

New Chapter in Nebraska History

*Documents from Paris Give Account of Massacre by the
Otoe Tribe of Spanish Military Expedition
on August 11, 1720*

*Declare That the Fight Took Place on Nebraska Soil at
the Junction of the Platte and
Loup Rivers*

*Unpublished Diary of Spanish Officer Found on the Field
of Battle Gives Account of the March
from Santa Fe.*

[A battle between a Spanish army and the Otoe tribe of Nebraska, fought 203 years ago at the junction of the Loup and the Platte rivers (adjoining the present city of Columbus.) The complete defeat and destruction of the Spanish force. Booty from the battlefield carried by Indians to the French settlements in Illinois and even as far away as the Straits of Mackinac in Michigan.

The above paragraph summarizes startling Nebraska news contained in a recent issue of the *Journal de la Societe des Americanistes*, published at Paris by a group of French scholars for the promotion of knowledge of America and cordial relations with its people.

The story of a Spanish expedition and its defeat is not new. Accounts hitherto published lacked definite information. They seemed, in some respects, like the wonderful legend of Penalosa, or the wild tales of Baron la Hontan, or Mathieu Sagean, all of them locating in the Nebraska region great nations of semi-civilized Indians with high walled cities, great wealth of gold and silver, fleets, armies and other products of the imagination. These early accounts of the Spanish Caravan were interpreted generally as embellishments of Spanish raids on the Osage country southeast of Kansas City.

Now comes the learned French editor at Paris furnishing us with unpublished documents—in particular a copy of a Spanish military note book kept by an officer with the expedition describing the march and the events preceding the battle. Based on these new sources—and critical comparison with the former accounts—the French editor hands us his

LE MASSACRE
DE L'EXPÉDITION ESPAGNOLE
DU MISSOURI

(31 AOÛT 1730).

PAR LE BARRON MARC DE VILLIERS.

Extrait du Journal de la Société des Américanistes de Paris,
Nouvelle série, tome XIII, 1921, p. 230-255.

AU SIÈGE DE LA SOCIÉTÉ,
61, RUE DE SUFFREN, 61.

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1921

Title page of Original French publication translated for this publication of Nebraska State Historical Society.

opinion all the way from Paris that the Massacre of the Spanish took place at the junction of the Loup with the Platte, in Platte county, Nebraska. He furnishes us with a map showing the location of Indian tribes in this region at the date of 1720 and indicating the site of the battle ground. There is yet room for more critical study of the text of these documents with the map of the Kansas-Nebraska region by Nebraska scholars qualified by exact knowledge of the country. But, even so, the new material and the opinion of the Paris editor give this discovery in Nebraska history an importance comparable only with the publication, forty years ago, of the Coronado expedition.]

**MASSACRE OF THE SPANISH EXPEDITION OF THE
MISSOURI (AUGUST 11, 1720)**

BY BARON MARC DE VILLIERS

(TRANSLATED BY ADDISON E. SHELDON)

FROM THE JOURNAL OF

THE SOCIETY OF AMERICANISTES, PARIS

Warned by the Padouka (Comanche) that French trappers were about to ascend the Missouri to search for mines and to try to gain possession of New Mexico, the Spanish organized, in the spring of 1720, an important expedition to explore the region of the Missouri and to drive from those quarters any French who might already have established themselves there. But the Spaniards did not know how to conciliate the Indians and their column, in spite of its strong armament, was completely exterminated by the Otopata, otherwise called Oto, about 100 kilometers from the Missouri.

Early Accounts of Massacre

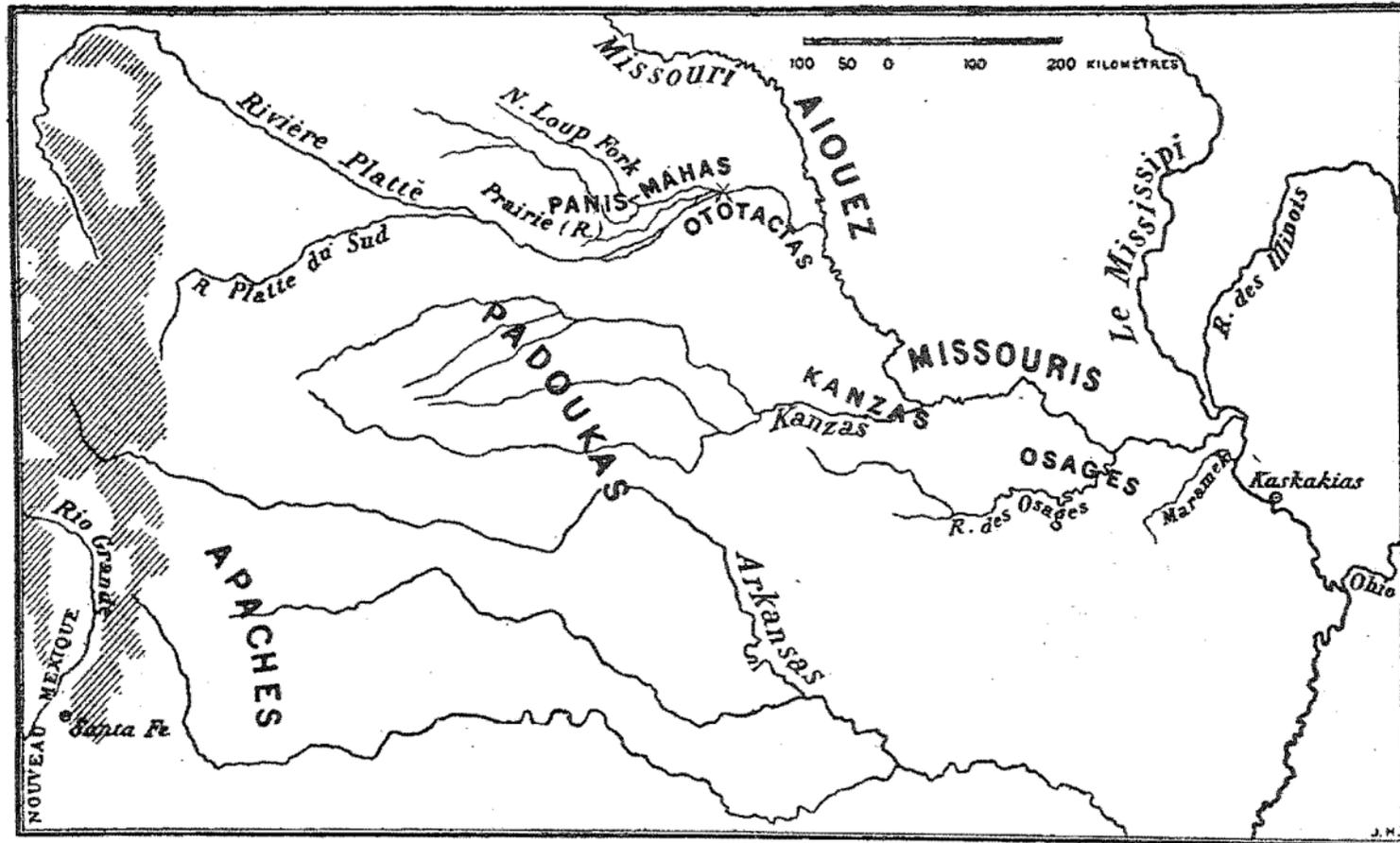
Father Charlevoix¹, Dumont de Montigny² and Le Page du Pratz³ have each left us an account of the massacre of the

NOTES

BY BARON MARC DE VILLIERS

1. History of New France. Edition of 1744, v. III, p. 246-251.
2. Historical Memoirs of Louisiana, 1753, v. II, p. 284-285.
3. History of Louisiana, 1756, v. II, p. 246-251.

* See notes by Addison E. Sheldon on pages 29-31.



NEBRASKA HISTORY

Carte montrant l'emplacement exact du Massacre de l'expédition espagnole du Missouri.
 Paris Map Showing Nebraska Region in 1720 X indicates place of Spanish Massacre.

expedition. The 20th letter of Father Charlevoix contains interesting details, especially since they were gathered from Indians coming directly to Canada, for all the other versions which we know came from the savage nations which frequented only our posts in the Illinois. The account of Le Page du Pratz, very much more developed and possibly inspired by that of Dumont, seems at times a little too fantastic and makes the error of taking the Missouri for the Otoptata and above all of confounding the Osage with the Pani. As to Dumont de Montigny he has quite certainly very much exaggerated the force of the Spanish Expedition by making it "1,500 persons, —men, women, and children." From 200 to 250 Europeans, accompanied by several hundreds of Indian carriers, probably started from Santa Fe. But, as three-fourths of the members of the expedition returned to New Mexico for various reasons, the column after crossing the river of the Kanza included scarcely more than 200 persons; of whom 60 were Spaniards.

New Documents Found.

Three unpublished documents, preserved in the archives of the Hydrographic Service of the Marine and of the Minister of War, enable us to correct or to complete the accounts of the three first historians of Louisiana, and to establish, for the first time, that the expedition of the Spaniards was exterminated on August 11 or 12, 1720 by the Otoptata Indians (Oto), acting in concert with the Pani-Maha (Loup or Skidi) and perhaps some Missouri, upon the banks of the river Platte (Nebraska) and very probably near its junction with the Loup river (Loup Fork).

In 1720 France and Spain were at war. We had just seized the port of Pensacola and driven—for the moment—the Spaniards from their post of Adayes. It would seem entirely natural to see the governor of New Mexico seeking to take an easy revenge against our posts, very poorly defended,

4. This letter is dated at Michillimakinac, July 21, 1721. But Charlevoix wrote out the greater part of his letters, or at least revised them entirely, after his return to France.

5. Bossu, who in recopying, always exaggerates, speaks of more than 1,500 guns! *New Voyages to West Indies*, v. I, p. 175.

6. The names written in italic are those adopted by the Handbook of American Indians, published by the Bureau of American Ethnology.

7. Founded to watch our establishment of Natchtotochez, located on Red river.

in the Illinois. However, when one knows the fundamental policy of the Spaniards, all of whose efforts tended to maintain a large zone of mystery between Louisiana and New Mexico, this reason alone seems quite insufficient.

John Law's Mississippi Bubble.

The 60-odd unhappy Spaniards massacred by the Otopotata, were, in truth, the obscure and unfortunate victims of the system of John Law and the fantastic schemes of the Company of the Indies. The great number of mining tools which this expedition carried, the colonists with their livestock which it conducted, show that the Spaniards did not limit themselves to the plan of keeping the French at a distance from New Mexico, but above all, cherished the hope of seizing the fabled mines of the Missouri, so well advertised on the Rue-Quinquempoix.

Certainly in the springtime of 1720 the Mississippi Craze had already greatly diminished. At Paris they sang:

The mines, —we will rummage in 'em
For no doubt we'll find something in 'em
—If Nature ever put it in 'em.

And very few people in Europe still believed in boulders of emerald and mountains of silver in Louisiana. But the news of this recent skepticism had not yet had time to reach Santa Fe in New Mexico.

Oto Tribe—Various Names.

Most of the early authors who concern themselves with Upper Louisiana speak of the Otopotata and nearly all the 18th century maps of America indicate their habitat* with considerable accuracy. But the name of these Indians* is written in many forms and one encounters indifferently Ototacta, Octotact, Onatotchite, Otontata, Huatocototo, Othouez, etc. In 1724 Venyard De Bourmont, later the author of the Relation of his Journey** called them Hoto and Otho, and it is this name of Oto which the Americans have preserved for the last survivors of this nation which is perpetuated even to our own time**.

8. We might cite: Franquelin, Le Page du Pratz, d'Auville, Vaugondys, Bowen, etc.

9. The Handbook of American Indians notes more than seventy of them, and that list is yet to be completed!

10. Margry, v. VI, p. 396 and 402.

11. The census of 1906 still numbers 390 of them.

* See notes by Addison E. Sheldon on pages 29-31.

According to Father Charlevoix "The Octotatas are people related to the Aioúez (now Iowas) from whom it is even said they are descended." This information agrees with the classification of the Handbook of American Indians, in which the Iowa, the Oto and the Missouri are grouped with the great Siouan family. An unfinished Spanish manuscript, a compilation of undated and unsigned documents, makes the Oto descendants of the Missouri. This collection indicates that at the beginning of the 19th century the Oto numbered 500 souls, of whom 120 were warriors; that they often intermarried with the Kansas, and protected in disdainful manner the Missouri, reduced then to only 80 warriors. At this period the Oto were allies of the Pani, properly called Grand Pani (Pawnees Chaui), of the Sawkee (Sawk) and the Zorro (Renards or Foxes). They were at war with the Maha (Omaha), Poncare (Ponca), Sioux, Great and Little Osage, and also with the Caneci (Lipan or Apache) and the Lobo (Skidi).

The Platte and Nemaha Rivers.

It is believed that the original Oto, then living in the present state of Iowa, first dwelt near the mouth of the Great Nemaha river¹², before they fixed their home on the right bank of the river of the Pani which the Mallet brothers christened on June 2, 1739, with the name of Plate. This name so well characterizes this river that it remains to our day, with the spelling Platte.¹³ The Otoe never removed far from this region and, though driven many times toward the south during the course of the 19th century, they still occupied in 1882,¹⁴ a reserve located in the central part of the present state of Nebraska.

12. This river falls into the Missouri a little north of the southeast corner of the State of Nebraska.

13. The Indians call this river Nebraska, the educated Spanish translate the name Plate in Somero, the others into Plata which means silver! And the Americans themselves, at times have given it that of Swallow—(perhaps Shallow?)

14. The Oto were at that date removed to Indian Territory.

* See notes by Addison E. Sheldon on pages 29-31.



Chon-moni-case or Shau-mone-kusse, (called by the white fur-traders Ietan) is the most noted chief of the Otoe tribe in the early American period. He was one of those prominent at the great council of the Otoe tribe with Major Long Oct. 3, 1819, at their camp about six miles above Florence, near Fort Lisa. He was then a young man and this portrait as made at that period. Later he became a head chief. He was killed April 28, 1837, in a fight with young Otoes who had run away with one of his wives. Moses Merrill, first missionary to the Otoe, saw the fight and wrote the story of it in his diary. The great Otoe village where Ietan ruled was three miles southeast of the present village of Yutan. There are many remains of this village still visible. They were photographed by the editor of this magazine in 1912. Yutan was named in honor of this Otoe chief.

Nebraska Indians Journey to Paris.

About 1714 the grand chief of the Otoptata descended the Mississippi to meet Bienville, and died at Biloxi. Ten years later another chief of this nation accompanied M. De Bourmont to Paris. The nations on the Missouri had designed to send to France ten delegates, —one Otoptata, four Osage and five Missouri, one of whom was a young woman. But the Council of the Colony, for reasons of economy, held back five and permitted to go only the young Missouri woman, one Otoptata and one Osage, one Missouri, one Illinois and Chicagou, ambassador of the Metchigamias.

The (Indian) envoys arrived at Paris on September 20, 1725, and were received by the duke of Bourbon, the duchess of Orleans and the directors of the Company of the Indies. They were then presented to the king by Rev. Father de Beaubois (S. J.) who delivered to Louis XV a necklace of friendship sent by Mamantonense, chief of the Metchigamias, Kaokias and Tamarois¹⁵, with a speech¹⁶ given by Chicagou¹⁷. This orator had, a few days before, wished the duchess of Orleans "to be fruitful in great warriors like the ancestors of your husband and yourself."

These Indians from Louisiana were, for sometime, all the rage at Paris. They received beautiful blue suits with gold lace. At the Bois de Bolougne, before the court, they hunted deer "in their own style, that is by chasing" and they gave war dances at the opera and the Italian theatre. If we may believe Bossu one of these Indian envoys recalled thirty years afterward the perfumes so extravagantly used by Paris ladies and declared that "they smelled like alligators."

Nebraska Orator at Paris.

One of the three representatives of the Otoptatas, Osages and Missouris, we do not know which, died on the journey, and one of his companions pronounced an oration for the deceased in the name of all the Indians of the Missouri. Here are two charming passages from the translation made in prose and verse of his address before the king:

"Twelve whole moons have passed since we left our land (that is, Nebraska, Missouri and Iowa,) November, 1724 to appear here. One of our chiefs is dead on the way, the others gave up, or remained on the seashore, (that is, in New Or-

15. The Michigamea, Cahokia and Tama^{ro} were Indian tribes closely related to the Illinois.

16. Chicagou was still living in 1762. See Bossu, *New Voyages to West Indies*, 1768, v. I, p. 157.

17. See Dumont, *Historical Memoirs of Louisiana* v. II, p. 76.

* See notes by Addison E. Sheldon on pages 29-31.

leans.) We are ashamed to see our plain speech. We bring with us furs and the work of our squaws. You will not think them of much worth, since you have in abundance, things so much more beautiful, but everything was lost in the first ship which was to bring us across¹⁸—we cannot wonder enough at the beautiful things which we see every day. We are very happy in the treatment given us since we arrived in this land; we had not been so before we arrived here¹⁹. The tribes represent to you:

1. Not to abandon them and they ask the French as much to keep friendship as to provide for their needs.

2. That they have never had any one to teach them to pray save only a white collar²⁰ who came to them a little time ago, whom they are happy to have and beseech you to send others.

3. They beg you to send us back entrusted with your message and they will look on all upon this side (the great water) in order that they may see you again.

4. That the French having made known to us all, that you think in all this country, and that the stores which are here are from you. We are in your hands give to our bodies. (Sic).

Verses in Honor.

So much eloquence drove an anonymous versemaker to put in rhyme the prose of the Indians of the Missouri.²¹

Great Chief, Master of Life, Spirit Grand,
 We have come to behold thee in the bosom of thy land!
 And, given heart to cross the seas and their distress,
 We arrive, without regret, from our dark wilderness.
 From thy soul there flashes upon our grosser soul
 A light we would gladly take for our control,
 Thy subjects, soldier's, court, with astonishment we own,
 Thy lordly power, the glory of thy person and thy throne.
 Thy cities, and thy gardens, thy mansions and thy sports.

Our nations brave all offer thee with willing hearts
 Their services in battle with their strong arms and darts.
 Send to our hunting grounds, under thy sway,
 Thy Frenchmen, thy goods, thy white collars to play.

18. La Bretonnie.

19. Always economizing, the Council of Louisiana had allowed the Indians, during their voyage only Sailors' rations, without wine or fresh meat, food to which the savages were not accustomed. Happily for them Bourmont bought food for them with his own money.

20. A father of the Mission Etrangeres. (Foreign Missions.)

21. Library of the Arsenal. Manuscript No. 3724, pages 77-81.

"Missouri Princess".

As for the "Missouri Princess"—she was baptised at (the church) of Notre Dame of Paris, then married to Sergeant Dubois, one of the companions of Bourmont during his journey of 1724 to the Padowkas. Dubois scarcely reaped the reward of his promotion to be commissioned officer and his appointment as King's interpreter for the nation of the Illinois—which he received on the occasion of his marriage, for he perished at the massacre of the garrison of the fort of Orleans of the Missouri. If one may believe Dumont Madame Dubois caused the assassination of her husband, but that statement seems to us hardly probable. In any event she married again a little later a captain of militia of Illinois named Marin. Bossu saw at Paris in 1751 two children of the "Princess."²²

Ancient Home of Otoe Tribe.

At the time which concerns us the Oto lived on the south bank of the river Platte, most of the time, it seems, near the point where the course of that river turns sharply in the southern direction. It is difficult to locate the point with greater certainty, first, because the Indians lived in a number of villages²³ and during the 18th century drew, little by little, closer to the Missouri river, and second, because the explorers who give the number of leagues (figures varying) which separate the Oto from the Missouri, have failed for the most part to inform us whether they reckoned the distances by the direct trail across country or by following the great bend of the river.²⁴

The Pani—Maha.

The exact location of the Pani-Maha seems a little more difficult. These Indians, who certainly played a very important role in the massacre of the Spaniards, lived in 1720 north of the river Platte, along the different branches of the river which was generally given the name "River of the Pani-Maha," but later received the name of Loup which it still bears.²⁵

22. *New Voyages in North America*, 1777, p. 227.

23. "The Ottoes" says the Spanish manuscript already cited, "Do not claim the exclusive possession of any territory, and do not fix any boundaries to their own lands. They are hospitable, cultivate the soil in the same way as the Kansa and Osage. They hunt on the salt marshes of the lake of Nimnehaw."

24. In 1794 Truteau reckoned twelve leagues, by water, and Clark, ten years later, only eight. But neither one had ever gone up the river Platte, rarely navigable.

25. Bienville expressly asserted it. The Missouri also declared they took part in the Massacre. (Margry, v. VI, p. 450).

* See notes by Addison E. Sheldon on pages 29-31.



Pes-ke-le-cha-co

Was a noted Pawnee chief in the early period of the 19th century. He was one of the chiefs chosen to visit Washington some time prior to 1825 and confer with the president. His portrait was painted at that time. On his return he became one of the strong advocates of friendly relations with the white men in the councils of the Pawnee nation. He had seen the great cities filled with white people, their great guns, ships and factories and he never tired of relating the sights of this visit. In 1826 a war party of Osage raided the Pawnee villages. Pes-ke-le-cha-co killed an Osage. He rushed forward to lay his hand on the dead warrior—one of the highest honors in war. In the struggle to prevent this Pes-ke-le-cha-co was slain. His deeds were long related around the camp fires of the Pawnee nation.

The Pani-Maha were evidently part of the great nation of Pani (Pawnee) but seem to have formed a branch somewhat distinct from the other tribes, of whom the nearest was the Grand Pani sometimes called simply Pani—and the Pani-Pique, often formerly called White Pani. These latter were more friendly to the Spaniards than to the French. Nothing forbids conceding (with the Handbook of American Indians) that the Pani-Maha were the direct ancestors of the Pani-Loup, Loup or Skidi²⁶ who lived in the same region sixty years later. The independence of the Pani-Maha, in opposition to the other Pani, and the complex formation of their name might well arise from a fusion, common enough with Indians,—between one tribe of Pani and a group of Maha²⁷—which nation for so long a time wandered along the Missouri and one tribe of which was located at the beginning of the 18th century near the Oto.

The Loup²⁸, in any event, had without doubt forgotten their double (surmised) parentage, for they were later often at war with the white Pani and the Maha.

Spanish Officer's Note Book.

Let us now proceed to the history of the Spanish Expedition. And here, at the start, are the last leaves of the note book of the journey by a Spanish officer. These are the only records, unfortunately, which the Indians brought to M. de Boisbriant, commandant of the province of Illinois:

Translation of a leaf from a journal in Spanish, found at the defeat of a detachment of that nation by the Otoptata.²⁹

(On the margin—"Also written Ouatotchata").

"The trails which we find lead us to a place where we believe we shall get information of a band which, by all appearances, is not very far distant from some village. We resolve to camp in order to see what there is for us to do.

26. Many derivations have been proposed for this name, but all come from a root which means "wolf."

27. These Mahas, now called Omaha, belonged to the Siouan group as did the Kanza and the Osage, but in spite of the relation, they hardly understand the speech of nations living north of the river Platte.

28. At the beginning of the 19th century their number was upward of 1,000 of whom 280 were warriors.

29. War Department. MSS. No. 2592, folio 100. Also Colonies Cahier Book C13, Chapter IV, folios 235-235. The translations are different.

The lieutenant general having assembled all the officers on duty and on leave, and the natives, told them that a savage had reported to him that he had found some branches and leaves of fresh sand cherries which seemed to be the fragments of a meal of some band which had passed very recently. He then gave an estimate of the distance we had traveled, which in our reckoning was about 300 leagues. He then took counsel whether we should wait for orders from the Viceroy of New Spain, who had sent the detachment to discover from the savage nations if any French had established themselves in the region, or whether, since we had thus far found no proof of such establishment, we should continue our search with the Panane³⁰ nation (the only one which could give light on the question) and how we should communicate with them.

Names of Spanish Officers.

The military council was composed of Captain Thomas Aulguin, Aide-de-camp Joseph Domingue, Ensign Bernard Cazille; Captains Manuel Theverio de Albas, Alonzo Reald, Pierre Lucan; Corporals Joseph Gregoire, Manuel Thenonorio de Alba, Laurent Rodrigue; Captain Christophe de la Serne³¹ and Captain Jean Arhive; these two last named are natives.

All were of opinion that we ought to find the Panane in order to learn from them the truth or to know whether the Apaches had deceived us—that for this purpose the detachment should cross the river and thereafter proceed in the best way to carry out the plan proposed.

Crossing Great River Full of Islands.

Upon this resolve the lieutenant general ordered certain savages to locate the ford of the river so that the detachment might cross to the other shore. In the afternoon we began to carry over the baggage on travois upon the backs of the savages. It was not possible to get it across otherwise. The great number of islands in the river makes navigation by boats absolutely impracticable. Since one day did not suffice to transport everything our camp was divided that night by the river. Besides we did not wish to expose our natives by crossing at night, because it was so cold.

30. It is the name which the Spanish gave the Pani.

31. These proper names are spelled in different ways. Sometimes one finds Cerise.

* See notes by Addison E. Sheldon on pages 29-31.

Wednesday 7 of August.

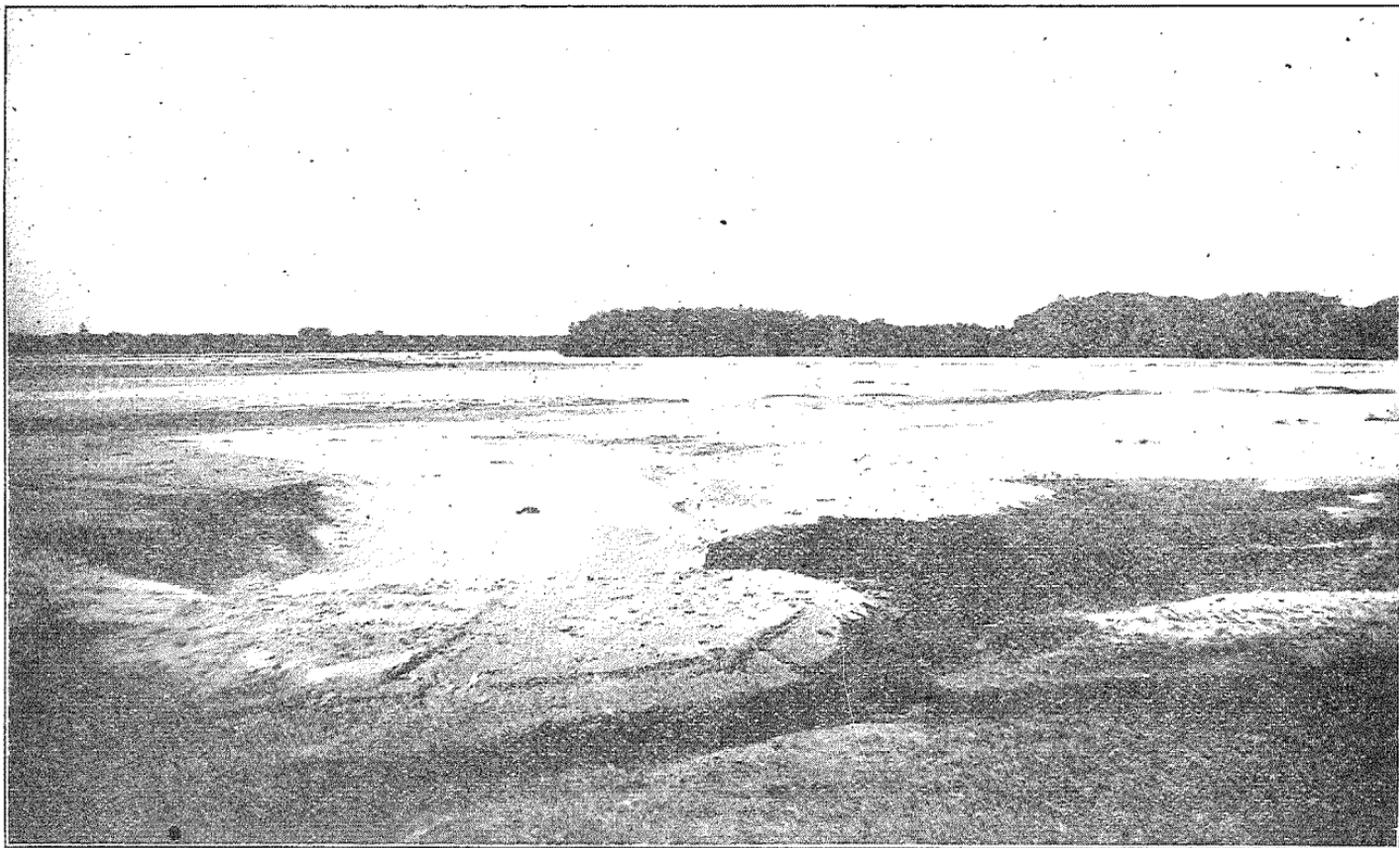
At the break of day we crossed over the remainder of our baggage and people to the other side of the river of Jesus-Maria. This was not without much trouble, but at last we found ourselves together at noon.

Thursday 8.

We leave the river Jesus-Maria following the trail of the Panane. The native Captain Serne boasted that he knows the trail well. He lost his way, however, and came back to camp. He was sent out again and with him Captain Joseph Narvanno, four corporals and two soldiers. A servant of Captain Serne, Panane by nation, said that he remembered, although he had left it when very young, that the village of his tribe was located on the bank of a river far to the north. Our soldiers were ordered to find out the truth of his statement. They were ordered at the same time when they were near the village to let the savage talk alone with his people, to tell them they had nothing to fear, that we were Spaniards, their friends. And in case they found no one in the village to go such distance as would enable them to return to camp the same day or ensuing night.

Another Large Stream Crossed.

Since we left the river Jesus-Maria we have taken care to follow the trail which we found before us and which we believe was made by the Panane. We found, at a league from the river a large creek which it was necessary to cross and we thought from the water which was very warm that it was a branch of the river whose course was from west to east. We then marched over a plain, following always the trail of those who had gone before us. We saw a number of trees a league away and we met one of our savages who was of Captain Narrans detachment and who had orders to wait for us to tell us to follow the creek and that he would follow the trail of those gone ahead since they found no one in the villages. The camp arrived at the bank of the creek and, as it was impossible to cross with our arms, we were obliged to keep along its bank and follow the same route as that taken by Captain Narrans. We had already travelled three leagues to reach the creek; we marched three more to arrive at a plain. Finally we halted in order that those following might not lose the way. At the same time two savages arrived from Captain Narrans to tell the lieutenant general that he should not worry if the captain did not return to camp that ensuing night, that he was following the trail of the Panane who, ac-



Junction of Loup River with the Platte, near present city of Columbus, Nebraska. Photo July, 1923.

ording to all indications, were not far off, and that the main command might march since he counted on rejoining them very soon.

Friday 9.

The camp being ready to march we saw, at more than a league's distance, some one approaching at a gallop. We were in advance and we found that it was one of our people who had been at the discovery. They told us that, eight leagues distant, on the other side of the creek we were following, they found the Panane in a bottom, singing and dancing according to custom of the savages. They seemed to be in great numbers. They had not judged it wise to approach nearer to them for fear of frightening them away during the night.

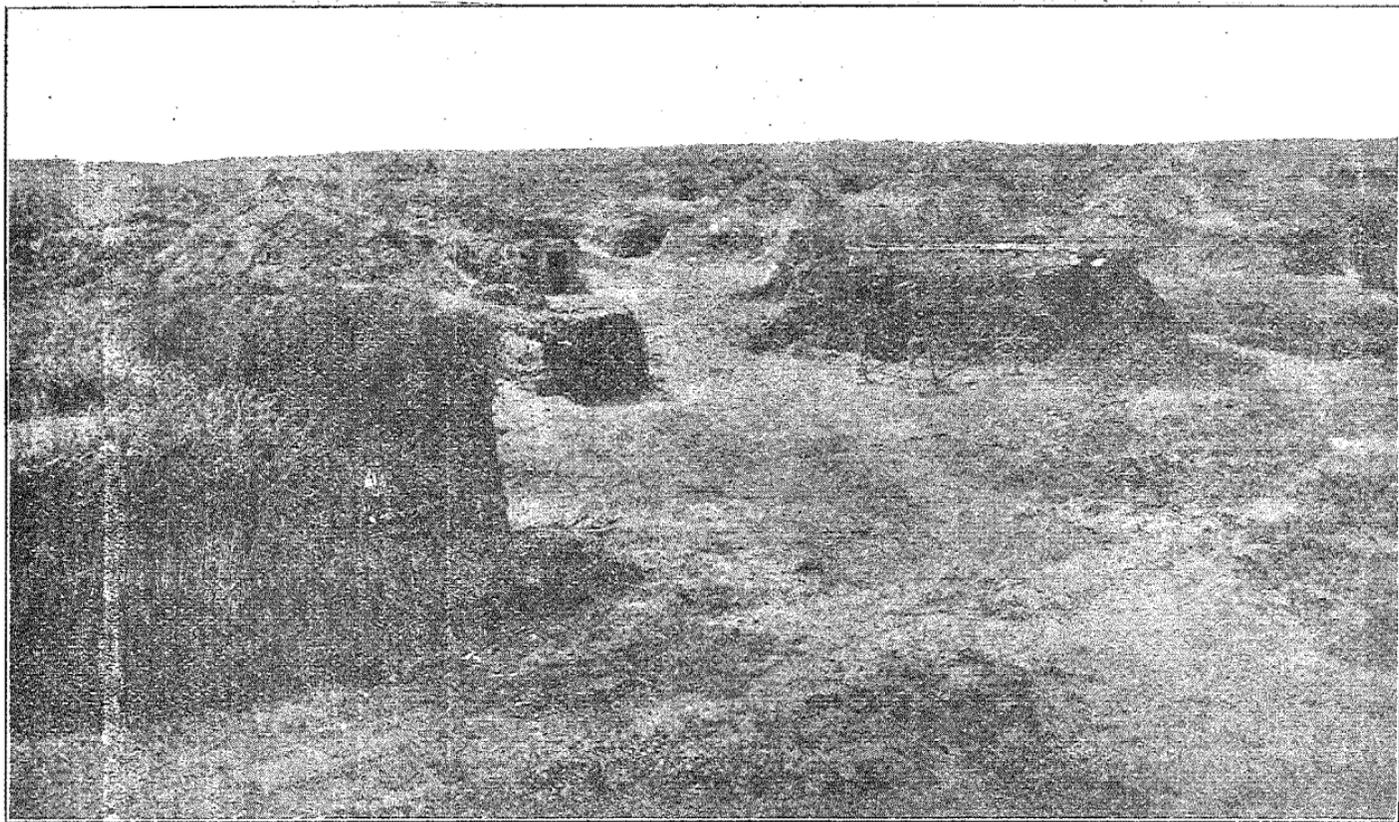
Upon this news order was at once given to cross to the other side of the creek. It was carried out with so much good fortune that everything went over without getting wet, although the mules were up to their girths in the water. We marched three leagues along the creek and found it convenient to halt at five leagues distant from the tribe, according to the report of those who brought in the news.

Council with Panane or Pawnee Nation.

As soon as we were in camp the lieutenant general sent the savage of Captain Serne to visit and talk with those of his nation, assuring them of our friendship and good will, and that we were taking this means of letting them know our good faith. Although the lieutenant general wished to send two soldiers with the savage to see that he was not insulted by those of his nation, the native told him that he had nothing to fear and that it was better to go alone, that if the soldiers accompanied him they might believe that there was deception and bad faith in what he proposed to them. This was agreed to and the savage started at 11 a. m. to see his nation. May God and the Holy Virgin, his mother, give him success. The general named the creek Saint Lawrence. The river Jesus-Maria makes a junction with this creek at the place where we are, in such manner that if we had not already crossed it would be impossible to do so.

At 6 p. m. we saw Francois Sistaca, which is the name of the savage of Don Christophe de la Serne, coming on the gallop. He related to the lieutenant general and all the others that he had been to see the band seen dancing the night before and, not finding it, he had followed the creek and had seen them crossing to the other side where they had a village and many people. He stopped at the bank of the creek, dis-

* See notes by Addison E. Sheldon on pages 29-31.



Pawnee Village at forks of Beaver Creek and Loup River, near Genoa, Nebraska, photo 1875. Photograph furnished by J. W. Williamson, Genoa.

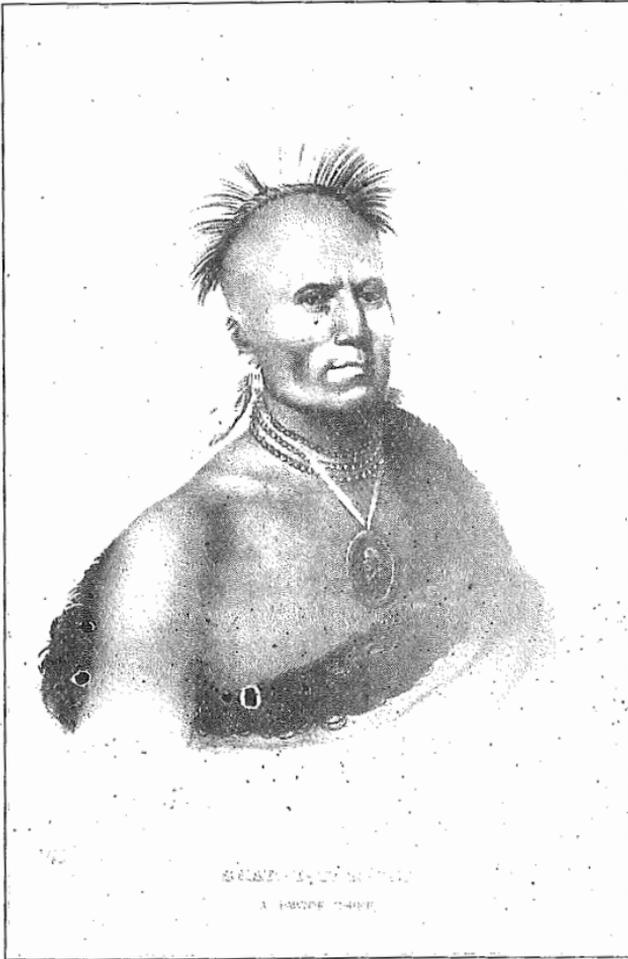
mounted, and called to the people crossing the river, making the signs of friendship and peace used by savages. As soon as he was seen many savages came to him and, among others, four at the head of them with tomahawks in hand, without bows or arrows, making cries, and seeing them approach within a stone's throw, he was afraid, made a sign with his cap as though he were calling people back of him and mounting his horse he galloped eight leagues to camp without stopping.

Saturday 10th of the month.

Feast day of the glorious Martyr, Saint Lawrence (died Aug. 10, A. D. 258). The camp marched along the river, following the band (of savages) and having discovered on the other side of the creek a village with a number of houses and people passing from one side to the other by a ford, making calls easily heard because only the creek was between us, we made the signs of peace and friendship spoken of before. Twenty-five or thirty savages came to the edge of the creek to talk with us. We heard easily what they said. The savage of Don Christophe la Serne, who recognized the language of his nation, told the lieutenant general that they asked for peace and that he should come into their village.

They made signs looking at the sun²² which meant that the Spaniards need wait only one day for their visit. At once the savage of Don Christophe La Serne resolved to cross over to the other side in spite of the fear he had the day before. The camp halted opposite the village and the savage took off his clothing in order to swim across, with consent of his master. The lieutenant general told him to tell his nation that he would come and visit them with no design of doing them the least injury, as they could easily see since he had just discovered them without any strategems, as he might have done when he learned they were singing and dancing not more than two leagues distant. Thus they might confer with us in entire safety for peace and the friendly union which should exist between brothers and subjects of the same king. The lieutenant general gave tobacco for the savage to carry to them, which is the usual custom at these meetings.

32. A party of Pani-Maha on a hunting expedition had evidently retreated before the Spaniards in order to draw them to the country of the Otoptata. But the Pani-Maha had a species of religion based on the worship of a certain number of stars and their chief villages were always arranged in a certain relation to each other. On this account, no doubt, these signs which the Spaniards interpreted in their own way.



Shar-i-tar-ish was a principal chief of the Grand Pawnee tribe. He was son of another chief of the same name mentioned as Char-actar-ish by Lieutenant Pike who met him at the Grand Pawnee village on the Republican river in 1806. The subject of this portrait succeeded his elder brother, Ta-re-ca-wa-ho as head chief. The latter was invited to visit the president at Washington, but refused because he thought the Pawnee the greatest people on earth and would not condescend to go in person. He sent Shar-i-tar-ish in his stead. Shar-i-tar-ish was then a young man, six feet tall, well proportioned and of fine appearance. His portrait was made at Washington. Soon after his return he became head chief and died a little later, aged thirty. He was succeeded by Ish-ca-te-pi sometimes spelled Is-ka-tap-pi and called "The Wicked Chief."

End of Military Note Book.

The last leaves of the record of this journal were evidently lost like those of the beginning. However, as we know that the massacre of the Spaniards took place the day after their meeting with the Optoptata and their allies, there is every ground for supposing that the manuscript ended at the date of August 10, 1720 and that its author was killed the next day.

News of the Massacre Carried to the French.

At any rate the news of the disaster to the expedition was known in all its details at Kaskaskia about the beginning of November. The first rumors of it probably arrived a month earlier, for it seems the same event referred to in the following letter. However, since the Spaniards were not always in a body, the letter may refer to an isolated detachment.

Slavery and Human Sacrifice in Nebraska Region.

"All the nations of the Missouri" wrote Boisbriant on October 5, 1720³³, "have made peace with the Pani-Maha, but they utterly refuse to consider with the Padoka. The Otop-tata and the Canzes have been at war with the latter (Padoka). They have taken 250 slaves. As in the village where they have taken these there were many Spaniards, twenty of these are among the slain. This news has been brought to Sieur Boisbriant by four Frenchman whom he had given permission to go and buy horses from the Panyouessa³⁴ (Wichita). Before the arrival of these French that nation had also defeated a village of Padoka. It had led away 100 slaves whom it had burned without mercy from day to day. Our French ransomed four or five from the flames, but their generosity was ill rewarded. The wretches ran away a little later and carried with them, the clothing of their liberators." —and further on "A Spaniard escaped from the defeat recorded above. He is with the Canzes (Kansas). We have written a Frenchman who is on the Missouri, to ransom the Spaniard and bring him this fall to Sieur Boisbriant. He hopes to draw from the Spaniard information of the commerce which the Spanish carry on with the savages and to learn from him if there are mines in that region."

33. Letter dated at Kaskakias.

34. According to the *Handbook of American Indians* the Paniouessa were the Wichita. It is necessary to concede that these Indians lived at that time not far from the river of the Kanza.

* See notes by Addison E. Sheldon on pages 29-31.



Chon-ca-pe, sometimes written Shunk-co-pe, was also called "Big Kansas." He lived in the first half of the 19th century. He was a signer of the treaty of 1825 made at Council Bluffs, between the United States and the Otoe tribe. Soon after he was called to Washington to meet the president. At this visit this portrait was made. The grizzly bear necklace is a trophy of a victory over one of those fierce animals.

On November 22, 1720, Boisbriant gave more precise information.

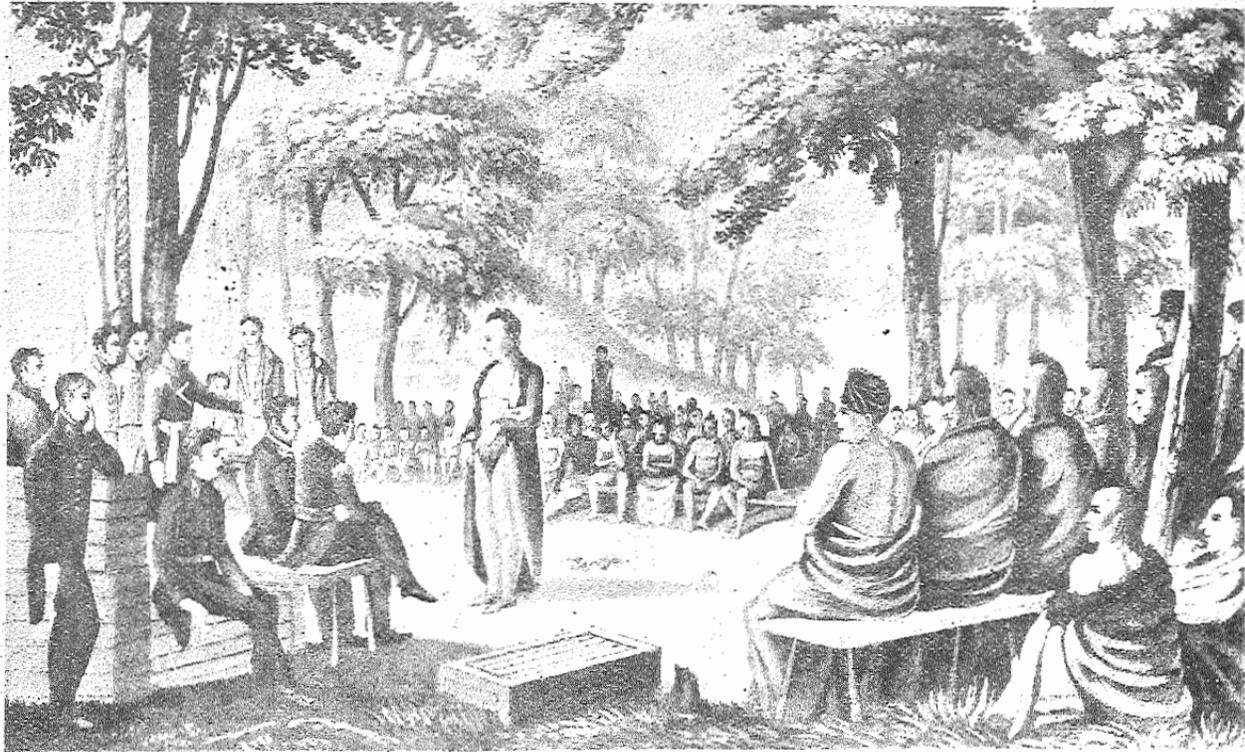
"The Spaniards to the number of 250, accompanied by the Padoka³⁵ nation, came to make an establishment on the Missouri. On the way they defeated five³⁶ nations. The commandant believed, after one splendid victory, he was strong enough to withstand anything. He sent part of his force to conduct the slaves taken in the villages he had destroyed and advanced within 15 leagues of the Otoptata. His plan, was to extirpate that nation. He had with him then 60 Spaniards and 150 Padokas.

Oto Deceive the Spaniards.

The Otoptata, warned by the Pani-Maha of the Spanish approach, marched to meet him. They called themselves Pani-Maha, which was rendered easier since they spoke the language of the Pani-Maha as though their native language. The Spanish commander, deceived, asked if there were any French on the Missouri river and assured them that he would give them a great quantity of goods if they would deliver French into his hands. They replied that there were French with the Otoptata and that they would make it easy for him to capture them. They passed the night together, but in very different ways. The Otoptata danced, the Padoka fled from fear, while the Spaniards, abandoned by their allies kept on their guard. The Spaniards feared nothing, since they trusted in such a great number of the pretended Pani-Maha.

35. The Padouka (Comanche) are allies to the great Shoshonean family whose diverse branches, located at first in the north, successively occupied a wide territory which stretched from Vancouver Island as far as Texas. In 1720 the Padouka dwelt near the headwaters of the Kansas. It was there that Bourgmont in 1724 came to visit them in order to break their alliance with the Spaniards. But these Indians, essentially nomads, living in tents, always at war with their neighbors, later emigrated south and crossed the Red river. By virtue of information we may point out that this author of the Spanish manuscript already cited, who very well knew the Indians of Texas, was astonished because, in spite of his extensive researches he was not able to understand what had become of the great nation of the Padouka which numbered 2,000 warriors—and, in consequence, supposed that these Indians dispersed and formed the following nations: Wetepahatoe (one of the tribes of the Kiowa), Kiawa, Kanenawish, Kalteka, Dotame, etc.

36. Two of these tribes, according to Father Charlevoix made part of the Otoptata nation, but this statement seems doubtful.



Oto Council

Great Council of Otoe Indian tribe held with Major Long October 3, 1819 at Long's Encampment on the Missouri river, about 6 miles north of the present Florence. Sketch made at the time by Thomas Seymour, member of Long's Expedition. Chief Ietan or Chon-moni-case was one of the chief speakers.

Oto Destroy the Spanish Army.

On the next day the savages proposed an Iroquois dance. The Spaniards agreed and unloaded their mules in order to rest. About two o'clock in the afternoon the Otoptata asked for the lances of the Spaniards for their dancers to use in the dance and they were granted them.³⁷ The chief of the savages during the dance formed his warriors in groups about the Spaniards who were always under arms. When he saw everything arranged as he wished he fired a pistol upon the Spanish. At the signal all his men attacked with such impetuosity that all the Spaniards were killed in less than an instant. Only four of them were quick enough to mount their horses and drive their mules ahead of them. But some young warriors seized their quivers, shot and killed two of them. The two sole survivors of the sixty Spaniards pushed on toward Mexico, which they could reach with difficulty deprived as they were of all provisions.

The chaplain of the detachment was made prisoner. The Otoptata chief was bringing him to Sieur Boisbriant, but the chief was compelled to turn back on receiving news that the Renards (Fox) had come to attack his village. A man named Chevallier was ordered to go in search of the chaplain.

Spaniards Plan to Colonize Nebraska Country.

This undertaking of the Spanish shows the necessity of establishing a post on the Missouri. They brought with them a large number of oxen, cows and sheep which proves their purpose to make a permanent settlement.

Booty from the Battlefield.

According to Charlevoix there were two chaplains. "All that was told me" said he "related to the chaplain who was slain and from whom was taken a book of prayers which I have not seen. It was apparently his breviary. I purchased his pistol, his shoes were worthless, and the savage would not part with the ointment because when taken it was a sovereign remedy for all kinds of ills. I was curious to know how he used it and he replied that it was enough to swallow a little at a time and whatever illness one had he was instantly cured. He assured me that he had not yet tried it and I counselled him not to do so. We find the savages here very coarse. There is much need of spirituality or at least that their minds should be as open as those who have had more intercourse with us."

37. According to Dumont the Spaniards, after having made a treaty with the Indians, had given them arms to attack the French. He adds what seems correct (after correcting the names) that the Oto and their allies, taken for Pani by the Spaniards, learned from the mouth of the latter (the Spaniards) that they had come to destroy them (the Oto).

* See notes by Addison E. Sheldon on pages 29-31.

The spoils of the Spaniards were scattered everywhere. The letter of Charlevoix is dated at Michillimakinac. The following one was written to the Illinois by the engineer Lallemand who explored the mines of the Maramek river region.

"The Spaniards of New Mexico"³⁸ Says he "came three or four months ago with the design to establish themselves on the Missouri. They had with them a number of mules loaded with all kinds of tools to work the mines. They drove with them a number of cows and sheep. In this array they arrived at a nation called Octotata, two hundred leagues from here."

"They took only 40 days to reach the Octotata. It is presumed that they did not move rapidly on account of the baggage and the animals which they brought with them."³⁹

Distance from Santa Fe to Nebraska Country.

"It is believed that it is not more than 120 leagues⁴⁰ from New Mexico to the Octotata. These savages say there is a fort built of stone four days journey from where they are."

"On their way they killed and destroyed many savage nations. They flattered themselves they would finish the others. The affair turned out differently."

Account of Charlevoix.

"The Octotata who were on the hunt learned all the cruelties which the Spanish had inflicted on their neighbors. They dissimulated and came to the number of 60 to smoke the pipe of peace with their new hosts, the Spaniards, who suspected nothing. The savages all of a sudden gave a great cry which was the signal to strike them down, they did this so well only one remained. The mules took fright and fled on the run with their loads. The prisoner whom the savages had captured was a monk of San Juan de Dios. He escaped a little later. The savages were foolish enough to let him have a horse in order to show them how to ride one.⁴¹ His shrewdness had been too smart for them and he fled with all speed. Since then it is learned that other Spaniards had returned to the attack and that they had met the same fate as the first, excepting one whom the savages would send here at once. M.

38. This letter is dated April 5, 1721.

39. This note is found on the margin of the document.

40. This figure is, manifestly, incorrect. The figure of 300 leagues, as given by the Spaniards, approaches very much nearer to the truth.

41. Charlevoix says that the Chaplain who escaped from the "Missouristes" was a remarkable horseman and the Indians who, according to Dumont, did not know how to manage a horse, greatly admired his skill. Before fleeing the "Jacobin" had had the foresight to prepare a package of food.

* See notes by Addison E. Sheldon on pages 29-31.

de Boisbriant has shown me several documents written in Spanish, among others one which is marked Esquadras with the names of those who apparently were on guard for that day. The other papers are songs or hymns and prayers to the Virgin. There are some leaves of the breviary of the Spanish monk and some rosaries with their crosses, evident proof that the savages have not made up a tale. From this it must appear that there are rich mines on the Missouri since the Spaniards wish to penetrate there whether desired or not."

Hope of Mines in Missouri River Region.

Poor Lallement who, in spite of his efforts, never succeeded in discovering in the region of the river Maramek anything but very poor mines difficult to work, had not yet lost his illusions. It was for him a deadly irony, the news of the death of the Spanish prospectors, duped like himself by the chimerical prospectus of the Company of the Indies, coming just at this time to beguile him.

In Le Page du Pratz there is a long account, very picturesque but fantastic, of the arrival at Kaskaskia of Indians bearing the spoils of the Spaniards. His account would make one think a whole convent had been massacred, so much one glimpses of defiling of chasubles, of stoles, of surplices, of crosses and candlesticks.

But what is for us more interesting Du Pratz adds:

Spanish Maps of Nebraska Region.

"The Indians brought with them the map which had so ill-guided the Spaniards. After having examined it, it seems to me better, for the west of our colony which is toward them, than for the region which concerns us. According to this map it appears that the Red River and the Arkansas must bend more than I have said and that the source of the Missouri is more to the west than shown by our geographers—since the Spaniards should know that region better than the French who have given notes upon it."

Where Did Massacre Take Place?

Let us now see whether the documents which precede, in spite of their apparent lack of certainty, may not, in reality, be sufficiently exact to determine with satisfactory approximation, the place where the massacre of the Spaniards occurred.

Not in Osage Country.

Let us observe, at the start, that the expedition did not go to the Osage,¹² as Le Page du Pratz believed, but to the Pani, most of whose tribes then dwelt to the north of or along

¹² See notes by Addison E. Sheldon on pages 29-31.

the middle course of the river Platte. The Spanish officers seemed much better informed than that author thinks and would therefore seek to avoid contact with the Osage who had always shown themselves faithful allies of the French. On the other hand the Spanish, who held only distant friendly relations (except with the Apache and Padoka) could hardly yet have knowledge of the peace, quite recent, between the Pani-Maha and our allies the Missouri, the Oto and the Kanza.

The Platte or Kansas River?

The geographic hints contained in the last leaves of the note book of the route furnish only rather vague information and the author seems a little lost among the divers branches which join the river "Jesus-Maria." However, since it must relate to some affluent of the Kanzas—or of the river Platte—the description seems precise enough to show that the river, not navigable and full of islands, which the Spaniards in search of the Pari, crossed on the 7th and 8th of August, 1720, (after having traveled 300 leagues) could be none other than the river Platte, whose name indicates³³ that it is as broad as it is shallow.

So far as the Creek of "Saint Lawrence", a veritable river, since the mules could hardly cross it in the month of August, in studying the map of this region, and in comparing the place then inhabited by the Oto, with the various distances indicated which otherwise show remarkable agreement, one may, we believe, identify it most surely with the Loup Fork and the name of this river comes from the surname of the tribe of Loup Indians, which our trappers gave at another time to the later Pani-Maha along its banks.

Paris Editor Believes it was at Junction of Loup and Platte.

The Spanish expedition was, then, exterminated on August 11, 1720, by the Oto and Pani-Maha at a point below, but very near, the junction of the Loup Fork and the river Platte. This place is in fact, located in a straight line about 25 leagues from the Missouri. And the disaster according to Boisbriant, occurred about 15 leagues west of the Otoptata who dwelt about 8 hours in an air line, from Missouri.

When once the gold mines had vanished it does not seem that the Spaniards renewed their efforts, although this dispatch from Bienville on April 25, 1722, reports:

"I learned a little while ago, from the savages of the Missouri, that the Spaniards of New Mexico calculated to return and demand satisfaction from those who defeated them, and to make at the same time, a settlement upon the river of the Kanzas (Kansas) which flows into Missouri."

Revenge on the French.

And one might also ask whether it was not at the instigation of the Spaniards that the Indians massacred, about 1725-26, under mysterious circumstances the garrison of Fort d'Orleans,⁴² then reduced on account of economy, to 8 men. It was then, we have already stated, commanded by Dubois, the first husband of the "Princess of the Missouri."

42. A tribe of this nation lived at this period a little below the junction of the Missouri and the Kanzas but most of the Osage lived in the valley of the river which still bears their name.

43. "It is only navigable for very small hunting canoes," Journal of Truteau (American Historical Review, January 1914.) Perrin du Lac says that one can navigate it only in the springtime.

44. This fort whose site is not exactly known was located on the Missouri a few leagues above its junction with Grand river.

NOTES BY ADDISON E. SHELDON

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1. Under the title, "The Spanish Caravan", Sheldon's "History and Stories of Nebraska", first edition published in 1913, gave a summary of what was then known upon this subject and a critical review of conjectures upon it. The new information contained in this article clears up many of the conjectures and gives us an historical basis for the real story.

2. The discovery of new documents upon Louisiana and the Missouri river region in the last 20 years has been full of interesting encouragement. These documents were generally sent from New Orleans to France or to Spain during the 18th century. They were filed away in pigeon holes from which they are now being rescued by the diligent scholarship of Europe and America.

3. The books mentioned by the French editor in his notes 1, 2, 3, are the chief bases of our knowledge of the French Province of Louisiana as it was 150 years ago. The Missouri country (including Nebraska) was even then known in its general features from reports of French far-traders.

4. Pierre Francois Xavier de Charlevoix, born 29 October, 1682, died 1 February, 1761. Twice visited Canada. Wrote "History of New France" and "Journal and Letters" of his travels.

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5. Pierre Margry, born 8 December, 1818, at Paris. Died 27 March, 1894, at Paris. He was author of many important books on early history of America—most valuable of them six volumes on French and Spanish explorations entitled "Memoires et Documents pour servir a l'histoire des origines francaises des pays d'outremer." Volume six of this series contains the most important documents relating to the Missouri river region including the present Nebraska. (See a fine article on Margry's life work in the Louisiana Historical Quarterly for April, 1922.)

6. John Law, born in 1671, died 1729, was a shrewd Scotch economist and promoter. His most famous financial promotion was the Company of the Indies. This company sold shares to the French public based upon the expectation of great profit from the region known as the Province of Louisiana, including the present Nebraska. The company had the support of the French government and a practical monopoly of the French foreign trade. The immediate expectation of profit was from the development of mines in the Missouri river region. These mines were reported as having vast quantities of all kinds of metals. The shares in the Indies Company rose to a premium of 4,000%. A perfect craze to make fortunes out of the undeveloped resources in the Mississippi Valley seized the French public. It was impossible for these expectations to be realized at once, and, after a period of three years of the wildest speculation, the company went up in smoke and its shareholders were ruined. This is called "The Mississippi Bubble." It was accompanied with a large issue of paper money through the Royal Bank controlled by John Law.

7. The Rue Quinempoix was the location of the stock-exchange at Paris in 1720. It corresponded in the popular language with the American phrase "Wall Street."

8. The original French is more musical and sarcastic than the best translation:

Les Mines, l'on y fouillera
Car, sans doute on en trouvera
Si la Nature en a mis!

9. The Otoe occupied in general, southeastern Nebraska a century ago. The salt basin at Lincoln was near the dividing line between territory claimed by the Pawnee and claimed by the Otoe. Both tribes gathered salt at the basin. In 1868-70 bands of Otoe and bands of Pawnee camped frequently on the homestead in Seward county, where the editor of this magazine lived as a boy.

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10. Morse's Geography of the World (copy dated 1805 in the Historical Society library) has the legend "R. Plate or Shallow R.", upon the chief stream on the map in the Nebraska region. The French editor (or his printer) has simply misspelled the word in suggesting that the river is ever called "Swallow." In the Otoe language Ne-brath-ka means Water Shallow.

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11. This chief of the Metchigamias is the original from which the name of the modern city of Chicago is derived.

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12. "Salt Marshes of the Lake of Nemahaw" is the earliest reference I have found in literature to the Nemaha river. It suggests that the early explorers had the idea that the salt basin at Lincoln was connected with the streams we now call Nemaha.

13. By section lines the site of the great Otoe village near Yutan is 25 miles west and about eleven north of the mouth of the Platte. This village was the capital city of the Otoe tribe for 100 years or more. Its remains today cover 640 acres of land.

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14. "Fresh Sand Cherries." In the original French "des feuilles d'Oloues (?) fraiches." The Paris editor inserts the question mark into the Spanish text, evidently not understanding what kind of wild fruit is meant. Any one familiar with the Platte Valley in the month of August knows that sand cherries are the most abundant fruit to be found and most likely to be the one eaten by this band of Indians.

15. "The great number of islands in the river" certainly fits the Platte better than any other stream between Santa Fe and the Missouri river.

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16. The junction of the river San Maria with the creek named St. Lawrence by the Spanish commander "in such a manner that if we had not already crossed it would be impossible to do so," suggests one of three difficulties, great depth of water, very swift current or difficult banks. Either of the first two would fit the junction of the Loup and the Platte today.

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17. Early records of the plains Indians clearly show a system of slavery or servitude for captives. Human sacrifice is known to have existed among the Pawnee in Nebraska, with many citations on that point.

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18. "An Iroquois dance." The Iroquois tribe set the style in dancing for all other Indian tribes in North America. More than thirty different Iroquois dances are described by competent writers on the subject. Each dance had a distinct style and signification.

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19. The distance from Santa Fe to the junction of the Loup and the Platte, as measured in air line across the map today is 619 miles. The distance by railroad, via Denver from Columbus, Nebraska to Santa Fe is 965 miles. The league unit of measurement is about 3 miles. The French kilometre is about 3-5th of a mile.

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20. Mines in the Missouri region. All the early explorers got the idea of very rich mines in the region now occupied by the states of Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska and Iowa. There are in fact rich mines in that region, but not the kind either the Spanish or French could utilize at that time. A number of early references to "Spanish Mines," on the Weeping Water refer beyond doubt to the excavations on the Pollard farm at Nehawka, studied twenty years ago by Curator Blackman and others of the Nebraska State Historical Society. About forty acres of limestone hill is tunnelled and dug in a most extraordinary manner, probably by Indians searching for flint. Early fur-traders saw this hill and carried report down the Missouri of Spanish mines on the Weeping Water. There were expert advertising geniuses in 1720 as well as in 1923.