

The Red Man in Real Life

If there is one criticism that might be leveled at the fifty illustrations depicting "Indian Life in the 60's" it would be that all the "Noble Red Men" appear to be glorified individuals with the physical attributes of a Jim Thorpe. Over the past forty years the writer has visited different Indian tribes in a dozen states and has never seen such bodily perfection.

Aside from this, the general treatment of the subject—Indian Life—is remarkably accurate and can be readily supported by various authorities. Since the buffalo played such a vital role in the economy of the Red Man, their presence in the Upper Mississippi and particularly the Missouri Valley is confirmed by numerous authorities. As Joliet and Marquette paddled down the Mississippi along the eastern border of what is now Iowa in 1673, they recorded the first description of the shaggy buffalo in the future Hawkeye State:

We call them "wild cattle," because they are very similar to our domestic cattle. They are not longer, but are nearly as large again, and more Corpulent. When Our people killed one, three persons had much difficulty in moving it. The head is very large; The forehead is flat, and a foot and a half Wide between the Horns, which

are exactly like Those of our oxen, but black and much larger. Under the Neck They have a Sort of large dewlap, which hangs down; and on The back is a rather high hump. The whole of the head, The Neck, and a portion of the Shoulders, are Covered with a thick Mane Like That of horses; It forms a crest a foot long, which makes them hideous, and, falling over their eyes, Prevents them from seeing what is before Them. The remainder of the Body is covered with a heavy coat of curly hair, almost Like That of our sheep, but much stronger and Thicker. It falls off in Summer, and The skin becomes as soft As Velvet. At that season, the savages Use the hides for making fine Robes, which they paint in various Colors. The flesh and the fat of the pisikious are Excellent, and constitute the best dish at feasts. Moreover, they are very fierce; and not a year passes without their killing some savages When attacked, they catch a man on their Horns, if they can, toss Him in the air, and then throw him on the ground, after which they trample him under foot, and kill him. If a person fire at Them from a distance, with either a bow or a gun, he must, immediately after the Shot, throw himself down and hide in the grass; For if they perceive Him who has fired, they Run at him, and attack him. As their legs are thick and rather Short, they do not run very fast, As a rule, except when angry. They are scattered about the prairie in herds; I have seen one of 400.

Nicholas Perrot, the French "Commandant of the West," recorded a buffalo hunt with the Miami Indians somewhere west of Dubuque in 1690. The Miami had a unique but effective way of ensuring a successful hunt. They simply encircled a herd with a ring of fire and killed large numbers

of them as they attempted to escape through the only passage left open to them.

One hundred and thirty years later, in 1820, Captain Stephen Watts Kearny was a member of a military expedition that had left Engineer's Cantonment above present-day Omaha and set out up the Boyer River Valley for Fort Snelling at the mouth of the Minnesota River. In his journal of July 6, Kearny recorded:

At noon a large bull buffalo was sighted and a number set out in pursuit. Riding the fleetest horse, Captain Kearny fired three pistol balls into him at a range of ten feet. The chase continued for two miles when two more shots brought the mighty beast down. "He is very large, & would weigh a thousand weight," wrote the twenty-six year old captain proudly in his journal. "Sent back four mules to bring up the buffaloe, which some men have been left to butcher."

As they proceeded through Northwestern Iowa the soldiers encountered numerous herds of buffalo grazing on the succulent grass. On July 11, 1820, Captain Kearny saw "a large drove of Buffaloe to our left, probably 5 thousand," but did not molest them. Presently, however, they "fell upon a drove of about 100, to which several of us gave chase, & out of which a *yearling* was obtained, after a half mile chase."

In his *North American Indians*, George Catlin has left many illustrations, as well as vivid word-pictures, of the importance of the buffalo, partic-

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