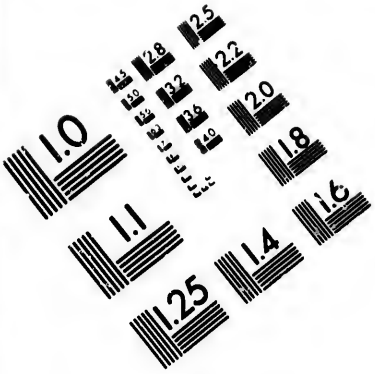

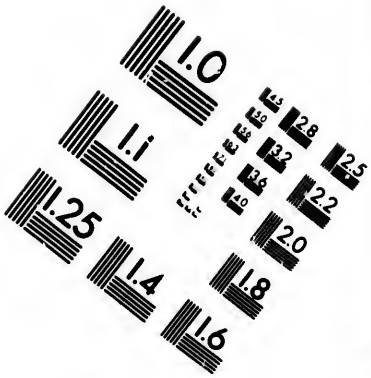

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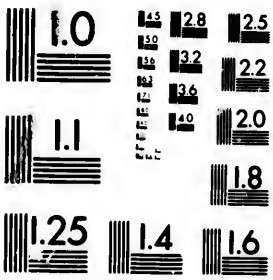

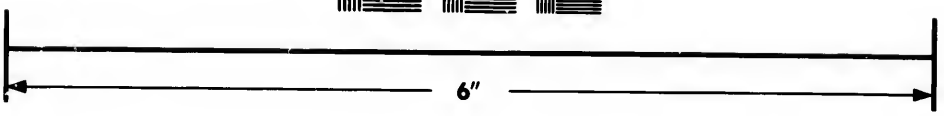

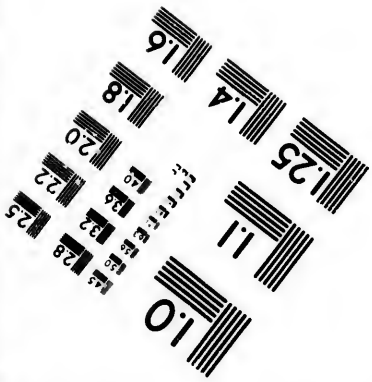

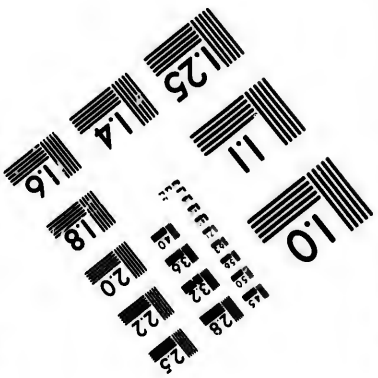

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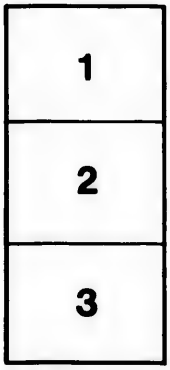
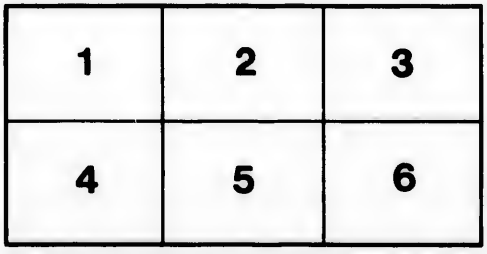




O-KEE-PA.

O-KEE-PA:

A RELIGIOUS CEREMONY;

AND OTHER

CUSTOMS OF THE MANDANS.

BY

GEORGE CATLIN.

With Thirteen Coloured Illustrations.

LONDON:
TRÜBNER AND CO., 60, PATERNOSTER ROW.
1867.

J. E. TAYLOR AND CO., PRINTERS,
LITTLE QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

TO THE READER.

Mr. Schoolcraft, in his work on the North American Indians, published for the Congress of the United States, has endeavoured to impeach the veracity of Mr. Catlin's description of the Mandan religious ceremonies, first made public some years since, and here republished.

We have always had the most implicit confidence in the truth of Mr. Catlin, who was an eye-witness to the scenes described; and it is therefore with no little satisfaction we submit for the reader's perusal the following extract from a recent letter written (with the manuscript of this work before him) by His Highness the Prince Maximilian of Neuwied, the celebrated traveller among the North American Indians, the original of which is now in our possession.

The unimpeachable statements contained in the letter, and the certificates of three educated and intelligent men, who, as will be seen in the narrative, witnessed with Mr. Catlin the whole of those ceremonies as he has described them, added to Mr. Catlin's account, are conclusive evidence as to the existence and character of this ceremony before the extinction of the Mandan tribe; and, after a perusal of the work, the reader, we think, will admit that no ethnological fact is now better established than that of the *O-kee-pa* of the Mandans.

The Publishers.

"Neuwied, Prussia, December 20, 1866.

"To Mr. George Catlin.

"Dear Sir,

"Your letter came safely to hand, and revived the quite forgotten recollections of my stay amongst the Indian tribes of the Missouri, now thirty-three years past.

"The Mandan tribe, which we both have known so well, and with whom I passed a whole winter, was one of the first to be destroyed by a terrible disease, when all the distinguished chiefs, Mah-to-toh-pa, Char-a-ta, Numa-ka-kie, etc. etc., died; and it is doubtful if a single man of them remained to record the history, customs, and religious ideas of his people.

"Not having been, like yourself, an eye-witness of those remarkable starvations and tortures of the *O-kee-pa*, but having arrived later, and spent the whole of a winter with the Mandans, I received from all the distinguished chiefs, and from Mr. Kipp (at that time director of Fort Clarke, at the Mandan village, and an excellent interpreter of the Mandan language), the most detailed and complete record and description of the *O-kee-pa* festival, where the young men suffered a great deal; and I can attest your relation of it to be a correct one, after all that I heard and observed myself.

"In my description of my voyage in North America (English edition) I gave a very detailed description of the *O-kee-pa*, as it was reported to me by all the chiefs and Mr. Kipp, and it is about the same that you told,—and nobody would doubt our veracity, I hope.

"I know most of the American works published on the American Indians, and I possess many of them; but it would be a labour too heavy for my age of eighty-five years, to recapitulate them all.

"Schoolcraft is a writer who knows well the Indians of his own part of the country, but I do not know his last large work on that matter. If he should doubt what we have both told in our works, of the great Medicine festivities of the *O-kee-pa*, he would be wrong, certainly.

"If my statement, as that of a witness, could be of use to you, I should be very pleased.

"Your obedient

"(Signed) Max, *Prince of Neuwied.*"

PREFACE.

All men have, or ought to have, some peculiar ambition towards the attainment of which the principal energies of their lives are directed: mine, which developed itself some thirty years since, has been that of perpetuating the looks and customs of a numerous race of human beings fast passing to extinction. In this pursuit I have passed fourteen years of my life amongst the various tribes of Indians in North, South, and Central America, and of the numerous customs which I have recorded, there is nothing else so peculiar and surprising as the *O-kee-pa* of the Mandans, the subject of this book,—an annual ceremony, which I described in a former publication, but which description, forming but an item in a large work, was necessarily too brief to give all the connecting links of a custom which derives its interest from being understood in all its phases.

This publication, therefore, which is made for all classes of readers, as well as for gentlemen of science who study, not the *proprieties* of man, but *Man*, and which has not before appeared in all its parts, is made from a sense of *duty*, to perpetuate entire a human custom of extraordinary interest, peculiar to a single tribe in America, and which tribe, as will be seen, is now extinct; leaving in my hands alone chiefly, what has been preserved of their personal looks and peculiar modes.

Geo. Catlin.

O-KEE-PA:

A RELIGIOUS CEREMONY OF THE MANDANS.

In a narrative of fourteen years' travels and residence amongst the native tribes of North and South America, entitled '*Life amongst the Indians*,' and published in London and in Paris, several years since, I gave an account of the tribe of Mandans,—their personal appearance, character, and habits; and briefly alluded to the singular and unique custom which is now to be described, and was then omitted, as was alleged, for want of sufficient space for its insertion,—the "O-kee-pa," an annual religious ceremony, to the strict observance of which those ignorant and superstitious people attributed not only their enjoyment in life, but their very existence; for traditions, their only history, instructed them in the belief that the singular forms of this ceremony produced the buffalos for their supply of food, and that the omission of this annual ceremony, with its sacrifices made to the waters, would bring upon them a repetition of the calamity which their traditions say once befell them, destroying the whole human race, excepting one man, who landed from his canoe on a high mountain in the West.

This tradition, however, was not peculiar to the Mandan tribe, for amongst one hundred and twenty different tribes that I have visited in

North and South and Central America, not a tribe exists that has not related to me distinct or vague traditions of such a calamity, in which one, or three, or eight persons were saved above the waters, on the top of a high mountain. Some of these, at the base of the Rocky Mountains and in the plains of Venezuela, and the Pampa del Sacramento in South America, make annual pilgrimages to the fancied summits where the antediluvian species were saved in canoes or otherwise, and, under the mysterious regulations of their *medicine* (mystery) men, tender their prayers and sacrifices to the Great Spirit, to ensure their exemption from a similar catastrophe.

Indian traditions are generally conflicting, and soon run into fable; but how strong a proof is the *unanimous* tradition of the aboriginal races of a whole continent, of such an event!—how strong a corroboration of the Mosaic account,—and what an unanswerable proof that *anthropos Americanus* is an antediluvian race! And how just a claim does it lay, with the various modes and forms which these poor people practise in celebrating that event, to the inquiries and sympathies of the philanthropic and Christian (as well as to the scientific) world!

Some of those writers who have endeavoured to trace the aborigines of America to an Asiatic or Egyptian origin, have advanced these traditions as evidence in support of their theories, which are, as yet, but unconfirmed hypotheses; and as there is not yet known to exist (as I shall show, but not in this place), either in the American languages, or in the Mexican or Aztec, or other monuments of these people, one single proof of such an immigration (though it could have been made), these traditions as yet are mine, and not theirs,—are American,—indigenous, and not exotic. If it were shown that inspired history of the Deluge and of the Creation restricted those events to one continent alone, then it might be that the American races came from the Eastern continent, bringing these traditions with them; but until that is proved, the American traditions of the Deluge are

no evidence whatever of an Eastern origin. If it were so, and the aborigines of America brought their traditions of the Deluge from the East, why did they not bring inspired history of the *Creation?*

Though there is not a tribe in America but what have some theory of man's creation, there is not one amongst them all that bears the slightest resemblance to the Mosaic account. How strange is this if these people came from the country where inspiration was prior to all history! The Mandans believed they were created under the ground, and that a portion of their people reside there yet. The Choctaws assert that "they were created *craw-fish*, living alternately under the ground and above it, as they chose; and coming out at their little holes in the earth to get the warmth of the sun one sunny day, a portion of the tribe was driven away and could not return; they built the Choctaw village, and the remainder of the tribe are still living under the ground."

The Sioux relate with great minuteness their traditions of the creation. They say that "the Indians were all made from the red pipe-stone, which is exactly of their colour; that the Great Spirit, at a subsequent period, called all the tribes together at the red pipe-stone quarry, and told them this, that the red stone was their flesh, and that they must use it for their pipes only."

Other tribes were created under the water; and at least one half of the tribes in America represent that man was first created under the ground, or in the rocky caverns of the mountains. Why this diversity of theories of the *Creation*, if these people brought their tradition of the Deluge from the land of inspiration?

This interesting subject, too intricate for full discussion in this work, will be further incidentally alluded to in the course of the following relations.

For the scientific, who look amongst these native people chiefly for shapes of their skulls and for analogies to foreign races, I believe there will be found enough in the following description of their

religious ceremonies to command their attention; and for the purely philanthropic and religious world, whose motives are love and sympathy, there will be sufficient to excite their profoundest astonishment, and to touch their hearts with pity.

In a relation so singular, and apparently incredible, as I am now to make, I hope the reader will be able to follow me, under the conviction that I am representing nothing in my descriptions or in my illustrations but what I *saw*, and that I had by my side, during the four days of these scenes, three civilized and educated men, who gave me their certificates that they witnessed with me all these scenes as I have represented them, and which certificates, with other evidences, will be produced in their proper places, as I proceed.

During the summer of 1832 I made two visits to the tribe of Mandan Indians, all living in one village of earth-covered wigwams, on the west bank of the Missouri river, eighteen hundred miles above the town of St. Louis.

Their numbers at that time were between two and three thousand, and they were living entirely according to their native modes, having had no other civilized people residing amongst them or in their vicinity, that we know of, than the few individuals conducting the Missouri Fur Company's business with them, and living in a trading-house by the side of them.

Two exploring parties had long before visited the Mandans, but without in any way affecting their manners. The first of these, in 1738, under the lead of the Brothers Verendrye, Frenchmen, who afterwards ascended the Missouri and Saskachewan, to the Rocky Mountains; and the other, under Lewis and Clark, about sixty years afterwards.

The Mandans, in their personal appearance, as well as in their modes, had many peculiarities different from the other tribes around them. In stature they were about the ordinary size; they were comfortably, and in many instances very beautifully clad with

dresses of skins. Both women and men wore leggings and moccasins made of skins, and neatly embroidered with dyed porcupine quills. Every man had his "tunique and manteau" of skins, which he wore or not as the temperature prompted; and every woman wore a dress of deer or antelope skins, covering the arms to the elbows, and the person from the throat nearly to the feet.

In complexion, colour of hair, and eyes, they generally bore a family resemblance to the rest of the American tribes, but there were exceptions, constituting perhaps one-fifth or one sixth-part of the tribe, whose complexions were nearly white, with hair of a silvery-grey from childhood to old age, their eyes light blue, their faces oval, devoid of the salient angles so strongly characterizing all the other American tribes, and owing, unquestionably, to the infusion of some foreign stock.

Amongst the men, practised by a considerable portion of them, was a mode peculiar to the tribe, and exceedingly curious,—that of cultivating the hair to fall, spreading over their backs, to their haunches, and oftentimes as low as the calves of their legs; divided into flattened masses of an inch or more in breadth, and filled at intervals of two or three inches with hardened glue and red or yellow ochre.

I here present (Plate I.) three of my Mandan portraits in their ordinary costume,—a chief, a warrior, and a young woman,—lest the reader should form a wrong opinion of their usual appearance, from the *bizarre* effects of the figures disguised with clay and other pigments in the ceremony to be described in this work.

The Mandans (*Nu-mah-ká-kee*, pheasants, as they called themselves) have been known from the time of the first visits made to them to the day of their destruction, as one of the most friendly and hospitable tribes on the United States frontier; and it had become a proverb in those regions, and much to their credit, as they claimed, "that no Mandan ever killed a white man."

I was received with great kindness by their chiefs and by the

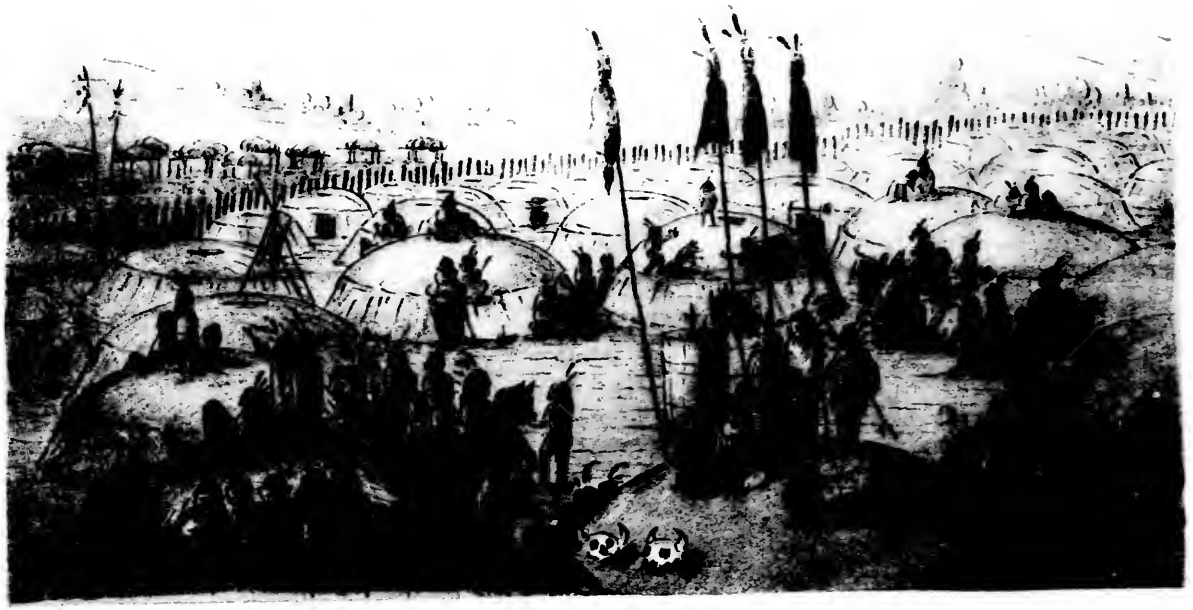
people, and afforded every facility for making my portraits and other designs and notes on their customs; and from Mr. J. Kipp, the conductor of the Fur Company's affairs at that post, and his interpreter, I was enabled to obtain the most complete interpretation of chiefly all that I witnessed.

I had heard, long before I reached their village, of their "annual religious ceremony," which the Mandans call "*O-kee-pa*," and from Mr. Kipp, who had resided several years with the people, a partial account of it; and from him the most pressing advice to remain until the ceremony commenced, as he believed it would be a subject of great interest to me.

I resolved to await its approach, and in the meantime, while inquiring of one of the chiefs whose portrait I was painting, when this ceremony was to begin, he replied that "it would commence as soon as the willow-leaves were full grown under the bank of the river." I asked him why the willow had anything to do with it, when he again replied, "The twig which the bird brought into the *Big Canoe* was a willow bough, and had full-grown leaves on it."

It will here be for the reader to appreciate the surprise with which I met such a remark from the lips of a wild man in the heart of an Indian country, and eighteen hundred miles from the nearest civilization; and the eagerness with which I followed up my inquiries on a subject so unexpected and so full of interest.

I inquired of him what bird he alluded to, which he found difficulty in making me understand, and, taking me by the arm, he conducted me through the winding avenues of the village until he discovered a couple of mourning doves pecking in the side of one of the earth-covered wigwams, and pointing to them said, "There is the bird; it is great *medicine*." It then occurred to me that on my arrival in their village Mr. Kipp had cautioned me against harming these birds, which were numerous in the village, and guarded and protected with a superstitious veneration as great *medicine* (or mystery).



The reader may here very properly inquire, If the American traditions of the Deluge have not been brought from the Eastern Continent, how is it that the Mandans have the Mosaic account of the olive-branch and the dove? This is easily explained; for these terms, and "Big Canoe," used by the Mandans, form no part of the general traditions, being entirely unused by, and unknown to, the other tribes of the American Continent; but have been introduced amongst the Mandans, like other customs that will be described, by some errant colony of Welsh, or other civilized people who have merged into the Mandan tribe, and, having witnessed the Mandan ceremonies, and heard their traditions of the Deluge, have described to those people the Mosaic account, and from which the Mandans have appropriated and introduced into their system the terms "willow bough" for olive-branch, and "Big Canoe" for the Ark, whilst all the other tribes which speak of a canoe use the word "*canoe*" only. And there are yet many tribes in the vicinity of the Rocky Mountains, and in the north of Mexico, which, without impairing in the least the great fact of the tradition, make no mention of a canoe whatever, but represent that the ancestor or ancestors of the present human race, by various miraculous modes, which they describe, gained the summit of a mountain above the reach of the waters in which the rest of mankind perished.

In Plate II. I have given a bird's-eye view of a section of the Mandan village, which is necessary to enable the reader fully to understand the ceremonies to be described.

As I have before said, these people all lived in one village, and their wigwams were covered with earth,—they were all of one form; the frames or shells constructed of timbers, and covered with a thatching of willow-boughs, and over and on that, with a foot or two in thickness, of a concrete of tough clay and gravel, which became so hard as to admit the whole group of inmates, with their dogs, to recline upon their tops. These wigwams varied in size from thirty

to sixty feet in diameter, were perfectly round, and often contained from twenty to thirty persons within.

The village was well protected in front by a high and precipitous rocky bank of the river; and, in the rear, by a stockade of timbers firmly set in the ground, with a ditch inside, not for water, but for the protection of the warriors who occupied it when firing their arrows between the pickets.

In this view the "*Medicine Lodge*," as it is termed, and the "*Big Canoe*" (or symbol of the "*Ark*") are conspicuous, and their positions should be borne in mind during the descriptions of the ceremonies that are to be given.

The "*Medicine Lodge*," the largest in the village and seventy-five feet in diameter, with four images (sacrifices of different-coloured and costly cloths) suspended on poles above it, was considered by these people as a sort of temple, held as strictly sacred, being built and used solely for these four days' ceremonies, and closed during the rest of the year.

In an open area in the centre of the village stands the Ark (or "*Big Canoe*"), around which a great proportion of their ceremonies were performed. This rude symbol, of eight or ten feet in height, was constructed of planks and hoops, having somewhat the appearance of a large hogshead standing on its end, and containing some mysterious things which none but the *medicine men* were allowed to examine. An evidence of the sacredness of this object was the fact that though it had stood, no doubt for many years, in the midst and very centre of the village population, there was not the slightest discoverable bruise or scratch upon it!

In the distance in this view, and outside of the picket, is seen a portion of their cemetery. Their dead, partially embalmed, are tightly wrapped in buffalo hides, softened with glue and water, and placed on slight scaffolds, above the reach of animals or human hands, each body having its separate scaffold.

The *O-kee-pa*, though in many respects apparently so unlike it, was strictly a *religious ceremony*, it having been conducted in most of its parts with the solemnity of religious worship, with abstinence, with sacrifices, and with prayer, whilst there were three other distinct and ostensible objects for which it was held.

1st. As an annual celebration of the event of the "subsiding of the waters" of the Deluge, of which they had a distinct tradition, and which in their language they called "*Mee-ne-ró-ka-há-sha*" (the settling down of the waters).

2nd. For the purpose of dancing what they called "*Bel-lohk-na-pick* (the bull-dance), to the strict performance of which they attributed the coming of buffalos to supply them with food during the ensuing year.

3rd. For the purpose of conducting the young men who had arrived at the age of manhood during the past year, through an ordeal of privation and bodily torture, which, while it was supposed to harden their muscles and prepare them for extreme endurance, enabled their chiefs, who were spectators of the scene, to decide upon their comparative bodily strength, and ability to endure the privations and sufferings that often fall to the lot of Indian warriors, and that they might decide who amongst the young men was the best able to lead a war-party in an extreme exigency.

The season having arrived for the holding of these ceremonies, the leading *medicine* (mystery) man of the tribe presented himself on the top of a wigwam one morning before sunrise, and haranguing the people told them that "he discovered something very strange in the western horizon, and he believed that at the rising of the sun a great white man would enter the village from the west and open the *Medicine Lodge*."

In a few moments the tops of the wigwams, and all other elevations, were covered with men, women, and children on the look-out; and at the moment the rays of the sun shed their first light over the

prairies and back of the village, a simultaneous shout was raised, and in a few minutes all voices were united in yells and mournful cries, and with them the barking and howling of dogs; all were in motion and apparent alarm, preparing their weapons and securing their horses, as if an enemy were rushing on them to take them by storm.

All eyes were at this time directed to the prairie, where, at the distance of a mile or so from the village, a solitary human figure was seen descending the prairie hills and approaching the village in a straight line, until he reached the picket, where a formidable array of shields and spears was ready to receive him. A large body of warriors was drawn up in battle-array, when their leader advanced and called out to the stranger to make his errand known, and to tell from whence he came. He replied that he had come from the high mountains in the west, where he resided,—that he had come for the purpose of opening the *Medicine Lodge* of the Mandans, and that he must have uninterrupted access to it, or certain destruction would be the fate of the whole tribe.

The head chief and the council of chiefs, who were at that moment assembled in the council-house, with their faces painted black, were sent for, and soon made their appearance in a body at the picket, and recognized the visitor as an old acquaintance, whom they addressed as "*Nu-mohk-múck-a-nah*" (the *first* or *only* man). All shook hands with him, and invited him within the picket. He then harangued them for a few minutes, reminding them that every human being on the surface of the earth had been destroyed by the water excepting himself, who had landed on a high mountain in the West, in his canoe, where he still resided, and from whence he had come to open the *Medicine Lodge*, that the Mandans might celebrate the subsiding of the waters and make the proper sacrifices to the water, lest the same calamity should again happen to them.

The next moment he was seen entering the village under the

escort of the chiefs, when the cries and alarms of the villagers instantly ceased, and orders were given by the chiefs that the women and children should all be silent and retire within their wigwams, and their dogs all to be muzzled during the whole of that day, which belonged to the Great Spirit.

In the midst of this startling and thrilling scene, which was so well acted out by men, women, and children, and (apparently) by their dogs, I should scarcely have had the nerve to have been a close observer but for the announcement by the fur-trader, Mr. Kipp, with whom I was lodging, that this was the beginning of the "great ceremony," and that I ought not to lose a moment in witnessing its commencement, and of making sketches of all that transpired.

With this advice Mr. Kipp had accompanied me to the picket, where I had a fair view of the reception of this strange visitor from the West; in appearance a very aged man, whose body was naked, with the exception of a robe made of four white wolves' skins. His body and face and hair were entirely covered with white clay, and he closely resembled, at a little distance, a *centenarian* white man. In his left hand he extended, as he walked, a large pipe, which seemed to be borne as a very sacred thing. The procession moved to the *Medicine Lodge*, which this personage seemed to have the only means of opening. He opened it, and entered it alone, it having been (as I was assured) superstitiously closed during the past year, and never used since the last annual ceremony.

The chiefs then retired to the Council-house, leaving this strange visitor sole tenant of this sacred edifice; soon after which he placed himself at its door, and called out to the chiefs to furnish him "four men,—one from the *North*, one from the *South*, one from the *East*, and one from the *West*, whose hands and feet were clean and would not profane the sacred temple while labouring within it during that day."

These four men were soon produced, and they were employed

during the day in sweeping and cleaning every part of the temple, and strewing the floor, which was a concrete of gravel and clay, and ornamenting the sides of it, with willow boughs and aromatic herbs which they gathered in the prairies, and otherwise preparing it for the "*Ceremonies*," to commence on the next morning.

During the remainder of that day, while all the Mandans were shut up in their wigwams, and not allowed to go out, *Nu-mohk-múck-a-nah* (the *first* or *only* man) visited alone each wigwam, and, while crying in front of it, the owner appeared and asked, "Who's there?" and "What was wanting?" To this *Nu-mohk-múck-a-nah* replied by relating the destruction of all the human family by the *Flood*, excepting himself, who had been saved in his "Big Canoe," and now dwelt in the West; that he had come to open the *Medicine Lodge*, that the Mandans might make the necessary sacrifices to the water, and for this purpose it was requisite that he should receive at the door of every Mandan's wigwam some edged tool to be given to the water as a sacrifice, as it was with such tools that the "*Big Canoe*" was built.

He then demanded and received at the door of every Mandan wigwam, some edged or pointed tool or instrument made of iron or steel, which seemed to have been procured and held in readiness for the occasion; with these he returned to the *Medicine Lodge* at evening, where he deposited them, and where they remained during the four days of the ceremony, and were, as will be seen, on the last day at sundown, in the presence of the chiefs and all the tribe, to be thrown into deep water from the top of the rocks, and thus made a sacrifice to the water.

Nu-mohk-múck-a-nah rested alone in the Medicine Lodge during that night, and at sunrise the next morning, in front of the lodge, called out for all the young men who were candidates for the *O-kee-pa* graduation as warriors, to come forward,—the rest of the villagers still enclosed in their wigwams.

In a few minutes about fifty young men, whom I learned were all of those of the tribe who had arrived at maturity during the last year, appeared in a beautiful group, their graceful limbs entirely denuded, but without exception covered with clay of different colours from head to foot,—some white, some red, some yellow, and others blue and green, each one carrying his shield of bull's hide on his left arm, and his bow in his left hand, and his *medicine bag* in the right.

In this plight they followed *Nu-mohk-múck-a-nah* into the Medicine Lodge in "Indian file," and taking their positions around the sides of the lodge, each one hung his bow and quiver, shield and *medicine-bag* over him as he reclined upon the floor of the wigwam.

Nu-mohk-múck-a-nah then called into the *Medicine Lodge* the principal *medicine man* of the tribe, whom he appointed *O-kee-pa-ka-see-ka* (Keeper or Conductor of the Ceremonies), by passing into his hand the large pipe which he had so carefully brought with him, "which had been saved in the big canoe with him," and on which it will appear the whole of these mysteries hung.

Nu-mohk-múck-a-nah then took leave of him by shaking hands with him, and left the Medicine Lodge, saying that he would return to the West, where he lived, and be back again in just a year to reopen the Medicine Lodge. He then passed through the village, shaking hands with the chiefs, and in a few moments was seen disappearing over the hills from whence he came the day previous.

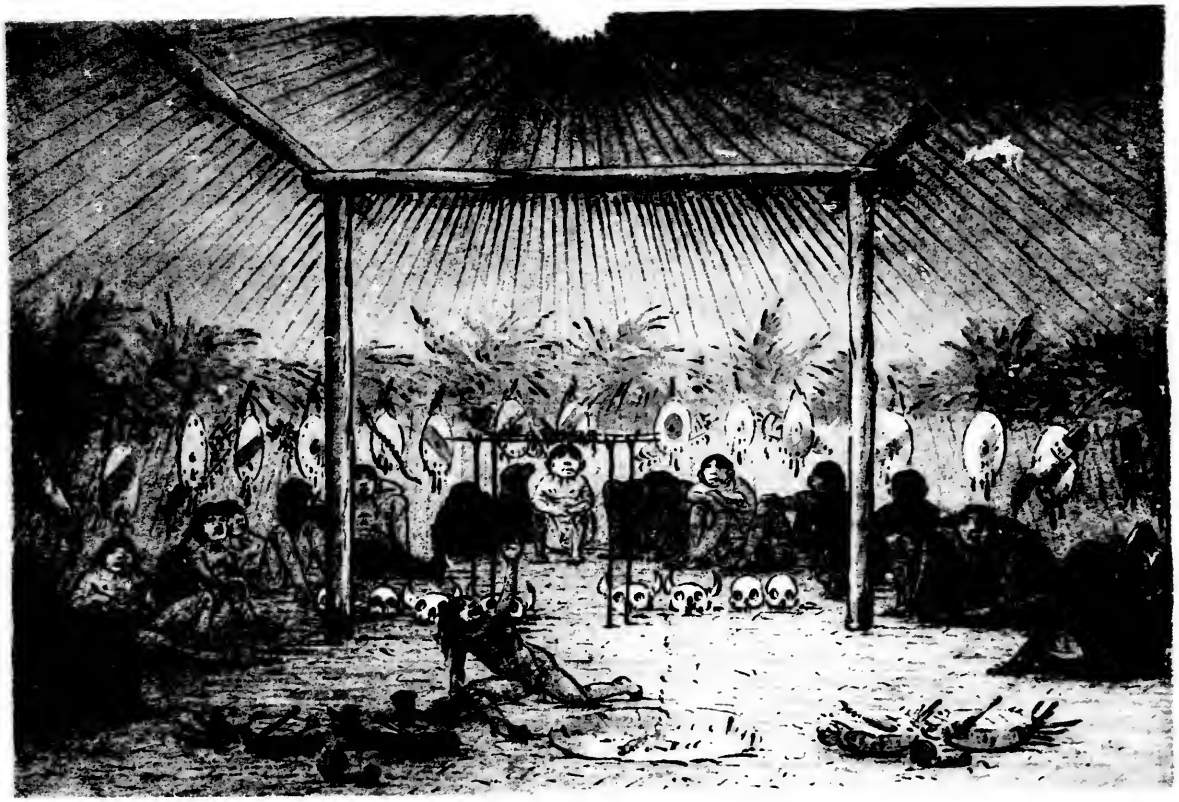
No more was *seen* of this extraordinary personage during the ceremonies, but more will be learned of him before this description is finished.*

* Here the question again arises, If the Indian tradition of the Deluge was not of Mosaic origin, why was the "first or only man" represented by the Mandans as a white man? and the answer is the same as that already given as to the "willow-bough" and the "big canoe." The same teachers have made these people believe that the first man was a *white* man, and they consequently so represent him,—a peculiarity of the Mandans, not practised or thought of in any other tribe of the American continent.

Here is the proper place to relate the manner in which I gained admission into this sacred temple, and to give the credit that was due, to the man who kindly gave me permission to witness what was probably never seen before by a white man, the secret and sacred transactions of the interior of the Mandan Medicine Lodge, so sacred that a double door, with an intervening passage and an armed sentinel at each end, positively denying all access except by permission of the Conductor of the Ceremonies, and strictly guarding it against the approach or gaze of women, who, I was told, had never been allowed to catch the slightest glance of its interior.

This interior had also been too sacred a place for the admission of Mr. Kipp, the fur-trader, who had lived in the village eight or ten years; but luckily for me, I had completed a portrait the day before, of the renowned doctor or "*mystery man*," to whom the superintendence of the ceremonies had just been committed, and whose vanity had been so much excited by the painting that he had mounted on to a wigwam with it, holding it up by the corners and haranguing the villagers, claiming that "he must be the greatest man among the Mandans, because I had painted his portrait before I had painted the great chief; and that I was the greatest '*medicine*' of the whites, and a great chief, because I could make so perfect a duplicate of him that it set all the women and children laughing!"

This man, then, in charge of the Medicine Lodge, seeing me with one of my men and Mr. Kipp, the fur trader, standing in front of the door, came out, and passing his arm through mine, politely led me into the lodge, and allowing my hired man and Mr. Kipp, with one of the clerks of his establishment, to follow. We took our seats, and were allowed to resume them on the three following days, occupying them most of the time from sunrise to sundown; and therefore the following description of those scenes, and the paintings which I then made of them, and to all of which Mr. Kipp and the other two men attached their certificates, which are here given.



"We hereby certify that we witnessed, with Mr. Catlin, in the Mandan village, the ceremonies represented in the four paintings to which this certificate refers, and that he has therein represented those scenes as we saw them enacted, without addition or exaggeration.

"J. KIPP, *Agent of Missouri Fur Company.*
"J. CRAWFORD, *Clerk.*
"ABRAHAM BOGARD.

"*Mandan Village, 28th July,* 1832."

The Conductor or Master of the Ceremonies then took his position, reclining on the ground near the fire, in the centre of the lodge, with the medicine-pipe in his hand, and commenced crying, and continued to cry to the Great Spirit, while he guarded the young candidates who were reclining around the sides of the lodge, and for four days and four nights were not allowed to eat, drink, or to sleep. (This interior, which they called "*Mee-ne-ro-ka-Há-sha,*"—the waters settle down,—see in Plate III.)

By such denial great lassitude, and even emaciation, was produced, preparing the young men for the tortures which they afterwards went through.

The Medicine Lodge, in which they were thus resting during the four days, and which I have said was seventy-five feet in diameter, presented the most strange and picturesque appearance. Its sides were curiously decorated with willow-boughs and aromatic herbs, and its floor (covered also with willow-boughs) with a curious arrangement of buffalo and human skulls.

There were also four articles of veneration and importance lying on the ground, which were sacks, containing each some three or four gallons of water. These seemed to be objects of great superstitious regard, and had been made with much labour and ingenuity, being constructed of the skins of the buffalo's neck, and sewed together in the forms of large tortoises lying on their backs, each having a sort of tail made of raven's quills, and a stick like a drum-

stick lying on it, with which, as will be seen in a subsequent part of the ceremony, the musicians beat upon the sacks as instruments of music for their strange dances.

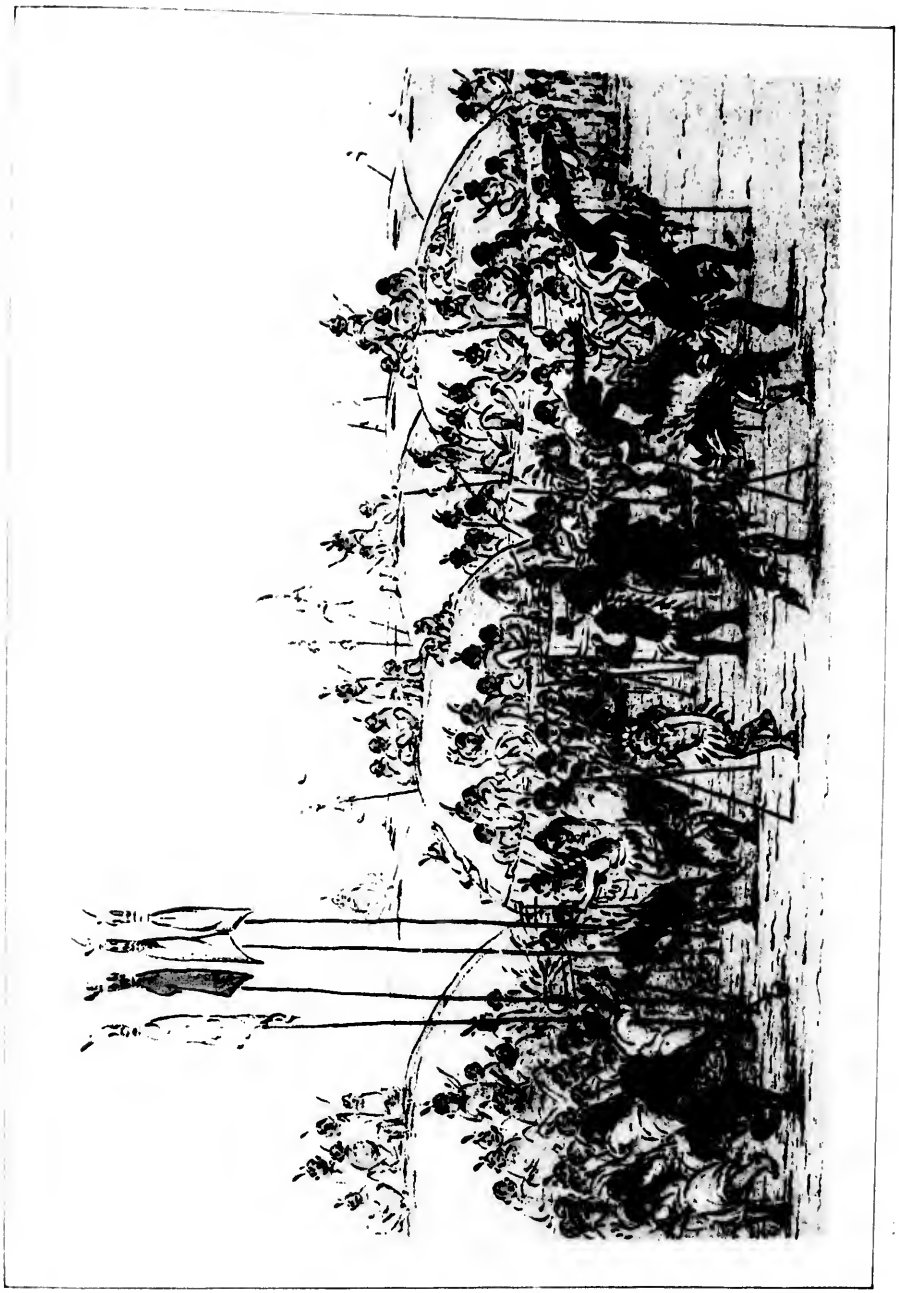
By the sides of these sacks, which they called *Eeh-tee-ka* (drums), there were two other articles of equal importance, which they called *Eeh-na-de* (rattles), made of dried undressed skins, shaped into the form of gourd-shells, which they also used, as will be seen, as another part of the music for their dances.

The sacks of water had the appearance of great antiquity, and the Mandans pretended that the water had been contained in them ever since the Deluge. At what time it had been originally put in, or when replenished, I consequently could not learn. I made several efforts to purchase one of these tortoise drums, so elaborately and curiously were they embroidered and ornamented, offering them goods at the Fur Company's trading-house to the value of one hundred dollars, but they said they were *medicine* (mystery) things, and therefore could not be sold at any price.

Such was the appearance of the interior of the Medicine Lodge during the three first (and part of the fourth) days. During the three first days, while things remained thus inside of the Medicine Lodge, there were many curious and grotesque amusements and ceremonies transpiring outside and around the "Big Canoe."

The principal of these, which they called *Bel-iohk-na-pick* (the bull dance), to the strict observance of which they attributed the coming of buffaloes to supply them with food, was one of an exceedingly grotesque and amusing character, and was danced four times on the first day, eight times on the second day, twelve times on the third day, and sixteen times on the fourth day, and always around the "Big Canoe," of which I have already spoken. (See the "Bull Dance," Plate IV.)

The chief actors in these strange scenes were eight men, with the entire skins of buffaloes thrown over them, enabling them closely



to imitate the appearance and motions of those animals, as the bodies of the dancers were kept in a horizontal position, the horns and tails of the animals remaining on the skins, and the skins of the animals' heads served as masks, through the eyes of which the dancers were looking.

The eight men were all naked and painted exactly alike, and in the most extraordinary manner; their bodies, limbs, and faces being everywhere covered with black, red, or white paint. Each joint was marked with two white rings, one within the other, even to the joints in the under jaw, the fingers and the toes; and the abdomens were painted to represent the face of an infant, the navel representing its mouth. (See "A Buffalo Bull," Plate V.*)

Each one of these characters also had a lock of buffalo's hair tied around the ankles, in his right hand a rattle (*she-shée-quoin*), and a slender staff six feet in length in the other; and carried on his back, above the buffalo skin, a bundle of willow-boughs, of the ordinary size of a bundle of wheat. (See "A Buffalo Bull" dancing, Plate VI.)

These eight men representing eight buffalo bulls, being divided into four pairs, took their positions on the four sides of the Ark, or "Big Canoe" (as seen in the general view, Plate IV.), representing thereby the four cardinal points; and between each couple of these, with his back turned to the "Big Canoe," was another figure engaged in the same dance, keeping step with the eight buffalo bulls, with a staff in one hand and a rattle in the other: and being four in number, answered again to the four cardinal points.

The bodies of these four men were also entirely naked, with the exception of beautiful kilts of eagles' quills and ermine, and head-dresses made of the same materials.

* Whilst the handsome warrior was standing for the sketch here given, he told me that it took eight men an entire day to paint the bodies and limbs of the eight buffaloes, no part of the painting being done by their own hands.

Two of these figures were painted jet black with charcoal and grease, whom they called *the night*, and the numerous white spots dotted over their bodies and limbs they called *stars*. (See one of these, Plate VII.)

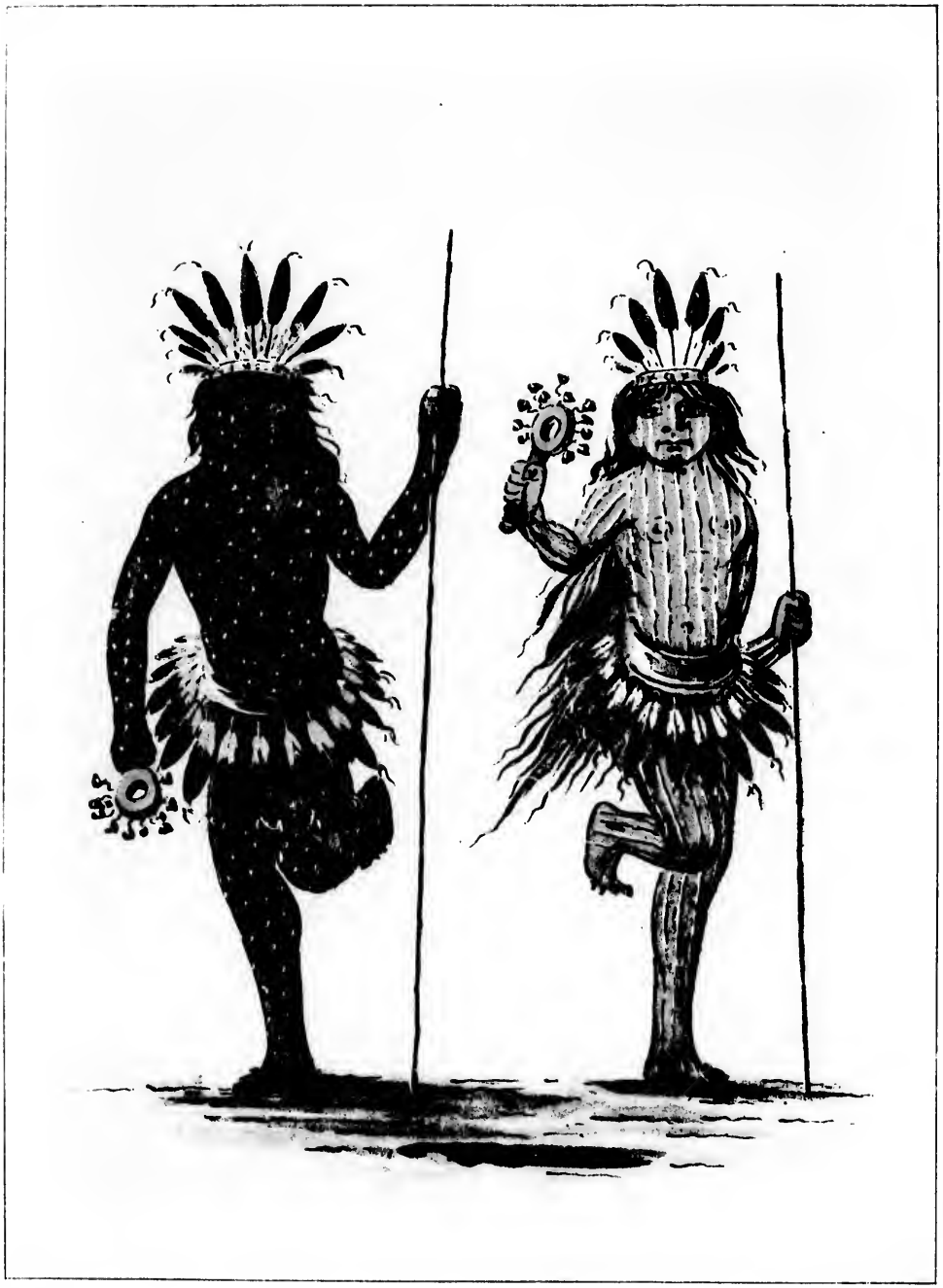
The other two, who were painted from head to foot as red as vermilion could make them, with white stripes up and down over their bodies and limbs, were called the *morning rays* (symbols of day). (See one of them, Plate VII.)

These twelve were the only figures actually engaged in the Bull *dance*, which was each time repeated in the same manner without any apparent variation. There were, however, a great number of characters, many of them representing various animals of the country, engaged in giving the whole effect to this strange scene, and all of which are worthy of a few remarks.

The bull dance was conducted by the old master of ceremonies (*O-kee-pa Ka-see-ka*) carrying his medicine pipe; his body entirely naked, and covered, as well as his hair, with yellow clay.

For each time that the bull dance was repeated, this man came out of the Medicine Lodge with the *medicine pipe* in his hands, bringing with him four old men carrying the tortoise drums, their bodies painted red, and head-dresses of eagles' quills, and with them another old man with the two *she-shée-quoins* (rattles). These took their seats by the side of the "Big Canoe," and commenced drumming and rattling and singing, whilst the conductor of the ceremonies, with his medicine pipe in his hands, was leaning against the "Big Canoe," and crying in his full voice to the Great Spirit, as seen in the general view, Plate IV. Squatted on the ground, on the opposite side of the "Big Canoe," were two men with skins of grizzly bears thrown over them, using the skins as masks covering their faces. Their bodies were naked, and painted with yellow clay.

These characters, whom they called *grizzly bears*, were continually growling and threatening to devour everything before them, and



interfering with the forms of the ceremony. To appease them and keep them quiet, the women were continually bringing and placing before them dishes of meat, which were as often snatched away and carried to the prairies by two men called *bald eagles*, whose bodies and limbs were painted black, whilst their heads and feet and hands were whitened with clay. These were again chased upon the prairies by a numerous group of small boys, whose bodies and limbs were painted yellow, and their heads white, wearing tails of white deer's hair, and whom they called *antelopes*.

Besides these there were two men representing *swans*, their bodies naked and painted white, and their noses and feet were painted black.

There were two men called *rattlesnakes*, their bodies naked and curiously painted, resembling that reptile; each holding a rattle in one hand and a bunch of wild sage in the other. (See "A Rattlesnake," Plate VIII.) There were two *beavers*, represented by two men entirely covered with dresses made of buffalo skins, except their heads, and wearing beavers' tails attached to their belts. (See "A Beaver," Plate VIII.)

There were two men representing *vultures*, their bodies naked and painted brown, their heads and shoulders painted blue, and their noses red.

Two men represented *wolves*, their bodies naked, wearing wolf-skins. These pursued the antelopes, and whenever they overtook one of them on the prairie one or both of the grizzly bears came up and pretended to devour it, in revenge for the antelopes having devoured the meat given to the grizzly bears by the women.

All these characters closely imitated the habits of the animals they represented, and they all had some peculiar and appropriate songs, which they constantly chanted and sang during the dances, without even themselves (probably) knowing the meaning of them, they being strictly *medicine* songs, which are kept profound secrets

from those of their own tribe, except those who have been regularly initiated into their *medicines* (mysteries) at an early age, and at an exorbitant price; and I therefore failed to get a translation of them.

At the close of each of these bull dances, these representatives of animals and birds all set up the howl and growl peculiar to their species, in a deafening chorus; some dancing, some jumping, and others (apparently) flying; the *beavers* clapping with their tails, the *rattlesnakes* shaking their rattles, the *bears* striking with their paws, the *wolves* howling, and the buffaloes rolling in the sand or rearing upon their hind feet; and dancing off together to an adjoining lodge, where they remained in a curious and picturesque group until the master of ceremonies came again out of the Medicine Lodge, and leaning as before against the "Big Canoe," cried out for all the dancers, musicians, and the group of animals and birds to gather again around him.

This lodge, which was also strictly a Medicine Lodge during the occasion, and used for painting and arranging all the characters, and not allowed to be entered during the four days, except by the persons taking part in the ceremonies, was shown to me by the conductor of the ceremonies, who sent a *medicine man* with me to its interior whilst the scene of painting and ornamenting their bodies for the *bull dance* was taking place; and none but the most vivid imagination could ever conceive anything so peculiar, so wild, and so curious in effect as this strange spectacle then presented to my view.

No man painted himself, but, standing or lying naked, submitted like a statue to the operations of other hands, who were appointed for the purpose. Each painter seemed to have his special department or peculiar figure, and each appeared to be working with great care and with ambition for the applause of the public when he turned out his figure.

It may be thought easy to imagine such a group of naked figures, and the effect that the rude painting on their bodies would have; but

I am ready to declare that the most creative imagination cannot appreciate the singular beauty of these graceful figures thus decorated with various colours, reclining in groups, or set in rapid motion; it was one of those few scenes that must be witnessed to be fully appreciated.

The first ordeal they all went through in this sanctuary was that of *Tah-ke-way ka-ra-ka* (the hiding man), the name given to an aged man, who was supplied with small thongs of deer's sinew, for the purpose of obscuring the *glans* secret, which was uniformly done by this operator, with all the above-named figures, by drawing the prepuce over in front of the glans, and tying it secure with the sinew, and then covering the private parts with clay, which he took from a wooden bowl, and, with his hand, plastered unsparingly over.

Of men performing their respective parts in the *bull dance*, representing the various animals, birds, and reptiles of the country, there were about forty, and forty boys representing antelopes,—making a group in all of eighty figures, entirely naked, and painted from head to foot in the most fantastic shapes, and of all colours, as has been described; and the fifty young men resting in the Medicine Lodge, and waiting for the infliction of their tortures, were also naked and entirely covered with clay of various colours (as has been described), some red, some yellow, and others blue and green; so that of (probably) one hundred and thirty persons engaged in these picturesque scenes, *not one single inch of the natural colour of their bodies, their limbs, or their hair could be seen!*

During each and every one of these bull dances, the four old men who were beating on the sacks of water, were chanting forth their supplications to the Great Spirit for the continuation of his favours, in sending them buffaloes to supply them with food for the ensuing year. They were also exciting the courage and fortitude of the young men inside of the Medicine Lodge, who were listening to their prayers, by telling them that "the Great Spirit had opened his ears

in their behalf; that the very atmosphere out-of-doors was full of peace and happiness for them when they got through; that the women and children could hold the mouths and paws of the grizzly bears; that they had invoked from day to day the Evil Spirit; that they were still challenging him to come, and yet he had not dared to make his appearance."

But, in the midst of the last dance on the fourth day, a sudden alarm throughout the group announced the arrival of a strange character from the West. Women were crying, dogs were howling, and all eyes were turned to the prairie, where, a mile or so in distance, was seen an individual man making his approach towards the village; his colour was black, and he was darting about in different directions, and in a zigzag course approached and entered the village, amidst the greatest (apparent) imaginable fear and consternation of the women and children.

This strange and frightful character, whom they called *O-ke-hée-de* (the owl or Evil Spirit), darted through the crowd where the buffalo dance was proceeding (as seen in Plate IV.), alarming all he came in contact with. His body was painted jet black with pulverized charcoal and grease, with rings of white clay over his limbs and body. Indentations of white, like huge teeth, surrounded his mouth, and white rings surrounded his eyes. In his two hands he carried a sort of wand—a slender rod of eight feet in length, with a red ball at the end of it, which he slid about upon the ground as he ran. (See "O-ke-hée-de," Plate IX.)

On entering the crowd where the buffalo dance was going on, he directed his steps towards the groups of women, who retreated in the greatest alarm, tumbling over each other and screaming for help as he advanced upon them. At this moment of increased alarm the screams of the women had brought by his side *O-kee-pa-ká-see-ka* (the conductor of the ceremonies) with his medicine pipe, for their protection. This man had left the "Big Canoe," against which he

was leaning and crying during the dance, and now thrust his *medicine* pipe before this hideous monster, and, looking him full in the eyes, held him motionless under its *charm*, until the women and children had withdrawn from his reach.

The awkwardness of the position of this blackened demon, and the laughable appearance of the two, frowning each other in the face, while the women and children and the whole crowd were laughing at them, were amusing beyond the power of description.

After a round of hisses and groans from the crowd, and the women had retired to a safe distance, the *medicine* pipe was gradually withdrawn, and this vulgar monster, whose wand was slowly lowering to the ground, gained power of locomotion again.

The conductor of the ceremonies returned to the "Big Canoe," and resumed his former position and crying, as the buffalo dance was still proceeding, without interruption.

The Evil Spirit in the meantime had wandered to another part of the village, where the screams of the women were again heard, and the conductor of the ceremonies again ran with the medicine pipe in his hands to their rescue, and arriving just in time, and holding this monster in check as before, enabled them again to escape.

In several attempts of this kind the Evil Spirit was thus defeated, after which he came wandering back amongst the dancers, apparently much fatigued and disappointed; and the women gradually advancing and gathering around him, evidently less apprehensive of danger than a few moments before.

In this *distressing* dilemma he was approached by an old matron, who came up slily behind him with both hands full of yellow dirt, which (by reaching around him) she suddenly dashed in his face, covering him from head to foot and changing his colour, as the dirt adhered to the undried bears'-grease on his skin. As he turned around he received another handful, and another, from different quarters; and at length another snatched his wand from his hands,

and broke it across her knee; others grasped the broken parts, and, snapping them into small bits, threw them into his face. His power was thus gone, and his colour changed: he began then to cry, and, bolting through the crowd, he made his way to the prairies, where he fell into the hands of a fresh swarm of women and girls (no doubt assembled there for the purpose) outside of the picket, who hailed him with screams and hisses and terms of reproach, whilst they were escorting him for a considerable distance over the prairie, and beating him with sticks and dirt.

He was at length seen escaping from this group of women, who were returning to the village, whilst he was disappearing over the plains from whence he had made his first appearance.

The crowd of women entered the village, and the area where the ceremony was transpiring, in triumph, and the fortunate one who had deprived him of his power was escorted by two matrons on each side. She was then lifted by her four female attendants on to the front of the Medicine Lodge, directly over its door, where she stood and harangued the multitude for some time; claiming that "she held the power of *creation*, and also the power of life and death over them; that she was the father of all the buffaloes, and that she could make them come or stay away, as she pleased."

She then ordered the bull dance to be stopped—the four musicians to carry the four tortoise-drums into the Medicine Lodge. The assistant dancers, and all the other characters taking parts, were ordered into the dressing and painting lodge. The buffalo and human skulls on the floor of the Medicine Lodge (as seen in Plate III.) she ordered to be hung on the four posts (as seen in Plate X.). She invited the chiefs to enter the Medicine Lodge, and (being seated) to witness the voluntary tortures of the young men, now to commence. She ordered the conductor of the ceremonies to sit by the fire and smoke the *medicine* pipe, and the operators to go in with their knife and splints, and to commence the tortures.

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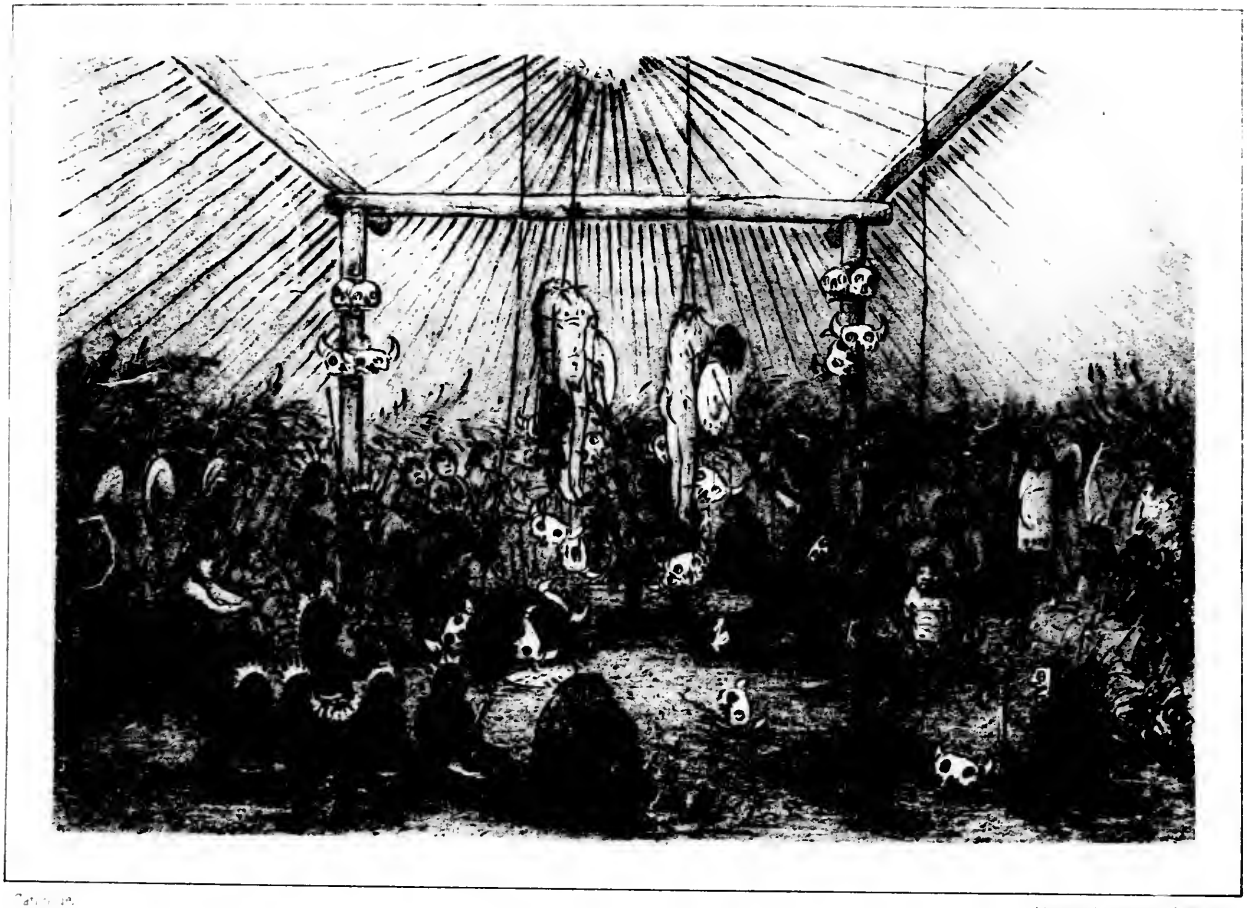

She then called out for and demanded the handsomest woman's dress in the Mandan village, which was due to her who had disarmed *O-ke-hee-de* and had the power of making all the buffaloes which the Mandans would require during the coming year. Her demand for this beautiful dress was *peremptory*, and she must have it to lead the dance in the *Feast of the Buffaloes*, to be given that night.

The beautiful dress was then presented to her by the conductor of the ceremonies, who said to her, "Young woman, you have gained great fame this day; and the honour of leading the dance in the *Feast of the Buffaloes*, to be given this night, belongs to you."

Thus ended the bull dance (*bel-lohk-nú-pick*) and other amusements at midday on the fourth day of the *O-kée-pa*, preparatory to the scenes of torture to take place in the Medicine Lodge; and the pleasing *moral* from these strange (and in some respects disgusting) modes, at once suggests itself, that in the midst of their religious ceremony the Evil Spirit had made his *entrée* for the purpose of doing mischief, and, having been defeated in all his designs by the magic power of the medicine pipe, on which all those ceremonies hung, he had been disarmed and driven out of the village in disgrace by the very part of the community he came to impose upon.

The *bull dance* and other grotesque scenes being finished outside of the Medicine Lodge, the torturing scene (or *pohk-hong* as they called it) commenced within, in the following manner. (See Plate X.)

The young men reclining around the sides of the Medicine Lodge (before shown in Plate III.), who had now reached the middle of the fourth day without eating, drinking, or sleeping, and consequently weakened and emaciated, commenced to submit to the operation of the knife and other instruments of torture.

Two men, who were to inflict the tortures, had taken their positions near the middle of the lodge; one, with a large knife with a sharp point and two edges, which were hacked with another knife in order to produce as much pain as possible, was ready to make the

incisions through the flesh, and the other, prepared with a handful of splints of the size of a man's finger, and sharpened at both ends, to be passed through the wounds as soon as the knife was withdrawn.

The bodies of these two men, who were probably *medicine men*, were painted red, with their hands and feet black; and the one who made the incisions with the knife wore a mask, that the young men should never know who gave them their wounds; and on their bodies and limbs they had conspicuously marked with paint the scars which they bore, as evidence that they had passed through the same ordeal.

To these two men one of the emaciated candidates at a time crawled up, and submitted to the knife (as seen in Plate X.), which was passed under and through the integuments and flesh taken up between the thumb and forefinger of the operator, on each arm, above and below the elbow, over the *brachialis externus* and the *extensor radialis*, and on each leg above and below the knee, over the *vastus externus* and the *peroneus;* and also on each breast and each shoulder.

During this painful operation, most of these young men, as they took their position to be operated upon, observing me taking notes, beckoned me to look them in the face, and sat, without the apparent change of a muscle, smiling at me whilst the knife was passing through their flesh, the ripping sound of which, and the trickling of blood over their clay-covered bodies and limbs, filled my eyes with irresistible tears.

When these incisions were all made, and the splints passed through, a cord of raw hide was lowered down through the top of the wigwam, and fastened to the splints on the breasts or shoulders, by which the young man was to be raised up and suspended, by men placed on the top of the lodge for the purpose.

These cords having been attached to the splints on the breast or the shoulders, each one had his shield hung to some one of the splints:

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his *medicine bag* was held in his left hand, and a dried buffalo skull was attached to the splint on each lower leg and each lower arm, that its weight might prevent him from struggling; when, at a signal, by striking the cord, the men on top of the lodge commenced to draw him up. He was thus raised some three or four feet above the ground, until the buffalo heads and other articles attached to the wounds swung clear, when another man, his body red and his hands and feet black, stepped up, and, with a small pole, began to turn him around.

The turning was slow at first, and gradually increased until fainting ensued, when it ceased. In each case these young men submitted to the knife, to the insertion of the splints, and even to being hung and lifted up, without a perceptible murmur or a groan; but when the turning commenced, they began crying in the most heartrending tones to the Great Spirit, imploring him to enable them to bear and survive the painful ordeal they were entering on. This piteous prayer, the sounds of which no imagination can ever reach, and of which I could get no translation, seemed to be an established form, ejaculated alike by all, and continued until fainting commenced, when it gradually ceased.

In each instance they were turned until they fainted and their cries were ended. Their heads hanging forwards and down, and their tongues distended, and becoming entirely motionless and silent, they had, in each instance, the appearance of a corpse. (See Plate XI.) In this view, which was sketched whilst the two young men were hanging before me, one is suspended by the muscles of the breast, and the other by the muscles of the shoulders, and two of the young candidates are seen reclining on the ground, and waiting for their turn.

When brought to this condition, without signs of animation, the lookers-on pronounced the word *dead! dead!* when the men who had turned them struck the cords with their poles, which was the signal for the men on top of the lodge to lower them to the ground,

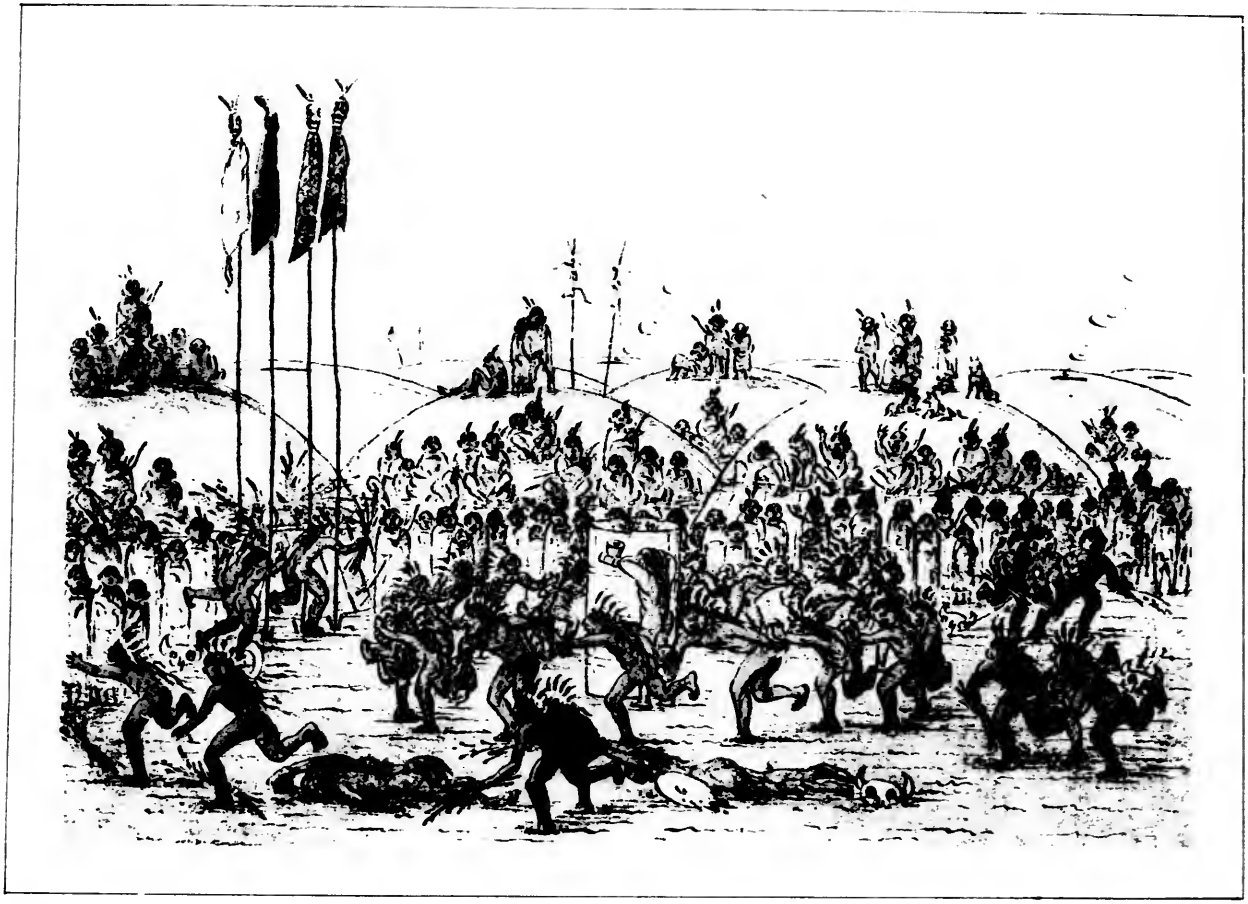
—the time of their suspension having been from fifteen to twenty minutes.

The excessive pain produced by the turning, which was evinced by the increased cries as the rapidity of the turning increased, was no doubt caused by the additional weight of the buffalo skulls upon the splints, in consequence of their centrifugal direction, caused by the rapidity with which the bodies were turned, added to the sickening distress of the rotary motion; and what that double agony actually was, every adult Mandan knew, and probably no human being but a Mandan ever felt.

After this ordeal (in which two or three bodies were generally hanging at the same time), and the bodies were lowered to the ground as has been described, a man advanced (as is seen in Plate X.) and withdrew the two splints by which they had been hung up, they having necessarily been passed under a portion of the *trapezius* or *pectoral* muscle, in order to support the weight of their bodies; but leaving all the others remaining in the flesh, to be got rid of in the manner yet to be described.

Each body lowered to the ground appeared like a loathsome and lifeless corpse. No one was allowed to offer them aid whilst they lay in this condition. They were here enjoying their inestimable privilege of voluntarily entrusting their lives to the keeping of the Great Spirit, and chose to remain there until the Great Spirit gave them strength to get up and walk away.

In each instance, as soon as they got strength enough *partly* to rise, and move their bodies to another part of the lodge, where there sat a man with a hatchet in his hand and a dried buffalo skull before him, his body red, his hands and feet black, and wearing a mask, they held up the little finger of the left hand (as seen in Plate X.) towards the Great Spirit (offering it as a sacrifice, as they thanked him audibly, for having listened to their prayers and protected their lives in what they had just gone through), and laid it on the buffalo



skull, where the man with the mask, struck it off at a blow with the hatchet, close to the hand.

In several instances I saw them offer immediately after, and give, the *fore*finger of the same hand,—leaving only the two middle fingers and the thumb to hold the bow, the only weapon used in that hand. Instances had been known, and several such were subsequently shown to me amongst the chiefs and warriors, where they had given also the little finger of the *right* hand, a much greater sacrifice; and several famous men of the tribe were also shown to me, who proved, by the corresponding scars on their breasts and limbs, which they exhibited to me, that they had been several times, at their own option, through these horrid ordeals.

The young men seemed to take no care or notice of the wounds thus made, and neither bleeding nor inflammation to any extent ensued, though arteries were severed,—owing probably to the checked circulation caused by the reduced state to which their four days and nights of fasting and other abstinence had brought them.

During the whole time of this cruel part of the ceremonies, the chiefs and other dignitaries of the tribe were looking on, to decide who amongst the young men were the hardiest and stoutest-hearted, who could hang the longest by his torn flesh without fainting, and who was soonest up after he had fainted,—that they might decide whom to appoint to lead a war party, or to place at the most important posts, in time of war.

As soon as six or eight had passed through the ordeal as above described, they were led out of the Medicine Lodge, with the weights still hanging to their flesh and dragging on the ground, to undergo another and (perhaps) still more painful mode of suffering.

This part of the ceremony, which they called *Eeh-ke-náh-ka Na-pick* (the last race) (see Plate XII.), took place in presence of the whole tribe, who were lookers-on. For this a circle was formed by the buffalo dancers (their masks thrown off) and others who had

taken parts in the bull dance, now wearing head-dresses of eagles' quills, and all connected by circular wreaths of willow-boughs held in their hands, who ran, with all possible speed and piercing yells, around the "Big Canoe;" and outside of that circle the bleeding young men thus led out, with all their buffalo skulls and other weights hanging to the splints, and dragging on the ground, were placed at equal distances, with two athletic young men assigned to each, one on each side, their bodies painted one half red and the other blue, and carrying a bunch of willow-boughs in one hand, (see one of them, Plate XIII.,) who took them, by leather straps fastened to the wrists, and ran with them as fast as they could, around the "Big Canoe;" the buffalo skulls and other weights still dragging on the ground as they ran, amidst the deafening shouts of the bystanders and the runners in the inner circle, who raised their voices to the highest key, to drown the cries of the poor fellows thus suffering by the violence of their tortures.

The ambition of the young aspirants in this part of the ceremony was to decide who could run the longest under these circumstances without fainting, and who could be soonest on his feet again after having been brought to that extremity. So much were they exhausted, however, that the greater portion of them fainted and settled down before they had run half the circle, and were then violently dragged, even (in some cases) with their faces in the dirt, until every weight attached to their flesh was left behind.

This *must* be done to produce honourable scars, which could not be effected by withdrawing the splints endwise; the flesh must be *broken out*, leaving a scar an inch or more in length: and in order to do this, there were several instances where the buffalo skulls adhered so long that they were jumped upon by the bystanders as they were being dragged at full speed, which forced the splints out of the wounds by breaking the flesh, and the buffalo skulls were left behind.

The tortured youth, when thus freed from all weights, was left

upon the ground, appearing like a mangled corpse, whilst his two torturers, having dropped their willow-boughs, were seen running through the crowd towards the prairies, as if to escape the punishment that would follow the commission of a heinous crime.

In this pitiable condition each sufferer was left, his life again entrusted to the keeping of the Great Spirit, the sacredness of which privilege no one had a right to infringe upon by offering a helping hand. Each one in his turn lay in this condition until "the Great Spirit gave him strength to rise upon his feet," when he was seen, covered with marks of trickling blood, staggering through the crowd and entering his wigwam, where his wounds were probably dressed, and with food and sleep his strength was restored.

The chiefs and other dignitaries of the tribe were all spectators here also, deciding who amongst the young men were the strongest, and could run the longest in the *last race* without fainting, and whom to appoint and promote accordingly.

As soon as the six or eight thus treated were off from the ground, as many more were led out of the Medicine Lodge and passed through the same ordeal, or took some other more painful mode, at their own option, to rid themselves of the splints and weights attached to their limbs, until the whole number of candidates were disposed of; and on the occasion I am describing, to the whole of which I was a spectator, I should think that about fifty suffered in succession, and in the same manner.

The number of wounds inflicted required to be the same on each, and the number of weights attached to them the same, but in both stages of the torture the candidates had their choice of being, in the *first*, suspended by the breasts or by the shoulders; and in the "*last race*" of being dragged as has been described, or to wander about the prairies from day to day, and still without food, until suppuration of the wounds took place, and, by the decay of the flesh, the dragging weights were left behind.

It was natural for me to inquire, as I did, whether any of these young men ever died in the extreme part of this ceremony, and they could tell me of but one instance within their recollection, in which case the young man was left for three days upon the ground (unapproached by his relatives or by physicians) before they were quite certain that the Great Spirit did not intend to help him away. They all seemed to speak of this, however, as an enviable fate rather than as a misfortune; for "the Great Spirit had so willed it for some especial purpose, and no doubt for the young man's benefit."

After the Medicine Lodge had thus been cleared of its tortured inmates, the master or conductor of ceremonies returned to it alone, and, gathering up the edged tools which I have said were deposited there, and to be sacrificed to the water on the last day of the ceremony, he proceeded to the bank of the river, accompanied by all the tribe, in whose presence, and with much form and ceremony, he sacrificed them by throwing them into deep water from the rocks, from which they could never be recovered: and then announced that the Great Spirit must be thanked by all—and that the *O-kee-pa* (religious ceremony of the Mandans) was finished.

The *sequel* to this strange affair, and which has been briefly alluded to, and is yet to be described, was the

"FEAST OF THE BUFFALOES."

At the defeat of *O-ke-hée-de* (the Evil Spirit) it will be remembered that the young woman who returned from the prairie bearing the singular prize, and who ascended the front of the Medicine Lodge and put an end to the *bull dance*, claimed the privilege of a beautiful dress, in which she was to lead the dance in the *feast of the buffaloes* on that night.

The *O-kee-pa* having been ended, and night having approached, several old men with rattles in their hands, which they were violently

shaking, perambulated the village in various directions in the character of *criers*, announcing that "the whole government of the Mandans was then in the hands of one woman—she who had disarmed the Evil Spirit, and to whom they were to look during the coming year for buffaloes to supply them with food, and keep them alive; that all must repair to their wigwams and not show themselves outside; that the chiefs on that night were old women; that they had nothing to say; that no one was allowed to be out of their wigwams excepting the favoured ones whom *Ruh-ta-co-puk-chee* (the governing woman) had invited to be at the *feast of the buffaloes* around the 'Big Canoe,' and which was about to commence."

This select party, which assembled and was seated on the ground in a circle, and facing the "Big Canoe," consisted (*first*) of the eight men who had danced the bull dance, with the paint washed off. To them strictly the feast was given, and therefore was the *feast of the buffaloes* (and not to be confounded with the *buffalo feast*, another annual ceremony, given in the fall of the year, somewhat of a similar character, but held for a different purpose).

Besides the eight buffaloes were the old *medicine man*, conductor of the ceremonies, the four old men who had beaten on the tortoise-drums, and the one who had shaken the rattles, as musicians, and several of the aged chiefs of the tribe; and, added to these, this new-made, but temporary governess of the tribe, had invited some eight or ten of the young married women of the village, like herself, to pay the extraordinary *respect* that was due, by the custom of their country, to the makers of buffaloes and to reverenced old age on this extraordinary occasion.

The commencement of the ceremonies which fell under this woman's peculiar management was the *feast of the buffaloes* (as all the men invited to it were called *buffaloes*), which was handed around in wooden bowls by herself and attendants. After this was done, which lasted but a few minutes (appearing but a minor part of the affair),

she charged a large pipe, which was passed around amongst the men, during which a lascivious dance was performed by herself and female companions.

This dance finished, she advanced to her first selected paramour, and, giving some signals which seemed to be understood, passed her hand gently under his arm, and, raising him up, led him through the village and into the prairie, where, as all the villagers and their dogs were shut up in their wigwams, they were free from observation or molestation.*

From this excursion they returned separately, and the man took his seat again if he chose to be a candidate for further civilities, or returned to his wigwam. The other women were singing and going through the whirl of the dance in the meantime, and each one inviting her chosen paramour, when she was disposed, in the same manner.

Those of the women who returned from these excursions joined again in the continuous dance, and extended as many and as varied invitations in this way as they desired; and some of them, I learned, as well as of the men, had taken several of such promenades in the course of the evening, which may be accounted for by the relieving fact that though it would have been a most prejudicial want of gallantry on the part of the man to have refused to go, yet the trifling present of a string of beads or an awl saved him from any odium which might otherwise have been cast upon him.

This extraordinary scene gradually closed by the men returning from the prairie to their homes, the last of them on the ground pacifying any unsatisfied feelings there might have been, by bestow-

* In the foregoing account of the religious ceremonies, nothing has been described but what I saw enacted. Here, from necessity, I am trusting to the accounts of Mr. Kipp, of the Fur Company, and Mr. Tilton, whose letter will be seen in the Appendix, both of whom told me they had repeatedly been invited guests and sharers of these extraordinary hospitalities.

ing liberal presents amongst those women, and agreeing to smoke the pipe of friendship with their husbands the next day, which they were bound to offer, and the others, by the custom of the country, were bound to accept.

It may be met as matter of surprise, that a *religious ceremony* should be followed by a scene like the one just described, but before we entirely condemn these ignorant and superstitious people, let us inquire whether it is not, more or less, an inherent propensity in human nature (and even practised in some enlightened and Christian communities) to end extreme sorrow, extreme penitence, and even mourning for kindred the most loved, in *debauch?*

What has thus far been related has been simple and easy, as it has been but the description of what I *saw* and what I *heard;* but what may be *expected* of me—rational and conclusive deductions from the above premises—I approach with timidity; rather wishing to submit the materials for the conclusions of others abler than myself to explain them, and for whose assistance I will still continue a few suggestions.

That the Mandans should have had a tradition of *a "Deluge"* is by no means singular, when in every tribe I have visited I have found that they regard some high mountain in their vicinity, on which, they say, their ancestor or ancestors were saved, and also relate other vague stories of the destruction of everything else living on the earth, by the waters.

But that these people should hold an annual celebration of that event, and that the season of the year for that celebration was decided by such circumstances as the "willow-bough" and its "full-grown leaves," and the "*medicine bird*," and the Medicine Lodge opened by such a man as "*Nu-mohk-múck-a-nah*," who represented a white man, and some other circumstances, is surely a very remarkable thing, and, as I think, deserves some further attention.

This "*Nu-mohk-múck-a-nah*" (first or only man) was undoubtedly

some very aged *medicine man* of the tribe, who had gone out upon the prairies on the previous evening, and having dressed and painted himself for the occasion, came into the village at sunrise in the morning, endeavouring to keep up the semblance of reality; for the traditions of the Mandans say, that "at an ancient period such a man did actually come from the West, that his skin was white, that he was very old, that he appeared in all respects as has been represented; and, as has also been stated, that he related the manner of the destruction of every human being on the earth's surface by the waters, excepting himself, who was saved in his "*Big Canoe*" by landing on a high mountain in the West; that the Mandans and all other nations were his descendants, and were bound to make annual sacrifices of edged tools to the water, for with such things his "Big Canoe" was built; that he instructed the Mandans how to make their Medicine Lodge, and taught them also the forms of these annual ceremonies, and told them also that as long as they made these annual sacrifices and performed these rites to the full letter, they would be the favoured people of the Great Spirit, and would always have enough to eat and drink, and that so soon as they departed in the least degree from these forms their race would begin to decrease and finally die out.

These superstitious people have, no doubt, been living from time immemorial under the dread of such an injunction, and in the fear of departing from it; and as they were living in total ignorance of its origin, other than this vague tradition, the world will probably remain in equal ignorance of much of its meaning, as they needs must be of all Indian traditions, which soon run into fable, thereby losing much of their system by which they might more easily have been correctly construed.

It would seem from their tradition of the willow-bough and the dove, that these people must have had some proximity to some part of the civilized world, or that missionaries or others had been amongst

them teaching the Christian religion and the Mosaic account of the *Deluge*, which is in this and some other respects very different from the theories which all the other American tribes have distinctly established of that event.

There are other strong, and I think almost conclusive proofs, in support of this suggestion, which are to be drawn from the diversity of colour in their hair and complexions, as well as from their traditions just related of the "first or only man," whose body was white, and who came from the West, telling them of the destruction of the human race by the water; and in addition to the above I will offer another tradition, related to me by one of the chiefs of the tribe in the following way:—

"At a very ancient time *O-ke-hée-de* (the Evil Spirit) came from the West to the Mandan village in company with *Nu-mohk-múck-a-nah* (the first or only man), and they, being fatigued, sat down upon the ground near a woman who had but one eye and was hoeing corn. Her daughter, who was very beautiful, came up to her, and the Evil Spirit desired her to go and bring some water, but wished that before she started she would come to him and eat some buffalo meat.

"He then told her to take a piece out of his side, which she did, and ate it, and it proved to be buffalo's fat. She then went for the water, which she brought, and met them in the village where they had walked, and they both drank of it; nothing more was done. The friends of the girl soon after endeavoured to disgrace her by telling her that she was with child, which she did not deny. She declared at the same time her innocence, and boldly defied any man in the Mandan nation to come forward and accuse her. No one could accuse her, and she therefore became great '*medicine*,' and she soon after went to the little Mandan village, where the child was born.

"Great search was made for her before she was found, as it was

expected that the child also would be great '*medicine*,' and in some way be of great importance to the tribe. They were induced to this belief from the strange manner of its conception and birth, and were soon confirmed in their belief from the wonderful things which it did at an early age.

"Amongst the strange things which it did on an occasion when the Mandans were in danger of starving, this child gave them four buffalo bulls, which filled the bellies of the whole nation, leaving as much meat as there was before they began to eat, and saying also that these four bulls would supply them for ever.

"*Nu-mohk-múck-a-nah* (the first or only man) was bent on the destruction of this child, and after making many fruitless searches for it, found it hidden in a dark place, and put it to death by throwing it into the river.

"When *O-ke-hée-de* (the Evil Spirit) heard of the death of this child, he sought for *Nu-mohk-múck-a-nah* with intent to kill him. He traced him a long distance, and at length overtook him at the Heart River, seventy miles below the Mandan village, with the '*big medicine pipe*' in his hands, the charm or mystery of which protected him from all his enemies. They soon agreed however to become good friends, and after smoking the *medicine pipe* they returned together to the Mandan village.

"The Evil Spirit was now satisfied, and *Nu-mohk-múck-a-nah* told the Mandans never to go beyond the mouth of Heart River to live, for it was the centre of the world, and to live beyond it would be destruction to them, and he named it *Nat-com-pa-sá-ha* (the heart or centre of the world)."

Such was one of the very vague and imperfect traditions of those curious people, and I leave it to the world to judge of its similitude to the Scripture account of the Christian advent.

Omitting in this place their numerous other traditions and superstitions, I will barely refer to a few singular *deductions* I have made

from the customs which have been described, and leave them for the consideration of gentlemen abler than myself to decide upon their importance.

The Mandans believed that the earth rests on the backs of *four* tortoises. They say that "each tortoise rained ten days, making forty days in all, and the waters covered the earth."

Whenever a Mandan doctor (*medicine man*) lighted his pipe, he invariably presented the stem of it to the north, the south, the east, and the west, the *four* cardinal points, and then upwards to the Great Spirit, before smoking it himself.

Their annual religious ceremony lasted *four* days; *four* men were called for by *Nu-mohk-muck-a-nah*, as has been stated, to cleanse and prepare the Medicine Lodge, "one from the north, one from the south, one from the east, and one from the west." *Four* was the number of tortoise-drums on the floor of the Medicine Lodge; there were also *four* buffalo and *four* human skulls arranged on the floor of the Medicine Lodge. There were *four* couples of dancers in the bull-dance, and *four* intervening dancers in the same dance, as has been described; the bull-dance was repeated *four* times on the first day, eight times on the second day, twelve times on the third day, and sixteen times on the fourth day, adding *four* dances on each of the four days, which added together make forty, the exact number of days that it rained upon the earth to produce the Deluge.

There were *four* sacrifices of various-coloured cloths raised on poles over the Medicine Lodge. The visits of *O-ke-hée-de* were paid to *four* of the buffaloes in the bull-dance; and in every instance of the young men who underwent the tortures explained, there were *four* splints run through the flesh on the legs, *four* on the arms, *four* on the body, and *four* buffalo-skulls attached to each one's wounds. And, as has been related in the tradition above given, *four* was the number of bulls given by the medicine child to feed the Mandans when they were starving.

Such were a portion, but not all, of the *peculiar* modes of the hospitable and friendly Mandans, who have ceased to exist, and left almost the only tangible evidence of their having existed, in my collection, which contains their portraits, their manufactures, and all their modes, and which I hope to preserve with success for the information of ages to come.

The melancholy fate of these people was caused by the introduction of the smallpox, by that nefarious system of traffic which rapidly increases the wealth of civilized individual adventurers and monopolies who introduce it, but everywhere carries dissipation, poverty, disease and death to the poor Indians.

In the fourth summer after I left the Mandans, the Missouri Fur Company's steamer from St. Louis, freighted with whiskey and merchandise, and with two of the partners of that concern on board, moored at the shore of the river in front of the Mandan village, where a traffic was carried on with those unsuspecting people whilst there were two of the vessel's hands on board sick with the smallpox!

By this act of imprudence, and in fact of inhuman cruelty, the disease was communicated to those unfortunate people; and such were its awful results, with the self-destruction which ensued, that in the short space of three months there were but thirty-two of these people left in existence, with the exception of a few who had intermarried and were living with the *Minatarrees*, a friendly and neighbouring tribe.

A few months after the disease had subsided, the *Riccarrees*, a hostile tribe, living two hundred miles below, on the bank of the same river, moved up and took possession of the Mandan village, it being a better built town than their own, and by the side of the Fur Company's factory, making slaves of the remaining Mandans, who were unable to resist.

Whilst living in this condition in the Mandan village, and but a

few months after they had taken possession, the Riccarrees were attacked by a war-party of Sioux, and in the midst of a desperate battle around the pickets, in which the remaining Mandans were taking a part, they suddenly, at a signal, passed through the pickets and threw themselves under the horses' feet of the Sioux, and were slain at their own seeking, rather than to live, as they said, "dogs of the Riccarrees."

My authorities for these painful facts are letters which I hold from Mr. K. M'Kenzie and Mr. J. Potts, written *in the Mandan village* after the disease had subsided. Both of these gentlemen were from Edinburgh, in Scotland, the former a partner in the Missouri Fur Company, and the latter a clerk in the same Company. (See these letters in Nos. 3 and 4 in the Appendix.

REMARKS.

In contemplating so many striking peculiarities in an extinguished tribe, the mind reluctantly leaves so interesting a subject without raising the question as to the origin of the people; and in this feeling, though not within the original intention of this work, it is difficult for me to leave the subject without advancing my belief, and furnishing some part of my reasons for it, that many of the modes of these people were purely Welsh, and that the personal appearance and customs of the Mandans had been affected by the proximity or admixture of some wandering colony of Welsh who had been thrown at an early period somewhere upon the American coast.

I am here, perhaps, advancing a startling problem, which demands at my hands some striking proofs, which I will in a few words endeavour to produce.

The annual religious ceremony which has been described certainly cannot be attributed to the Welsh, nor am I able to compare it to

any civilized custom, and I leave it for the world to decide whether it bears a resemblance to any known customs of savage or civilized races in other parts of the world.

It is very strange, as I have before said, that those people should have been instructed how to hold those ceremonies by a white man, and that they should be commenced and the Medicine Lodge opened by a white man, and that the "big canoe" should have been built with edged tools, if they be solely of native origin; and it would be equally or more strange if the Jesuit missionaries, who, it would seem, were the only civilized teachers we can well suppose to have reached these people, had instructed them in modes like those, though it is easy to believe that their teaching might have been the cause of the last singular tradition mentioned, certainly bearing a visible but very imperfect parallel to the Christian Advent.

Many of the customs and traditions of the western tribes convince us that those indefatigable preachers penetrated much further into the American wildernesses than history has followed them, and in this singular tribe we find the extraordinary custom which has been described, and others to which I shall take a few moments to allude, neither of which can with any propriety be attributed to the teaching of those venerable missionaries.

On my arrival in their village, my first glance amongst the Mandans forced me, from their peculiar features and complexions, the colour of their eyes and hair, the singular mode of building and furnishing their wigwams, etc., to believe that they were an amalgam of some foreign with an American aboriginal stock, and every day that I dwelt amongst them furnished me additional convictions of this fact, and of course called on my part for greater endeavours to account for these singularities. And the information I gathered amongst them confirmed me in the opinion I have advanced,—that many of their peculiarities and customs were Welsh, and therefore that there existed amongst them the remains of some Welsh colony, however difficult it might be to account for their having got there.

The following, I believe, will be received as interesting and important facts, and if they fail to establish my theory, they may nevertheless revive the inquiry as to the direction and fate of the expedition which "sailed in ten ships, under the direction of Prince Madoc, from North Wales, in the early part of the fourteenth century," and which it has been pretty clearly shown, I believe, landed somewhere on the coast of Florida or about the mouth of the Mississippi, and, according to the history and poetry of their own country, "settled somewhere in the interior of America, where they are yet remaining, intermixed with some of the Indian tribes."

I have not met in any other tribe anything in personal appearance or customs that would seem to account for the direction of this colony, but in several of the customs of this tribe which I have already described, as well as in others which I shall name, there appeared to exist striking proofs of the arrival and settlement of that colony in the western regions of America.

The Mandan mode of constructing their wigwams, already described, was almost precisely that of the rude mode of building their cabins amongst the peasantry of the mountains of Wales, and, as I am told, in some districts they are building them at the present day.

The *pottery* made by the Mandans, to the time of their destruction, was strikingly similar to that manufactured in parts of Wales at the present time, and exactly similar to that found in the tumuli on the banks of the Ohio and Muskingum rivers; strongly suggesting the probable fact that those people formerly inhabited the banks of those rivers, and by a great number of moves up the Missouri had arrived at the place where I found them.

A peculiar and very beautiful sort of *blue beads* were also manufactured by the Mandans, and of which they were certainly the only known manufacturers in America; and since publishing my large work on the North American Indians, in which I gave some account of this curious manufacture, I have received several letters from

Welsh gentlemen of science, one of whom enclosed me drawings from, and another the *beads themselves*, found in *tumuli*, and also in the present progress of manufacture in Wales, precisely the same in character, in shape, and in colour and composition, as those in my collection brought from the Mandans.

The manufacture of these blue beads by the Mandans was guarded as a profound secret until the time of their destruction, although the Fur Company had made them repeated and liberal offers if they would divulge it, as the Mandan beads commanded a much higher price amongst the Mandans and the neighbouring tribes to whom they bartered them, than the beads introduced by the fur traders.

The *canoes* or boats of the Mandans, differing from those of all other tribes in America, were precisely the *Welsh coracle*, made of a bull's hide stretched over a frame of willow rods, bent and interlocked, and *pulled* over the water by the paddle, in the same manner as the coracle is pulled, by reaching forward with the paddle instead of passing it by the side of the boat, which is nearly round, and the paddler seated or kneeling in its front.

From the translation of their name, already mentioned, *Nu-mah-ká-kee* (pheasants), an important inference may be drawn in support of the probability of their having formerly lived much farther to the south, as that bird does not exist on the prairies of the Upper Missouri, and is not to be met with short of the heavy forests of Ohio and Indiana, one thousand eight hundred miles south of the last residence of the Mandans.

And in their familiar name of *Mandan*, which is not an Indian word, there are equally singular and important features. In the first place, that they knew nothing of the name or how they got it; and next, that the word *Mandan* in the Welsh language (it being purely a Welsh word) means *red dye*, of which further mention will be made.

In the brief vocabulary of Mandan words which I published in the Appendix to my large work on the North American Indians, it has been discovered by several Welsh scholars that there exist the following most striking resemblances, which it would be difficult to account for in any other way than that which I am now attempting.

English.	Mandan.	Welsh.
I	mo	mo
you	no	chwo
he	o	a
she	ea	ea
it	ount	hwynt
we	noo	no
they	eonah	hwna (*masculine*) hona (*feminine*)
no	negosh	nagosh
head	pan	pen
The Great Spirit	*Maho-Peneta*	*Mawr-Penaethir*

From the above evidences, and others which might be produced, I fully believe, what perhaps will for ever remain impossible (positively) to prove, that the ten ships commanded by the brother of Prince Madoc, or some portion of them, entered the mouth of the Mississippi, and advanced up that noble river to the mouth of the Ohio, which could easily have been navigated by vessels of that date, and, advancing up that river, which they would naturally have chosen, as the broadest and most gentle stream, as far as their vessels could go, the adventurers planted themselves as agriculturists on its rich and fertile banks, where they lived and flourished and increased in numbers, until they were attacked, and at last besieged, by the numerous hordes of savages who were jealous of their growing condition; and as a protection against the Indian assaults built those civilized fortifications, the remains of which are so numerous on the banks of the Ohio and Muskingum Rivers.

In these defences, I believe, they were at length all destroyed

by the overpowering numbers of the savage hordes, excepting those few families who had intermarried with the Indians, and whose offsprings, being *half-castes*, were in such a manner allied to them that their lives were spared.

Those, as is generally the case with the *half-castes*, I believe had formed a separate village in the vicinity of the whites, supporting themselves by their embroidery with porcupine quills, to which they gave the beautiful dyes for which the Mandans have been peculiarly famous, and were called by their Welsh neighbours, and in the Welsh language, the *Mandans* (or red dyers).

These *half-castes*, having formed themselves into a separate community, probably took up their residence, after the destruction of the whites, on the banks of the Missouri, on which, for the want of a permanent location and right to the soil, being on the lands and the hunting-grounds of their more powerful enemies, they were obliged repeatedly to move, as the numerous marks of their ancient residences show; and continuing their moves up the river, in time migrated to the place where I saw them, and where they terminated their existence.

Thus much of and for the character and modes of a peculiar people, who were proverbially intelligent, hospitable, and kind; who, with their language, have suddenly ceased to exist; whose character, history, modes, and personal appearance, almost solely existing in my collections, I have considered essentially interesting and important to *Ethnology*, and some of the most remarkable of which (as I have said) I am here, from a sense of *duty*, emphatically recording for the information of those who are to study *Man* and his modes after I shall be gone.

GEO. CATLIN.

EST. PERPET.

APPENDIX.

No. I.—CERTIFICATE.

"We hereby certify that we witnessed, in company with Mr. Catlin, in the Mandan village, the ceremony represented in the four paintings to which this certificate refers, and that he has therein represented those scenes as we saw them transacted, without any addition or exaggeration.

"J. Kipp, *Agent of the American Fur Company.*
"J. Crawford, *Clerk.*
"Abraham Bogard.

"*Mandan Village*, 28*th July*, 1832."

Witnessing scenes so extraordinary as those described in the foregoing pages, and so remote from civilization, I deemed it prudent to obtain the above certificates, which were given in the Mandan village, and inseparably attached to the backs of my four original oil-paintings of those four days' ceremonies, made in the Mandan village, and submitted to the examination and approval of the chiefs and the whole tribe, and now in my possession, entirely unchanged.

No. II.

"Fort Gibson, Arkansaw, June 3rd, 1836.

"To George Catlin, Esq.

"Dear Sir,

I have seen your account of the religious ceremonies of the Mandans, and no man will give you so much credit for it as myself. I conducted the

American Fur Company's business with the Mandans for eight years before Mr. Kipp, and was the first white man who ever learned to speak the Mandan language.

"Mr. Kipp, Mr. Crawford, and Bogard, who have given you their certificates, are old acquaintances of mine, and I am glad you had them with you. All those parts of the ceremonies which you describe as taking place outside of the Medicine Lodge,—the *bull dance*, the *dragging scene*, etc., I witnessed annually for eight years just as you have represented them, and I was every year an invited guest to the "*feast of the buffaloes*," but I was always unable to get admission into the Medicine Lodge to see that part of the tortures that took place inside.

"TILTON,
"*Sutler to the First Regiment of Mounted Dragoons.*"

No. III.—DESTRUCTION OF THE MANDANS.

As to the unlucky fate of the Mandans, the following letter, enclosed to me by my esteemed friend Thomas Potts, Esq., of Edinburgh, and now in my possession, written by his brother, who was then a clerk in the Fur Company's employment, is worthy of being read and distinctly understood, and will be received as undeniable authority, as he could have no *motive* for misrepresentation.

"Mandan Village, Upper Missouri, October 1, 1837.

"To THOMAS POTTS, Esq., Edinburgh, Scotland.

"Dear Brother,

"..... The friendly and hospitable tribe of Mandans are nearly all destroyed by the smallpox. There are but thirty-two families remaining, and those chiefly women and children; these the Riccarrees, who have moved up and taken possession, have turned out of the village, after plundering them of everything they had on earth, and they will all be destroyed by their enemies the Sioux, as they have no weapons to defend themselves with.

"About sixty young warriors, who had recovered from the smallpox, on seeing how they were disfigured, put an end to their existence by stabbing or drowning themselves. Nothing now but the name of these people remains.

"The disease was brought up by the Fur Company's steamboat in the spring: two men on board were sick with the disease when the boat arrived at the Mandan village, and the Mandans who went on board caught the infection, hence the almost total destruction of the tribe.

"The Indians are much exasperated against the whites; indeed, if they were not very forbearing, they would destroy every white man in the country, as they have been the cause of all the distress and disease, which have gone also to all the neighbouring tribes, and may perhaps depopulate the whole country. . . .

"Your affectionate Brother,

"ANDREW POTTS."

No. IV.—DESTRUCTION OF THE MANDANS.

In the summer following the calamity of the Mandans, Mr. Kennith M'Kenzie, at that time chief factor of the Fur Company, and in charge of Fort Union, at the mouth of the Yellow Stone River, came down to St. Louis and New York, where I had an interview with him; and as he was taking leave, to return to the Yellow Stone, passing through the Mandan village, I placed in his hands the sum of fifty dollars, and begged him to procure and send to me any relics of the Mandans that he might think interesting to be preserved in my Indian Collection.

In the course of the ensuing summer I received the following letter, enclosed in a box containing some articles procured for me, as described within it. Mr. M'Kenzie, who was from the city of Edinburgh, had treated me with honour and much kindness when I was visiting the Mandans and other tribes on the Upper Missouri a few years previous, and I never believed that he had any motive for misrepresentation in the following letter:—

"Fort Mandan, Mandan Village, Upper Missouri,
"June, 1839.

"TO GEORGE CATLIN, Esq., City of New York.

"Dear Sir,

". . . . . I have sent this day by your boat a box containing a few articles of Mandan manufacture, such as I thought would be of interest to

you for your Collection; but as the Riccarrees have taken possession of the Mandan village they have appropriated nearly everything, and it is impossible therefore to obtain what I otherwise would have procured for you. I have sent you, however, one thing which you will peculiarly value,—the famous *war-knife* of your old friend *Mah-to-toh-pa*, the war chief. This knife and its history you are familiar with.

"I have also sent a very beautiful woman's robe, with a figure of the sun painted on it, a grizzly bear's-claw necklace, and several other articles, the best I could obtain. . . . . On reaching here I learn that amongst the Assiniboins and Crees about 7000, and amongst the Blackfeet 15,000, have fallen victims to the disease, which spread to those tribes.

"Of the Mandans between forty and fifty were all that were left when the disease subsided. The Riccarrees soon after moved up and took possession of their village, making slaves of the remaining Mandans, and are living in it at the present time.

"A few months after the Riccarrees took possession they were attacked by a war-party of Sioux, and in the middle of the battle the Mandans, men, women, and children, whilst fighting for the Riccarrees, at a concerted signal ran through the pickets and threw themselves under the horses' feet of the Sioux, and, still fighting, begged the Sioux to kill them 'that they might not live to be the dogs of the Riccarrees.' The last of the tribe were here slain.

"Yours truly,

"KENNITH M'KENZIE."

I might not have encumbered my work with the above certificates and extracts of letters in my possession, were it not that the very Company who have been the cause of the destruction of these people, to punish me for having condemned their system of rum and whisky selling, and to veil their iniquities, have endeavoured to throw discredit upon my descriptions of the religious ceremonies of the Mandans, and to induce the world to believe, contrary to my representations, that a large proportion of the Mandans still exist, and are rapidly increasing under the *nourishing auspices of the Fur Company*.

There is no doubt whatever that a few straggling Mandans who fled to the Minatarrees, or in other directions, are still existing, nor any doubt but that the Riccarrees, since the destruction of the Mandans, have occupied to this day the Mandan village, under the range of the guns of the Fur Company's fort, and are exhibited to the passers-by and represented to the reading world

as *surviving Mandans*. The policy of this is easily understood, and the reader who has paid attention to the foregoing certificates and extracts of letters, added to my own testimony as an eye-witness, will have no difficulty in drawing correct conclusions as to the peculiar customs and the cruel fate of the Mandan Indians.

Every reader of this work will have a knowledge of, and a respect for the names of Cass and Webster, who were familiar with my works and also with Indian history and Indian character.

Letter from GENERAL CASS, *American Ambassador to France, and since, Secretary of State of the United States of America.*

"Légation des États-Unis à Paris.

"Dear Sir,

"No man can appreciate better than myself the admirable fidelity of your Indian Collection and Indian book, which I have lately examined. They are equally spirited and accurate; they are true to nature. Things that *are*, are not sacrificed, as they too often are by the painter, to things as (in his judgment) they should be.

"During eighteen years of my life I was superintendant of Indian affairs in the North-west Territory of the United States, and during more than five I was Secretary of War, to which department belongs the general control of Indian concerns. I know the Indians thoroughly. I have spent many a month in their camps, council-houses, villages, and hunting-grounds; I have fought *with* them and *against* them; and I have negotiated seventeen treaties of peace or of cession with them. I mention these circumstances to show you that I have a good right to speak confidently upon the subject of your drawings. Among them I recognize many of my old acquaintances, and everywhere I am struck with the vivid representations of them and their customs, of their peculiar features, and of their costumes. Unfortunately, they are receding before the advancing tide of our population, and are probably destined at no distant day wholly to disappear; but your Collection will preserve them, as far as human art can do, and will form the most perfect monument of an extinguished race that the world has ever seen."

"*To* GEORGE CATLIN. "LEWIS CASS."

Extract from the Speech of the Hon. Daniel Webster, *on a Motion in the Senate of the United States, for the purchase of Catlin's Indian Collection in* 1849.

"Mr. President,—The question is, whether it does not become us, as a useful thing, to possess in the United States this collection of paintings, etc., made amongst the Indian tribes?—whether it is not a case for the exercise of *large liberality*, I will not say *bounty*, but *policy?* These tribes, Sir, that have preceded us, to whose lands we have succeeded, and who have no written memorials of their laws, their habits, and their manners, are all passing away to the land of forgetfulness. Their likeness, manners, and customs, are portrayed with more accuracy and truth in this Collection by Catlin than in all the other drawings and representations on the face of the earth. Somebody in this country ought to possess this Collection,—that is my opinion; and I do not know who there is, or where there is to be found, any society or individual, who or which can with so much propriety possess himself or itself of it as the Government of the United States. For my part, then, I do think that the preservation of Catlin's Indian Collection in this country is an *important public act*. I think it properly belongs to those accumulations of historical matters respecting our predecessors on this continent which it is very proper for the Government of the United States to maintain. As I have said, this race is going into forgetfulness; they track the continuation of mankind in the present age, and call recollection back to them. And here they are better exhibited, in my judgment, better set forth and presented to the mind, and the taste and the curiosity of mankind, than in all other collections in the world. I go for this as an *American* subject, as a thing belonging to us, to our history, to the history of a race whose lands we till, and over whose obscure graves and bones we tread every day. I look upon it as a thing more appropriate for us than the ascertaining of the South Pole, or anything that can be discovered in the Dead Sea or the river Jordan. These are the grounds, Sir, upon which I propose to proceed, and I shall vote for the appropriation with great pleasure."

THE END.

J. E. TAYLOR AND CO., PRINTERS, LITTLE QUEEN STREET, HOLBORN.