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THE MANDAN INDIANS.

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BEING a small tribe and unable to contend on the wide prairies with the Sioux and other roaming tribes, who are ten times more numerous, the Mandans have very judiciously located themselves in permanent villages, which are strongly fortified, and insure their preservation. By this means they have advanced further in the arts of

manufacture; have supplied their lodges more abundantly with the comforts and even luxuries of life than any Indian nation that I know of. The consequence of this is, that this tribe has taken many steps ahead of other tribes in manners and refinements, and are therefore familiarly and correctly denominated by the traders and others who have been amongst them, "the polite and friendly Mandans." So speaks George Catlin, of the Mandan tribe, in his interesting history of the North American Indians, written fifty years ago. At that time, he tells us, they were a small tribe of 2,000 souls, living in two permanent villages on the river Missouri, 1800 miles above its junction with the Mississippi, and they occupied dome-shaped, earth-covered lodges; their villages being surrounded by a fence of strong pickets eighteen feet high, and a ditch. From some of their old men Catlin gained the information that formerly they lived fifteen or twenty miles further down the river, in ten contiguous villages, the marks or ruins of which were yet to be plainly seen, and that at that time they numbered about 15,000. Lewis and Clarke, who visited them in 1804, say that forty years before that time, viz., in 1764, the Mandans were occupying nine villages, eighty miles below their present site—seven on the west and two on the east side of the Missouri. Catlin attempts to trace their original haunts back to the Ohio and Muskingum rivers. Mr. Catlin also suggests the

novel and curious idea that these Mandans are a mixed race, having Welsh blood in their veins; he believes them to be the remains of a *Welsh Colony*, the followers of Prince Madoc, who, history tells us, sailed, in the early part of the fourteenth century, in ten ships, from North Wales, to colonize a country in the Western Ocean, and never returned. This Welsh expedition, it is believed, landed somewhere near the mouth of the Mississippi, and Catlin suggests that they ascended that river, formed a colony, somewhere near the junction with the Ohio, intermingled and intermarried with the Mandan Indians then occupying those regions, and taught them the art of fortifying their villages, and several other civilized customs. In support of his theory he adduces the following: (1) That the Mandan Indians differ very materially from other Indian tribes in their complexion and the color of their hair and eyes; a large proportion of them, he says, had light-colored, grey, and even white hair, while still young, and numbers of them had grey and blue eyes; (2) They dwelt in settled villages instead of roaming about the country like other Indians; (3) Their canoes were almost an exact imitation of the Welsh coracle, and were propelled in the same way, by dipping the paddle forward and drawing it in towards the paddler; (4) The name Mandan corresponds with the Welsh word *Mandon*, a species of madder used as a red dye; or it might be a corruption of the Welsh word *Madawgwys*, meaning a follower of Madoc; at any rate, Mandan is not an Indian word; (5) The fortifications, the ruins of which still exist on the banks of the Ohio River, could never have been the work of a wholly savage people; (6) Several words in Welsh correspond with those used in the Mandan language, e.g., head: Mandan, *pan*, Welsh, *pen*; the Great Spirit—Mandan, *Maho peneta*, Welsh, *Mawr penaethir*. It is also asserted that when, in the year 1781, Captain Lord was in command of the troops at Detroit, some Mandan Indians who visited the post were able to converse intelligently with his Welsh soldiers.

These people, whose history seems so curious, call themselves *See-pohs-kah-nu-mah-kah-kee*, meaning "the people of the pheasants." This seems a strange name for them, as there are no pheasants to be found in their