

been forced upon him; yet with the exception of the episode referred to, he maintained throughout the conference a dignified but respectful silence.

When the banishment of the last remnant of the Sacs and Foxes from their villages, for which they entertained, says General Flagler, "an affection like that of the Jews for the city of Jerusalem," was effected, the ultimate object for which Fort Armstrong was established was attained, and it was soon after abandoned, never to be re-garrisoned.

About these Indians it may be said that those of the early settlers who knew them best have given them the best character for honesty and sobriety.

Davenport, Iowa.

LETTERS OF WILLIAM CLARK AND NATHANIEL PRYOR.

BY ELLIOTT COUES.

When Captains Lewis and Clark were returning from their expedition, and had reached the Mandan villages, in August, 1806, they then and there took with them, for a visit to President Jefferson, a Mandan chief known by the names of Shahaka, Gros Blanc and Big White. For this chief, see the 1893 edition of Lewis and Clark, pp. xxxix, ciii, 182, 185, 192, 209, 236, 242, 247, 1184, 1185, 1186, 1191, 1212.

The attempt to send Shahaka safe home again, and its frustration by a sharp collision with hostile Indians, in the vicinity of Bismarck, S. D., in September, 1807, form the main subject of the four letters now first published. The originals, in the handwritings of Captain Clark and Ensign Pryor, respectively, are on file in the archives of the War Department at Washington, where I have examined and copied them, word for word, letter for letter and point for point. General Clark's three letters are in official correspondence with General Henry Dearborn, Secretary at War, in his capacity as Indian Agent

for Louisiana; one of them covers and transmits Ensign Pryor's official report to him, narrating the interesting incident, no sufficient account of which has hitherto appeared in print.

We know very little of Nathaniel Pryor, beyond the main fact that he was one of four sergeants of Lewis and Clark's expedition (the others being Charles Floyd, who died early in the expedition; Patrick Gass; and John Ordway), and afterward commissioned in the army. It appears from Heitman's Register of the United States Army that Nathaniel Pryor, of Kentucky, was appointed an ensign in the First Infantry, Feb. 27, 1807; promoted to be second lieutenant, May 3, 1808; resigned, April 1, 1810; was made first lieutenant in the Forty-fourth Infantry, August 30, 1813; promoted to be captain October 1, 1814; and honorably discharged, June 15, 1815.

SAINT LOUIS June 1st 1807.

SIR

In my letter to you of the 16th ulto: I informed you that a deputation from several bands of the Sieoux Nation had arrived at this place with Wm. Dorion, &c. Those Indians set out on their return a few days past highly pleased with the presents & treatment which they have received. Colonel [Thomas] Hunt furnished a Lieut. seven men and a boat to escort those people to their Country in safety. By the request of the Mandan Chief [Shahaka, Gros Blanc or Big White] I have suffered him to delay and go in Company with the Sieoux. The party accompanying those Indians consists of 1 Lieut. 1 Ensign. 1 Sergt. 1 Corpl. 18 privates, 1 hunter and 3 hired boatmen. Young Chouteau (late an Officer) has a boat and perogue and 32 men (for the Mandan Trade) Young Dorion has a boat and 10 men (for the Sieoux Trade) those together with the 2 interpreters makes a total of 70 men; exclusive of the 18 Indian Men and woin and 6 children. After Lieut. Kimble's [Joseph Kimball's] return which will be from the Sieoux Country, Ensign Pryors Party will consist of 48 men which will be fully sufficient to pass any hostile band which he may probably meet with. I am informed that the Ricaras have moved moved [bis] to the Mandans for fear of being cut off by the Sieoux of the North; I think it probable that the report is correct, and a measure which I advised them to as I decended last fall from a knowledge of their dependence on the Sieoux.

Mr. Bolvar [Nicholas Boilvin] has returned from the Saukees without the Indian who murdered the Frenchman near the mouth of the Missouri. He informs me that he has every promise from the Chiefs of that Nation that the Murderer will be delivered up. Bolvar will return to that Nation in a few days. Much has been said respecting the conduct of Mr. Youin

[Ewing*] the Farmer [farmer] for the Saukees, but nothing which can authorize me to make any change in his situation. Mr. Bolvar the Sub Agent has lately sent off from the Nation a young man by the name of O'Bannon, whom as I am informed, has shown some bad examples to those Indians. The Saukees wish to be furnished with a Blacksmith, one has offered to go to the Nation who is a farmer in this neighbourhood with a large family.

The Militia (where Organized) are so scattered that they will afford but a feeble defense to extensive frontiers of this Territory against the Indians. Their numbers I believe to be about Two Thousand four hundred men.

To prevent the probability of an Indian [outbreak] which can only be effected by *Spanish* or *British* influence and intreague it will in my opinion be necessary to have some establishments of troops in the Indian Country; as well as to watch the emissarys of those Nations, as to enforce the laws regulating the intercourse with the Indian Tribes, &c.

Wintering traders from the Panias [Pawnees] and several other Nations of Indians up the Missouri, confirm the report of several parties of Spaniards, amounting in all to about 350 men having visited the Panias country last fall, and are to return about August next. I fear their intentions are hostile, to the United States. They have given medals and flags and influenced the Indians very much in their favour. No certain accounts of Mr. Pike, some Indians have said they left him two days from the settlements of Santa Fee. No reliance can be placed on this information [which was in fact erroneous]. I enclose you the speeches of the Sieoux and my answer, &c.

It is probably necessary for me to go to Washington to settle my public accounts for moneys expended at this place, of which you have been advised in my last letter of the 18th ulto. On this subject I must request that you inform me.

With every sentiment of respect & esteem, I have the honor to be
Your Most Obedent Servt.

WM CLARK

Genl. Dearborn

[Endorsed rec'd July 7, 1807.]

ST LOUIS Oct 16. 1807

SIR

The escort under my command for the reconveyance of the Mandane Chief [Shahaka] to his nation has been compelled to return to St Louis without accomplishing that object.—You will expect to be informed of the untoward circumstances which have contributed to this failure.

We arrived at the lower villages of the Riouras at 9 OClock, on the morning of the 9th September.

These people, as soon as we came opposite their village, fired several guns, the shot of which came very near us. The sub Agent Dorion, enquired

*William Ewing, in charge of the United States Agricultural Establishment, on the site of present Nauvoo, Ill., opposite Montrose, Iowa. For this person, see letters of General James Wilkinson and of General Clark, in my new edition of Z. M. Pike's Expedition, 1895, p. 15 and p. 292.—E. C.

in the Sioux language 'What they meant' They replied 'put to shore we will supply you with corn and oil'.—From the hospitalities to our party on a former occasion, I thought it prudent to shew a confidence in their friendly professions, and ordered the Boats to land at the village

Several of the Sieux, the upper bands of which associated with the Ricaras in this affair, immediately came to the Beach. From them we learned, that the Ricaras and Mandanes still carried on war with each other, and that two of the former had been lately killed at the River Bullet [*i. e.*, Cannonball River].

In a very short time the bank was crowded with about six hundred and fifty Indians, all of whom were armed with guns, and many of them with additional warlike weapons.—A Mandane woman, who had been a captive for several years, came on board, from whom I obtained information, which could probably have been derived from no other quarter.

She informed me that Manuel Lisa, a St. Louis trader had passed up some time before: That he had given the Ricaras, through *compulsion* I conjecture, a number of guns and a considerable quantity of powder and ball.—This man you recollect obtained a Licence from Mr. (Frederick) Bates before your arrival and before the plan which the Government had adopted with respect to the Mandane was known at St. Louis. He was however, still at St. Charles and it is not forgotten that Mr. Bates having occasion to visit that village informed him of the change of arrangement in the upper country, and desired him to remain until my Boats should be equipped that he might accompany the expedition.

This, we understood he had consented to do—and his failure in those engagements, has probably obliged him to divert the storm which threatened *his own boat*, by diverting the attention of the Ricaras to *ours*

He told them; as we learn from this woman, that two boats might be very soon expected; that we had the Mandane Chief on board; and that we were to remain, for the purposes of trade at their villages.—On this, they pillaged him of about half of his goods, and suffered him to pass on, determining in their councils at the same time, to kill him on his return, and to lose no time in preparing to murder the Mandane and his escort as soon as we should arrive.—Being thus completely apprized of their sanguinary purposes, as respected the Mandane in particular, I directed him to secure himself in the cabin, by building in front a breast work of trunks and boxes.—My men were prepared for action, and the Indians about the picketed villages and breast works, appeared to be putting themselves in readiness to commence it.—They were observed chewing their bullets and driving away their women and children.

The Chief to whom you desired me to present a Medal, at length approached my boat. I had no doubt of his wish to serve us; and as he was known to possess influence with his nation, I felt desirous of conciliating him.—He presented me a letter from Courtney, who had previously to the arrival of Lisa, been cruelly treated by these barbarians, and informed us that he alone had been friendly to that unfortunate Trader, who owed his safety and ultimate release to his friendly offices.

This chief discovered much uneasiness while conversing with us, and after

professing his regard for the Mandane and myself, rejoined his blood thirsty companions by whom his advices were in the sequel overruled.—My interpreter was in the meantime, employed in persuading the chiefs to meet in council, and at length succeeded in collecting all of them except the chief of the upper village.

I should have made a farther effort to procure the attendance of this refractory man; but found that if we consumed the day in fruitless conferences, we would, as soon as it was dark, fall a more easy sacrifice. I therefore determined to meet them and proceed to the upper villages as expeditiously as possible.—My Interpreter was an old Spaniard whom you probably may not have forgotten. To employ a mediator in whom we have no confidence in such emergencies as this, was especially embarrassing; but I was obliged to make use of him on this occasion from the absolute improbability of obtaining another.

I addressed them somewhat in this manner: “Your Great American Father has sent me with a few of his soldiers to conduct the Maudane Chief to his nation.—In our long and laborious journey, we have met with many nations of Red people, by all of whom we have been treated with hospitality and kindness.—I have repeated to them the talk of their Great Father, whose counsels they will in future pursue.—We were not strangers to you: On a former occasion you extended to Louis [sic] and Clark the hand of friendship:—We feasted in your villages and exchanged mutual benefits.—As a proof of the confidence of your Great Father in a continuance of your pacific dispositions, and as an evidence of your pacific dispositions, and as an evidence of his personal friendship for your chief, he sends him a large Medal the devices of which may continually remind you of the amicable intercourse which ought always to subsist between his People and yours.”—I then suspended the Medal to the neck of Grey Eyes [an Arikara chief: see L. and C., ed. 1893, p. 1189] as is usual on such occasions.—

To this address they made no reply—and in fact from a variety of suspicious circumstances I scarcely calculated on a friendly answer.

We separated, it being understood that we would stop at the *upper* [Arikara] village to pay our respects to the Chief, who perhaps from motives of etiquette, had refused to attend the council below.—

Our Boats proceeded on—Dorion and the Interpreter [Rene] Jesseaume went by land—the Indians followed in a body, using threats and menaces—

On our arrival about 4 O'clock in the afternoon all the Indians were collected on the Beach. They appeared in violent rage. It was necessary as I conceived, to see the chief.—It was besides my duty to take on board Dorion and Jesseaume—My men were kept prepared for an attack, and it was doubtless, as prudent to meet it on the beach, as to be followed into a river filled with irregular sand-Bars.—We put to shore and were directed by the Indians to proceed up a narrow channel near the Beach. Their views on *this*, could not be mistaken and we declined a compliance.

We were then told that we should proceed no further: we should stay and trade with them.—Lisa had told them, it was our *intention* to remain &c. &c. together with various other things expressive of their determination to detain us.—

They first seized the cable of Chouteau's Barge—as *his* contained merchandize and had no Soldiers to defend it, with whom they were, no doubt unwilling to provoke a contest until they should have the other completely in their power—Waving their hands there, the moment they attacked the Barge, they made signals that I might go on—Chouteau 'hoped he' was not to be abandoned in so dangerous a situation'—I replied 'make them an offer' He and a number of his men had previously gone on the Beach, in order to shew an advance of confidence, but these unconscionable Rascals appeared to rise in their demands in proportion as they found their victims within their reach.—He at length *did* make them an offer, which, had they not been determined on plunder and blood, ought to have satisfied them. He proposed to leave the half of his goods with a man to trade them—

The Chief of the upper village who had refused to attend the council below, now came on board, and desired, by gestures which were readily understood that the Mandane might go on shore with him. On my peremptory refusal to suffer this, he retired as hastily as he had entered.—

Mr. Chouteau and several of his men were still on the Beach—Dorion continued in conference—a demand was instantly made of all the arms and ammunition;—The Chief to whom I had given the Medal, threw it on the ground, and one of the men was struck down with the butt end of a gun. The Indians now raised a general Whoop, and as they retired to the willows fired on the men, on the Beach, as well as on both Boats in the same instant.—I had reserved my fire, and was so fortunate as to reach them, with a well directed volley of swivels, blunderbusses and small arms, before they sheltered themselves behind a young growth of Willows at the distance of about sixty yards.—

Here, they were rather concealed than defended; and as it would have been madness to leave the Boats of which the savages would have taken the immediate possession, we continued the fight for about a quarter of an hour when, finding that they were too greatly superior in numbers, I ordered a retreat.—My Boat was put off with greater ease than Chouteau's—He stuck on a sand Bar; thro' which his men were obliged to drag the barge while exposed to the continual fire of the enemy.

To my unexpressible satisfaction, he at length surmounted Difficulties which had nearly proven fatal to the whole party.—

We again floated in a narrow rapid current, and continued a retreating combat from both sides of the river for about one hour.—

It was sunset, and the pursuit was at length checked by the death of one their Sioux Leaders.

He had been in my Boat, and was afterwards known by a white bandage which he wore about his head.—With about 40 men he was endeavouring to meet us at a point projecting into the stream when he received a Ball which was aimed particularly at him, and appeared to expire in a moment on the Beach.—His Partizans gathered about him and we saw no more of them.

During the rapid succession of these events I had no leisure to inquire into the situation of my men.

As soon as we imagined ourselves free from pursuit, we lashed our Boats together and examined their wounds.—

of my own men none were killed—My Hunter's leg was broken—One of the Soldiers had a ball thro' the fleshy part of his leg—and a second was wounded in the hip and the arm.

Mr. Chouteau was far less fortunate:—He had one man killed on the Beach; one in a Perogue which accompanied his Barge; One on board the Barge and one mortally wounded who died nine days afterwards.—Six others of his men were badly wounded but have since recovered.—

This miscarriage is a most unhappy affair.—The Mandane is now at the camp, and will be supplied with whatever he may reasonably want until the orders of the Government shall be known with respect to him.—

Altho' Jesseaume the Mandane Interpreter was of my party, he had quarrelled with his chief and was on board Chouteau's Boat.

I am sorry to say that he has been badly wounded in the thigh and shoulder. Mr. Bates has ordered him medical attendance in St. Louis, as the Surgeon of the garrison has been of late too ill to attend to his duties.

After our retreat, I felt so sensibly the necessity of obeying the orders of the government with respect to this expedition, that I proposed to the Mandane that he should accompany me through by land. The distance was only about three days march, and by leaving the River, and pursuing an unfrequented route, through the Praires, I hoped to reach the Mandane-Lodges, undiscovered by the Ricaras.—

The Chief declined this project, alledging the impossibility of accomplishing it with his wounded Interpreter together with the incumbrance of their wives and children.

If my opinion were asked 'what number of men would be necessary to escort this unhappy Chief to his nation,' I would be compelled to say, from my own knowledge of the association of the upper band of the Sieux with the Ricaras that a force of less than 400 men ought not to attempt such an enterprize—and surely it is possible that even One Thousand men might fail in the attempt

I have the honor to be
very respectfully

your obdt Servant

NATHL PRYOR

Genl. Clark }
Ind Agent }

LOUISVILLE October 24th 1807

DEAR SIR

I this moment received a letter from Ensign Pryor dated St Louis Octr. 16th. 1807 in which he mentions the failure of his expedition with the Mandan Chief to his Nation, after passing all the lower Bands of Sieoux unmolested, he was on the 9th. of Sept. at the village of the Ricaras, attacked by that Nation, and after an obstinate resistance for more than an hour, he was compelled to fall back (down the stream) with the loss of three men killed and several badly wounded.

The Mandan Chief with his interpreter who is badly wounded is with the party a Coal Water Camp [sic—at Cold Water Camp]. Young Mr. Chouteau behaved very well on this occasion. from some communications which

I have received by this mail from different quarters the Conduct of the British trader in the N W is such as cannot be put up with by our Government. I will send you by the next post some letters on the subject of Indian affairs, and Ensign Prior's report, the post is now waiting.

I have the honor to be with every sentiment of respect

Your Mt. Ob Ser

WM. CLARK

[Postwritten Louisville, Ky 25 Octo Free
Marked Recd Nov. 13, 1807]

NEAR LOUISVILLE 30th. Octr. 1807

DEAR SIR

I have the honor to enclose you Ensign Pryor's report, one letter from Captain Dunim [Josiah Dunham] and one from Mr John Cam[p]bell a merchant at Prarie de-chein; Ensigns Pryors report will inform you of his progress and misfortune on the Missouri.—I am a little gratified to find that all those Bands of Scioux who had a deputation at St: Louis last spring were friendly disposed to Pryors party and, only that Band of Scioux with whome we have had no intercourse has attached themselves to the Ricaras (no doubt under the influence of the British Traders) to prevent all parties from assending the Missouri.—You will observe by the letters of Captain Dunim and Mr. Cambell the Conduct of the British Traders in the vicinity of Michillimakinak their plans of avoiding the duties and Laws of the United States.—

Mr Campbell will wait on you early in December and will inform you of the views and probable intention of the formidable Maiana Company of whom I have given you a relation of.—I am not acquainted with Mr Campbell and can say nothing more of him than of his possessing some influence with the Indians about Prarie-De-Chein. I am told he is a Magistrate under Govr Harrison.

I have the honor to be

Sir &c

WM. CLARK

THE DES MOINES PIONEER CLUB.—The organization of "The Des Moines Pioneer Club" at Mr. J. C. Savery's New Year's dinner party was a long delayed step in the right direction, and if the annual fees and contributions can be made sufficiently large to print the speeches made at the regular New Year's dinners, much of the valuable early history of this city, county and State can be saved that will otherwise be forever lost. Among those present at Mr. Savery's dinner were men who have gained both State and National renown, who know more about Iowa history than any other living persons.—*Des Moines Register*, Jan. 3, 1895.

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