

I was smoking at the time. The great chief of the Plain Crees is styled "the Fox;" he is well figured in a photograph. "The Fox" is held in high esteem by all the Plain Indians with whom he comes in contact, either in peace or war. He is dreaded by the Sioux, the Blackfeet, the Bloodies, the Fall Indians, the Assiniboines, and all the tribes who occasionally hunt on the Grand Coteau de Missouri and the south branch of the Saskatchewan.

The cruel, barbarous treatment of prisoners so often described in narratives of Indian warfare, is common even now in the prairies south of the Qu'appelle or Calling River and the Assiniboine. Not a year passes without two or more of the Red River half-breeds being scalped by Sioux: sometimes, as was the case last year, quite close to the settlement of St. Joseph, on the boundary line, about 30 miles west of Red River. When a prisoner is taken, the Sioux sometimes adopt a terrible mode of death, during the summer season. They have been known to strip a half-breed, tie him to a stake on the borders of a marsh in the prairie, and leave him exposed to the attacks of millions of mosquitoes, without being able to move any part of his body; and when the agony of fever and the torment of thirst come upon him, they leave him to die a dreadful lingering death, with water at his feet, and buzzards hovering and circling around him in loathsome expectation. By way of illustrating the character of the medicine or conjuring ceremonies, which may be witnessed during all seasons of the year, when several families are encamped together, I shall describe a scene of which I was an eye witness last summer near the Hudson Bay Company's post in the Touchwood Hills, between the south branch of the Saskatchewan and the Assiniboine. The conversation was carried on in Cree, but, I believe, faithfully interpreted to me by the officer then in charge of the post, who was present. The interpretation was pronounced exact by one of the Cree half-breeds attached to my party.

At the time of my arrival at this Post, a conjuror of some celebrity was endeavoring to cure an invalided woman by the exercise of his cunning. The sick woman was lying in a buffalo skin tent; the conjuror, painted and decorated, employed himself in beating a medicine drum within a few feet of her, and in singing at intervals the following words, first uttered slowly, with a pause between each word, then as in ordinary conversation; lastly, with energy and rapidity: