



^The Adventures of Zenas Leonard - 1831-1836

Excerpts of his encounters with York, member of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Zenas is John Juras's Mom's Dad's Mom's Uncle. Great, great, great Uncle.

to war with the Snake Indians - whose country we were now in - and they also said they belonged to the Crow nation on the East side of the mountains. In all the intercourse had with them, while they were with us, not the least symptom of deception was discovered, and they parted with us manifesting as much regret as if we had been old acquaintances. But we were doomed to experience the faith of the Crow nation - for, on the same night of their departure, they returned and stole five of our best hunting horses. This was a serious loss to us, and a valuable prize for them - for an Indian belonging to these hunting and warring tribes is poor indeed if he is not the owner of a horse, as it is upon this animal they much depend for success in

chasing the buffaloe, and upon him greatly depends the fate of the battle.

Having a man in our company who had once been a captive in their village, and who could talk and understand a little of their language, we resolved at all hazards to give chase and retake our horses. We steered across the mountains towards the Southern head waters of the Missouri river. The first stream we came to on the east side is called Bighorn river - down which stream we travelled for some days, until we came to their village situated at the mouth of Stinking river. **In this village we found a negro man, who informed us that he first came to this country with Lewis & Clark^^ - with whom he also returned to the State of Missouri, and in a few years returned again with a Mr. Mackinney, a trader on the Missouri river, and has remained here ever since - which is about ten or twelve years. He has acquired a correct knowledge of their manner of living, and speaks their language fluently. He has rose to be quite a considerable character, or chief, in their village; at least he assumes all the dignities of a chief, for he has four wives with whom he lives alternately. This is the custom of many of the chiefs.**

After informing the negro of our stolen horses, he told us that they had them, and that the reason they were taken from us was because we were found in their enemies' country, and that they supposed we were going to trade them guns, &c. By giving the chiefs some trifling presents our horses were produced in as good trim as when they left us. (I shall say nothing more of these Indians at present, as I shall have occasion to speak of them when I again visit their village.)

JPJ --- The following year on return visit, Zenas encounters York again.

I now found myself in a situation that had charms which I had many times longed for. Ever since I engaged in the trapping business, I had occasional intercourse with the Indians, but never resided with them until now; which would afford me every opportunity to

minutely observe their internal mode of living. The Crows are a powerful nation, and inhabit a rich and extensive district of country. They raise no vegetation, but entirely depend on the chase for a living. This is the situation of nearly every tribe, and when game gets scarce in one part of the country claimed by a certain tribe, they remove to another part, until after a while their game becomes scarce, when they are induced to encroach upon the territory of a neighboring tribe, which will at once create a fearful strife, and not unfrequently ends in the total destruction of some powerful nation.

It will be recollected that I was amongst these Indians once before, when some of our horses were stolen and we followed them into the Crow village, — where we found our horses and also a negro man, in the winter of 1832-33. This man we found to be of as great advantage to us now as on former occasions, as he has become thoroughly acquainted with their language, method of transacting their public and private business, and considered of great value by the Indians. He enjoys perfect peace and satisfaction, and has every thing he desires at his own command.

The Crow nation contains from 7 to 8,000 souls, and are divided into two divisions of an equal number in each — there being too great a number to travel together, as they could not get game in many places to supply such a force. Each division is headed by a separate chief, whose duty it is to pilot them from one hunting ground to another, and to lead his followers to battle in time of war one of whom they call Grizzly Bear and the other. Long Haired Chief, which name he derives from the extreme length of his hair, which is no less than nine feet eleven inches long. This is the principal chief, or Sachem, of the nation, and is quite a worthy and venerable looking old man of 75 or 80 years of age. He uses every possible precaution to preserve his hair, which is perfectly white, and has never had it cut since his infancy. He worships it as the director or guide of his fate through life — never rising or laying down

228

Sbbentures; of Henas? ILeonarb

without humbly and devoutly adoring this talisman, and which they term Bah-park (medicine.)

It is customary for every tribe of Indians in the regions of the Rocky mountains to have some instrument or article to pay homage to and invoke, but no nation, I believe, are so devoutly attached to their talismans as the Crow nation — it is their life — their very existence. Almost every individual of the Crow tribe has something of this kind, and which generally consists of a seed, a stone, a piece of wood, a bear or eagle's claw,

or any thing which their fancy may lead them to believe has a successful virtue, and which has been purchased of some noted warrior who has been successful in his undertakings whilst in the possession of such an article. This magical thing, whatever it may be, is carefully enveloped in a piece of skin, and then tied round their neck or body. If an old experienced warrior gives one or two young men an article of this kind on going to war, and they happen to be successful in taking scalps or stealing horses, the whole affair is attributed to the virtue of his talisman, and he can then sell it for almost any price he demands, and if it be a precious stone, or seed, or piece of wood, all similar articles are immediately enhanced in value, and the greater

229

abbenturesi of Henas; ILeonarb

the price they pay for such an article, the greater service it will be to them in the hour of need. — Some of them will even give four or five good horses for the most trifling and simple article of this kind.

Their principal wealth consists of horses, porcupine quills, and fine dressed skins, for clothing, &c. but nothing is of so much value as their idol; without which an Indian is a poor miserable drone to society, unworthy the esteem and companionship of brutes. Long-haired chief worships nothing but his hair, which is regularly combed and carefully folded up every morning into a roll about three feet long by the principal warriors of his tribe.

Their houses are composed of dressed buffalo hides and pine poles about 25 or 30 feet in length, and about three inches in diameter. These poles are stuck upon end in a circle, and all coming together at the top forms the shape of a hay-stack. — The buffalo robes are then cut in proper shape, sewed together and covered over their habitation. Their fire is placed in the centre of the lodge, and the poles being left apart at the top affords a very good draught for the smoke. Some of these houses are much larger than others, such as are intended for the transacting of public business. These are constructed

with much care, and are quite comfortable and convenient habitations – the buffaloe robes affording a sufficient shield from the effects of the cold. In their public buildings all their national affairs are discussed at stated periods by the warriors and principal men. Here they have their public smokes and public rejoicings.

This tribe is also governed by a species of police, such as having a committee of soldiers appointed for the purpose of keeping order and regulation in their village, appointing a day for a general hunt and keeping any who might be so disposed, from running ahead and chasing off the game, in order that each individual may have a fair chance to obtain an equal share of provision, with his neighbor. – These soldiers are also to observe that on such occasions their village is not left in a weak and unsafe condition by too many going to war, or to horse stealing, (which generally ends in war) at a time, and also to see that such a party is properly provided with a competent commander, and if not, it is their duty to supply the deficiency by appointing one to act in his place. If any person acts contrary to their laws, these soldiers have the liberty of punishing him for it, which is done by shaving his horses mane and tail, cut up his lodge, and whip him, if not

contrary to the decision of the principal chief, in whom is invested the power of vetoing every act of this executive committee if not agreeable to his wish.

When game becomes scarce, and they are about to move to another section, every moveable article is packed upon horseback, when they travel on until they arrive in a country abounding with game. – Their children from two to three years of age, and unable to ride, are tied upon the baggage, and those younger are fastened upon a board and conveyed in manner as heretofore described. They have a sort of dray formed by these poles, which is done by fastening one end to the pack saddle, and the other end dragging on the ground, on which they place their furniture.

There is more personal ambition and rivalry existing among this tribe than any other I became acquainted with – each one trying to excel the other in merit, whilst engaged in some dangerous adventure. – Their preda-

tory wars afford them every opportunity for this, as they are at liberty and sometimes compelled to engage in the battle's strife as soon as they are able to bend the bow or wield the tomahawk. — Their first promotion from the ranks of a private citizen, is secured by stealing a few horses and killing one or

two of their enemies, when they are eligible to the title of a Small Brave. By adding so many more acts of this kind, they receive the title of a Large or Great Brave; from thence to a Little Chief, and to rise to the station of a Great Chief, they must steal such a number of horses, kill and scalp such a number of the enemy, and take so many guns or bows and arrows.

Whenever one person exceeds the existing chief in these deeds, he is installed into the office of chief of the nation, which he retains until some other ambitious, daring brave exceeds him. They always take good care, however, not to excel their present chief, old Long-hair.

This school, as it was, creates a great deal of jealousy and envy among the people, but it seldom leads to any disturbance, as the executive soldiers, or police, are always ready to chastise and punish any such conduct.

Any person not rising to either of these stations by the time he is twenty years of age, has nothing to say or do in any public business whatever, but is compelled to perform different kinds of menial labour altogether degrading to a man, as it is putting him on an equality with the squaws — which is low enough indeed in the estimation of the Indian. Such a man becomes the slave of the

women, as they are at liberty to order him to do any thing they may think proper, such as carry wood, water, &c., or any drudgery that is required to be done.

After receiving the title of Little Chief they are at liberty to speak and take part in all public debates in relation to the affairs of the nation, and are exempt from all kinds of labour in going to war, which has to be done by the privates, who are generally young men, as on such occasions they have no women with them; and as they progressively rise, they are at liberty to order and command those who are beneath them. This is

the principal cause of their ambition, which far exceeds description. If one of the men who has fallen into the rank of a woman, and has become tired of that occupation, he will undergo any exertion, and encounter any danger, no matter how great, in order to distinguish himself and improve his forlorn and dishonorable condition.

Soon after we took up our quarters with these Indians, I occupied my time in ascertaining their manner of taking game, which, if it is more laborious, it is more successful than the Spanish mode of taking wild horses. When their families are in want of provision, or desirous of having a hunt, one of the principal men, who might be called the

trumpeter, will mount a horse and ride round through the encampment, village, or settlement, and publicly proclaim that on a stated day the whole tribe must be prepared for a general hunt, or surround. When the day arrives the village is alive betimes in the morning, and several hundred will sometimes mount their race-horses and repair to a certain designated section of country, which they are to surround. When the men have all had time to get to their allotted stations, they begin to close in, driving the game, principally buffalo, into a circle and when they are pretty well confined in the circle, they commence killing them - until which time, no man dare attempt to take any of the game. In this manner they have sometimes caught several hundred buffalo, besides many other animals, at a single surround.

When they are in a country suitable, these people will destroy the buffaloe by driving a herd of some hundreds to the edge of a convenient rocky precipice, when they are forced headlong down the craggy descent. This is more dangerous than the other method, as the buffaloe, unless the Indians are very numerous, will sometimes rush in a solid column through their ranks, knocking down the horses and tramping their riders under their feet.

They have another method of taking the buffalo, which is in this way: - If they know of a place at the base of some mountain that is surrounded on three sides with inaccessible precipices, and a level valley leading into it, they manage to drive the whole gang of buffaloe into this neck and force them up to its

termination, when they erect a strong fence across the valley, or outlet, and then butcher their prisoners at leisure.

In a place of this kind I was shewn by the chief Grizzly Bear, upwards of seven hundred buffalo skulls which he said had been caught at a single hunt, and which had taken place about four years previous.

About the 20th of November, after travelling for three or four days in pursuit of provision, we at length arrived in the vicinity of buffalo, where we pitched our tents and the Indians prepared for a general hunt. In the evening their horses were all dressed in the best style, and at an early hour the next morning four or five hundred Indians were mounted and ready for the chase.

This was a favourable opportunity for me to gratify my curiosity in seeing this kind of sport, and my companions and myself followed in the rear of the Indians. — Our hunters had not advanced far on this sporting expedition until they met with an object

which entirely put them out of the notion of showing us their agility in catching buffalo, for, at some distance across the plain, along the base of some rough craggy hills, was espied a considerable body of people, who appeared to be advancing towards us. Immediately a halt was called, for the purpose of observing the movements of the strangers, and consulting on what steps should be taken. It did not require the keen eye of a Crow Indian long to tell that their visitors were Indians and belonged to their implacable enemies, the Blackfeet tribe. This was enough. War was now their only desire, and our Indians advanced towards their enemies as fast as the speed of their horses would admit, who, being on foot, were soon overtaken and forced to ascend the rocks, which they did in safety. The Crows immediately surrounded the Blackfeet, confident of an easy victory but when they made the attack they found that their enemy was too well prepared for defence, and they immediately despatched an express to the village for a reinforcement of men, conscious that the Blackfeet would not attempt to leave their present position until such reinforcement would have time to arrive.

This was quite a different kind of sport

from that which I expected to witness when

I left the Indian camp, but one of no less interest, and far more important to me. Whilst the express was absent both parties employed their time in strengthening their positions – the Blackfeet had chosen a most fortunate spot to defend themselves, and by a little labour found themselves in a fort that might have done credit to an army of frontier regulars. It was situated on the brow of a hill, in a circle of rocks shaped similar to a horse-shoe, with a ledge of rocks from three to four feet high on either side, and about ten feet, on the part reaching to the brink of the hill, with a very creditable piece of breast work built in front, composed of logs, brush and stones. From their present situation they have a decided advantage over the Crows, and if well prepared for war, could hold out a considerable length of time, and deal destruction thick and fast on any force that might attempt to scale their fort – which looks more like the production of art than nature. Whilst the Blackfeet were assiduously engaged in defending their position, the Crows were no less idle in preparing for the attack, the destruction of which, they were determined should not be relaxed as long as there was a living Blackfoot Indian to be found in the neighborhood. Previous to the arrival of the reinforcement, which was

about ten o'clock, there had been three Crows and one Blackfoot killed, which was done at the first attack after the latter were driven into their fort.

When the express reached the Crow village every man, woman, and child able to point a gun or mount a horse repaired with all speed to the scene of action, who came up uttering the most wild and piercing yells I ever heard in my life. A great deal of contention at first took place among the principal men of the Crow tribe as to the manner of attacking their enemy, who appeared to look down upon them in defiance; notwithstanding the Crows kept up a continual yelling and firing of guns, all of which was without effect. Finally they appeared to harmonize and understand each other.

As matters now seemed to indicate the approach of a crisis, I repaired to an eminence about 200 yards from the fort among some cedar trees, where I had an excellent view

of all their movements. At first the Crows would approach the fort by two or three hundred in a breast, but on arriving near enough to do any execution, the fire from the fort would compel them to retreat. They then formed in a trail along the top of the ridge, and in rotation would ride at full speed past the breast-work, firing as they passed, and then throwing themselves on the side of the horse until nothing will be exposed to the enemy except one arm and one leg. This they found to be very destructive to their horses and also their men, there being now ten Crows and several horses laying dead on the field. Urged by their ill success thus far, and by the piteous lamentations of the wives, children and relatives of those who had fell, the Crow Chiefs decided on suspending the attack, and determined to hold a council of war for the purpose of deciding on what measures should be adopted, in order to destroy these brave Blackfeet.

When the principal chiefs met in council, all was still except the lamentations of the bereaved, who, perhaps, regret the severe penance which the customs of their people compelled them to endure for the memory of a deceased friend, and lament more on account of the prospect of trouble ahead, than for the loss which they have sustained. The chiefs held a hasty and stormy council. Some were in favour of abandoning the Blackfeet entirely, & others were determined on charging into their fort and end the battle in a total and bloody massacre. This was finally decided upon, but not until after several speeches were made for and against it, and the pipe of war smoked by each brave and chief.

As soon as this determination of the chiefs was made known the war-whoop again resounded with the most deafening roar through the plain - every voice that was able to make a noise was strained to its very-utmost to increase the sound, until the very-earth, trees and rocks seemed to be possessed of vocal powers. By their tremendous howling they had worked as great a change in the courage of their soldiery, as the most soul-enlivening martial music would the cowardly fears of a half-intoxicated militia company.

Now was the moment for action. Each man appeared willing to sacrifice his life if it would bring down an enemy; and in this spirit did they renew and repeat the attack

on the breast-work of their enemy, but as often did they retreat with severe loss. Again and again did they return to the charge, but all was of no use – all their efforts were of no avail – confusion began to spread through their ranks – many appeared overwhelmed with despair – and the whole Crow nation was about to retreat from the field, when the negro, who has been heretofore mentioned, and who had been in company with us, advanced a few steps towards the Crows and ascended a rock from which he addressed the Crow warriors in the most earnest and impressive manner. He told them that they had

been here making a great noise, as if they could kill the enemy by it – that they had talked long and loud about going into the fort, and that the white men would say the Indian had a crooked tongue, when talking about his war exploits. He told them that their hearts were small, and that they were cowardly – that they acted more like squaws than men, and were not fit to defend their hunting ground. He told them that the white men were ashamed of them and would refuse to trade with such a nation of cowards – that the Blackfeet would go home and tell their people that three thousand Crows could not take a handful of them, – that they would be laughed at, scorned, and treated with contempt by all nations wherever known – that no tribe would degrade themselves hereafter by waging war with them, and that the whole Crow nation, once so powerful, would forever after be treated as a nation of squaws. The old negro continued in this strain until they became greatly animated, & told them that if the red man was afraid to go amongst his enemy, he would show them that a black man was not, and he leaped from the rock on which he had been standing, and, looking neither to the right nor to the left, made for the fort as fast as he could run. The Indians guessing his purpose, and

inspired by his words and fearless example, followed close to his heels, and were in the fort dealing destruction to the right and left nearly as soon as the old man.

Here now was a scene of no common occurrence. A space of ground about the size of an acre, completely crowded with hostile Indians fighting for life, with guns, bows and arrows, knives and clubs, yelling and screaming until the hair seemed to lift the caps from

our heads. As soon as most of the Crows got into the fort, the Blackfeet began to make their escape out of the opposite side, over the rocks about 10 feet high. Here they found themselves no better off, as they were immediately surrounded and hemmed in on all sides by overwhelming numbers. A large number on both sides had fell in the engagement in the inside of the fort, as there the Crows had an equal chance with their enemy, but when on the outside the advantage was decidedly against them, as they were confined in a circle and cut down in a few moments. When the Blackfeet found there was no chance of escape, and knowing that there was no prospect of mercy at the hands of their perplexed and aggravated, but victorious enemy, they fought with more than human desperation. From the time they left their fort, they kept themselves in regular

order, moving forward in a solid breast, cutting their way through with their knives, until their last man fell, pierced, perhaps, with an hundred wounds. In this massacre, if one of the Blackfeet would receive a dangerous wound he would drop to the ground, as if dead, and if his strength was not too far exhausted, he would suddenly rise to his feet and plunge his knife to the heart of an enemy who would be rushing through the crowd, and then die. This would not be done in self defence, nor with a hope of escape, but through revenge.

This was truly a scene of carnage, enough to sicken the stoutest heart - but nothing at all in comparison with what took place afterwards. The Crows, when they found the enemy strewn over the field, none having escaped their vengeance, commenced a general rejoicing, after which they retired a short distance for the purpose of taking repose and some refreshment.

Although the victory was complete, the Crows paid dear for it, having lost about thirty killed, and as many more wounded, besides a great number of horses. The loss of their companions did not appear to dampen the rejoicing of the men the least bit, and indeed it would appear that the squaws should do all the mourning and lamenting,

as well as all the labour. Their dead were all collected together, when the squaws went round and claimed their kindred. This was a

most affecting scene – but what was it when contrasted with that enacted by the men as soon as they had rested from the toil of battle. The women would throw themselves upon the dead bodies of their husbands, brothers, &c. and there manifest the most excruciating anguish that any human being could suffer. The women were occupied in this manner when the men went to work to glut their merciless vengeance on their fallen foe. Many of the Blackfeet who were scattered over the battle ground had fallen by broken limbs or wounded in some way, & were yet writhing in agony, unable to injure any one or help themselves in any way. All such were collected together, and then tormented in a manner too shocking to relate. These fiends would cut off their ears, nose, hands and feet, pluck out their eyes, pull out their hair, cut them open and take out part of their insides, piercing them with sharp sticks – in short, every method of inflicting pain was resorted to. In order that they might render their mode of torment still more excruciating, they would bring into the presence of the dying the bodies of those who were already dead, and then tear out their hearts, livers,

and brains, and throw them in the faces of the living, cutting them to pieces, and afterwards feeding them to their dogs – accompanying the whole with the most taunting and revengeful epithets, whilst those not engaged in this fiendish work, were occupied in keeping up a constant screaming, howling and yelling. When this torment commenced, all the sufferers who could get hold of a knife or any thing with which they could take away their lives, would do so immediately. All the torment that could be inflicted by their persecutors, failed to bring a single murmur of complaint from the sufferers – nor would they signify the least symptoms of being conquered. No – not if they had been offered undisturbed liberty, would those sufferers who had lost so many of their companions, acknowledge themselves prisoners in the Crow village. Death they preferred to this, and death with indescribable horrors, did they all receive.

After they had finished tormenting the living, which was not done until there was no more to kill, they commenced cutting off the heads of the mangled bodies, which were hoisted on the ends of poles and carried about, and afterwards dashed them against

trees, rocks, &c. leaving them on the plain to be devoured by wild beasts.

The men now repaired to their dead friends, where they went through various manoeuvres, as much as to say that they had revenged their death, and soon afterwards every thing was on the move towards the camp, where we arrived soon after dark, not to rest, and calmly meditate on the scenes of the day, but to see further developements of the superstitious propensities of the poor neglected savage.

x^fter arriving in the village, a part of the men commenced their public rejoicings, by beating upon drums, dancing and singing, which, together with the incessant wailings and lamentations of those who had lost relatives, gave us a night that was entirely free from repose, and averse to sober reflection. In this manner the whole night was spent, nor did the morning bring any prospect of a cessation of these singular customs.

About ten o'clock the whole tribe was engaged in performing the funeral obsequies to the remains of their deceased relatives. At an early hour the wife had seated herself by the side of her dead husband, where she would remain until it came his turn to be interred, when she would clasp the cold and lifeless form of him, whom she still seems to love, and cling to it until forced away by some of the men: Their manner of burying their dead is also most singular in some respects: The corpse is carefully wrapped up in buffalo robes and laid into the grave, together with his talisman, and any thing else to which he was attached, — and if he be a chief of some importance, his horse's tail & mane are shaved off" and buried with him — these benighted Indians believing that each of these hairs will turn into a beautiful horse in the land of spirits, where they think that a horse and bow and arrow are all that a man requires to perfect his happiness and peace. As soon as the dead were deposited in the silent tomb, the musicians collected together and marched through the camp, beating upon sticks and drums, as a signal for the mourners to fall in the rear, which they did, and the whole procession then proceeded to the top of some rising ground, not far off, where the males and females separated into different groups. — The female mourners now took the point of an arrow, which was fixed

in a stick, & commenced pricking their heads, beginning at one ear and continuing round the forehead to the other, making incisions half an inch apart all round; and the men went through a similar course on their legs, arms, &c., until the blood oozed out in streams. All this performance was done without creating the least appearance of pain.

After doing this each female that had lost a near relative or particular friend, collected along a log and deliberately cut off a finger at the first joint, which was done with as much coolness as the pricking process. This is done by the males, also, except the two first fingers on the right hand, which they preserve for the purpose of bending the bow, and many of the aged females may be seen with the end off each of their fingers, and some have even taken off the second crop. Whilst this was being done by the mourners, the other Indians kept up a continual noise with their music, singing, dancing and yelling.

The procession now returned to the village with the faces of all the female mourners daubed over with their own blood, which they never remove until it wears off. Those not wishing to lose a finger are at liberty to shave off their hair close, but it is the general custom among the Crows to lose a piece of their finger. Any one who has lost a relative is not allowed to take part in the dance or any kind of sport for 12 or 13 moons, unless one of their surviving friends take the life of an Indian belonging to the tribe that killed the mourned one - which will at once atone for all loss, and drown all grief, and she is then allowed to wash the blood from her face

and resume her former standing in society. This night was spent in about the same manner as last night - some being engaged in dancing and singing, and others crying and lamenting the loss they had sustained.

Nov. 22d. This morning the chief of the nation gave orders to move for the purpose of getting among the buffalo and other game - and also to be prepared for a national dance on their march. About ten o'clock the whole tribe was in readiness and we started in the direction of the battle ground, and on arriving there a halt was ordered for the purpose of giving the dead carcasses of the Blackfeet the last evidence of the Crow's

revenge – which was done by beating and mangling every piece of flesh they could find. This done, the march was resumed to a beautiful level plain, perfectly smooth and covered with short grass, for two or three miles square – where the national dance was to take place. When they had dismounted, the whole nation formed a ring, when 69 of the oldest squaws, all painted black, formed themselves in a line in the centre of the circle, each bearing a pole from 12 to 15 feet in length. The person who struck the first blow at their late battle with the Blackfeet now commenced dancing, and was immediately followed by every young man and woman

belonging to the tribe, (except the mourners, who stood silent, melancholy spectators) all clad in their best dresses, handsomely worked with porcupine quills, and their heads delightfully ornamented with magpie and pheasant tails – forming themselves in double file, and dancing round the whole circle to wild, though not irregular music – which they make by stretching a piece of buffalo skin over a hoop similar to a riddle, where it is well stretched, and then sewed together and filled with sand and left until it is dry and properly shaped, when the sand is thrown out and some pebbles or bullets put in, when it is ready for the hand of the musician – and is in shape similar to a gourd. After dancing round the circle once or twice, they would suddenly halt; shout their terrible war-whoop – shoot off their guns, when the rattling music would again commence and they would all be engaged in the dance. Each member of the tribe, who was not mourning, from the child up to the enfeebled old man and woman took part in this exercise. After about two hours spent in this manner, they concluded their celebration by the display of an Indian battle, which was exceedingly grand, far beyond any description I had ever heard. 70 or 80 of their best warriors mounted their most active horses.

one party acting the part of their enemies, the Blackfeetj each one armed with a gun, a club or lance, and some with both. They separated, one party to one side and the other to the other side of the plain, and at a given signal would advance towards each other as fast as their horses would run, firing and striking as they would pass – throwing

themselves nearly under their horses, so much so, that they could fire at each other under their horse's belly. During the time they seemed to exert every nerve, yet they kept up a continual noise, by repeating the most wild and ferocious yells I ever heard. Their activity in throwing the lance is no less wonderful – being so expert in this business that they can throw it 20 or 25 yards and strike a mark the size of a man's head, whilst riding past as swift as their horses will go.

The greater part of the day was occupied in this manner, after which they took up their march towards the river No-wood, on the banks of which stream we encamped for the night. In this vicinity buffalo appeared to be quite numerous and the Indians killed several this evening. As the prospect of game appeared so good, the Indians determined on remaining here a few days for the purpose of laying in a stock of buffalo robes to trade

with Capt. Walker. The Indians would go out in large companies and kill a great number of these animals, when it would be the duty of the women to follow after and gather up the hides, which they would convey to the camp, and dress them ready for market. It is the duty of the squaws to dress the buffalo robes alone, which is done by stretching the hide tight on the ground and there let it dry, when they have a piece of iron or sharp stone, fixed in a stick, making a tool similar to a foot-adze, with which they cut and scrape the fleshy side until it becomes thin and smooth – after this they have a mixture composed of the brains and liver of the animal mixed together, in which they soak the hide a couple of days, when it is taken out and again stretched on the ground, where it is beat and rubbed with a paddle until it becomes perfectly soft and dry.

After catching a good many buffalo and some beaver at this place, we removed towards the point designated to meet Capt. Walker and his men. On the 30th we encamped at the junction of the Bighorn and Wind rivers. Not long after dark our encampment was surprised by a party of about fifty Blackfeet suddenly appearing among our horses for the purpose of stealing them. This created a great uproar in our camp.

Every Indian was on his feet and ready for

fight in an instant. The enemy was discovered too soon, and had to retreat with the loss of one man, without taking any horses at all. They were followed a great ways across the plain to the mountain, but as the night was very dark they could not be overtaken, and finally escaped. The one who had fallen was a principal chief among the Blackfeet, and had ventured too near the encampment for the purpose of choosing a valuable horse.

Here we were to have another scene of Indian exultation. On the former occasion, when the 69 Blackfeet had been killed there was too much grief mingled with the joy of the Crows to render it any thing like complete; but now it was quite different, — an enemy had fallen without costing a drop of blood on their part. On the former occasion it was joy only imitated — now it was exultation in reality. It appears natural for these Indians to exult more over the death and scalping of one enemy without the loss of one of their own — than they would to kill fifty of the enemy and lose one of their own.

After those who had given chase to the Blackfeet returned to camp, this dead Indian was taken in hand. After every one had carefully examined him, he was taken to a tree and there suspended by the neck, when the

men commenced shooting at him and the squaws piercing him with sharp sticks. This work was kept up until after midnight, when they commenced dancing and singing, yelling & shouting, which was carried far beyond that of the 21st and 22^d Nov. In this manner they spent their time until near ten o'clock, when they prepared to remove up Wind river — which they did after all taking leave of the dead Indian by abusing it in some manner to show their spite.

We travelled up Wind river until the 4th of Dec. when we arrived at the camp of Capt. Walker, whom, together with his men we found in good health and spirits. This camp is situated 60 or 70 miles east of the main chain of the Rocky mountains, on the head waters of Wind river, which, after running 150 or 200 miles in an eastern direction, empties into the Bighorn. The Wind river valley, through which this river passes, is one of the most beautiful formations of nature. It is upwards of 20 miles wide in some places, and is as level as a floor, with the margin of

the river evenly ornamented with thriving
cotton wood. A great many white people
pass the winters in this valley, on account of
the abundance of buffalo and other game.