that other part of the day—the night—from an odd pleasure I enjoyed, which would, I think, drive many half wild. The Crees have an immensely fine breed of dogs, very large, strongly made, and—if a certain savage look is not displeasing—fine looking. They are quite essential as hauling dogs, mainly in winter, when three of them will make

a trip with the meat of a buffalo bull. So closely bred in with the wolf are they, that it may be fairly said that they are domesticated wolves. These creatures abound in the Cree camp, spending most of their spare time in battles with each other, which, however, are more ferocious in seeming than reality, they going to war, like the Chinese, with a great noise, and ending it there. They race in packs at any poor devil who comes in their way, and then the *millee* becomes general, until the Indians make a diversion by an impartial distribution of blows all round. They are full of a queer, wild character, all their own, and were to me an unending source of study and amusement.

Chiefly in the night, when the whole camp is buried in repose, is the satisfaction adverted to derived, for then commences the most wild, weird, unearthly concert that ever assailed man's ears. First you have a short yelp, then two or three yelps in succession, a brief howl, which is answered in every quarter, and then, as if seized with a contagious inclination which it is impossible to resist, every dog in the camp, in every variety of tone, and with a dolorous wailing and melancholy prolongation, broken, agonized, and complaining, gives tongue unto the night, which fairly rocks and trembles with the multitudinous and sorrowful acclaim. In this frantic discord, strange to say, I found an accord, and used to lie and listen, chained and attent to the strange blending of wild cries. The weird sounds were as entirely in keeping with the surroundings—both had a savage grace—were as natural the one to the other, as is the plaint of the nightingale amid the soft scenes of cultured life.

In the early night the Indian drum fills the air with its monotonous beat, the vocal accompaniment being chiefly remarkable from the persistent efforts of the boys to swell their voices above those of the men. One night, however, I was awakened by an extensive drum affair in the adjoining lodge (it might as well have been in my own), and can vouch for its efficacy in awakening emotions of rage and attack; speaking of which reminds me of what I heard from an old friend to-day, just in from the buffalo.

A short time ago, during an encounter, a party of Blackfeet found shelter from a force of Sioux in a thick covert. Being armed