

AUDUBON ON THE WESTERN BORDER OF IOWA IN 1843.

At the age of 63, the most distinguished ornithologist America has produced carried out his long-cherished desire to visit the Yellowstone region and see with his own eyes its wonders and the buffaloes and other animals of the plains. In March, 1843, he took passage at St. Louis on the steamboat Omega. The following extracts from his journal pertain to what he saw on the Missouri river of the western border of Iowa:

May 6, 1843. We fastened our boat to the edge of a beautiful prairie, to land freight and passengers. Eighty Indians came to visit us, some on foot, some on horseback, generally riding double, on skins and Spanish saddles; some squaws rode, and rode well. We landed some Indians who came as passengers with us, and I noticed that when they joined their relatives and friends, they neither shook hands nor exchanged any congratulations. I saw no emotion, nothing to corroborate Mr. Catlin's views of savage life.

When the boat started, these Indians followed us along the shore, running on foot and galloping on horseback to keep up with us. When we approached the next landing, I saw some of these poor creatures perched on the neighboring banks, while others crowded down to our landing-place. They belonged to the Iowa and Fox Indians: the two tribes number about twelve thousand, and their country extends for seventy miles up the river.

May 8. Today we passed the boundary of Missouri, and the country consists of prairies extending to the inland hills.

May 9. This evening we arrived at the famous settlement of Belle Vue where the Indian agent resides (on the west side of the river). Here a large pack of rascally-looking, dirty, and half-starved Indians awaited our arrival; and we paid for five cords of wood with five tin cups of sugar and three cups of coffee, all worth twenty-five cents at St. Louis. We saw here the first plowed ground since leaving the settlements near St. Louis.

May 10. Arrived at Fort Croghan (a temporary fort for the protection of the Pottawattamies, who after the Black Hawk war had been removed from the country about Chicago to this region; it stood near the present southwest corner of the city of Council Bluffs), named after an old friend of mine of that name, with whom I hunted raccoons on his father's plantation in Kentucky, thirty-five years before. His father and mine were well acquainted, and fought together with Washington and Lafayette in the Revolutionary war against "Merry England." The parade-ground here had been four feet under water in the late freshet.

May 11. The officers of this post last July were nearly destitute of provisions, and they sent off twenty dragoons and twenty Indians on a buffalo hunt, and within eighty miles they killed fifty-one buffaloes, one hundred and four deer, and ten elks.

We were told that the Pottawattamies were formerly a warlike people, but recently their enemies, the Sioux, have frequently killed them, when they met on hunting expeditions, and that they have become cowardly, which is a change in their character.

We cast off our lines from the shore at 12 o'clock, and by sunset reached the Council Bluffs (on the west side of the river, so named by Lewis and Clark from the council they held there with the Missouries and the Otoes in 1804), where the river-bed was utterly changed, though that called the Old Missouri is now visible. These bluffs rise from a beautiful bank about forty feet above the river, and slope down into as beautiful a prairie to the hills in the rear, which render the scenery very fine and very remarkable.

May 12. We have arrived at the most crooked part of the river yet seen, the shores on both sides lower, the hills more distant, the intervening plains more or less covered with water. We passed the Blackbird Hills where a famous Indian chief of this name was buried, and his horse buried alive with him at his request.

May 13. Today we passed some beautiful bluffs, composed of fine, white sandstone, of soft texture, covered with cedars. We saw also many fine prairies; the bottom lands appeared of an extremely rich soil. Indians hailed us along the shore, but no notice was taken of them; they followed us to the next landing, and boarded us; but our captain hates them, and they go away without a chew of tobacco, and I pity the poor creatures with all my heart.

This evening we came to the Burial-ground Bluff, so called by the ever memorable expedition of Lewis and Clark, because here they buried Sergeant Floyd, as they were on the way to the Pacific Ocean across the Rocky Mountains. The prairies are now more frequent and more elevated; we have seen more evergreens today than in the two preceding weeks.

We have entered the mouth of the Big Sioux River, which is a clear stream, abounding with fish; on one of its branches is found the famous red clay of which the Indians make their calumets. We saw on the banks of the river several Indian canoe frames, formed of bent sticks made into a circle, the edges fastened together by a long pole, with another in the bottom, holding the frame like the inner keel of a boat. Outside of this frame the Indians stretch a buffalo skin with the hair on and it is said to make a safe boat to convey two or three persons, even where the current is rapid. Here as on the shores of the Mississippi and Missouri the land along the banks is higher than further inland; tangled brush-wood and tall reeds grow along the margins, while the prairies abound with mud and muddy water. Willows are plenty, and the aspect of the country is pleasing.

May 16. Came to an Indian log-cabin, which had a fence around it. Passed several dead buffaloes floating down stream. A few hundred miles above here the river is confined between high, steep bluffs, many of them nearly perpendicular, and impossible for the buffalo to climb: when they have leaped or fallen down these, they try to ascend them or swim to the opposite shore, which is equally difficult; unable to ascend them they fall back time and again until they are exhausted, and at last, getting into the current, are borne away and drowned; hundreds thus perish every year, and their swollen and putrid bodies have been seen floating as low down as St. Louis. The Indians along shore watch for these carcasses, and no matter how putrid, if the "hump" is fat, they drag them ashore and cut it out for food.

Farther up the river, barges passed, bringing down the spoils of the hunters; one from St. Pierre had ten thousand buffaloes on board. The men reported that the country above was filled with buffaloes, and the shores of the river were covered with the dead bodies of old and young ones.

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APOSTROPHE TO THE BLUE AND THE GRAY.

In this hour of sacred eulogy of our dead, no noble soul will deny a slight chaplet to those who fell on the other side. Their cause is lost forever; indeed, the genius of liberty and the spirit of modern civilization foredoomed it to defeat. Never braver men stood embattled with a losing cause, and their ruined homes, and broken fortunes, and the last trenches of defeat and disaster, filled with the best blood of their race, attest their sincerity and devotion. But courage and devotion are never wholly lost; and when the perfect union of these people shall have come, —the union of which our fathers dreamed, and for which their sons died, —then the lustrous courage of our foemen shall become part of the common history of our common race and common blood. I lift my soul unto a vision of a noble future, when strife and clamor between the sections shall be hushed, forever, and one people, with one flag, and one destiny, shall teach only the gospel of peace and good will, from our northern boundary to where the southern cross blazes above the southern ocean. Enlarged patriotism, and enlightened statesmanship, should hasten the day. Its dawn is almost here. Let the loyalty and courage of the blue and the courage and devotion of the gray be given as the most patriotic duty of the hour toward absolute reconciliation. It is as holy a cause as was the war for the unity of these states. The blue and the gray sleep in peace, side by side, on every hill top, and in every valley of all the battle fields of the republic; over them bend the same heavens, above them shine the same stars, fixed, immutable; over them sweeps the same flag, free and immortal. Fallen comrades of the blue! Fallen foemen of the gray! Ye have pitched your tents together in the Eternal Bivouac beyond the stars, where ye shall camp forever, in that mysterious and unknown silence that shall be broken only by the reveille of the life immortal.—*J. O. A. Yeoman, Memorial Address, Omaha, Neb., May 30, 1891.*

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