

FIRST VISIT
of
NEBRASKA INDIANS TO PARIS
IN 1725

The following account of the first visit of Indians from the Nebraska region to the King of France, and Royal court at Paris is furnished by Rev. M. A. Shine, of Plattsmouth. The original article appeared in the London Postman, January 27, 1726. It was copied into the United States Catholic Historical Magazine for April, 1890, where it was found by Father Shine. It confirms the account translated from the Journal des Americanistes in many respects and adds to our knowledge of the relation of the Indians of the Missouri valley to France two centuries ago:

ILLINOIS, OSAGE AND OTOPTATA CHIEFS
IN PARIS, IN 1725.

Since our last, came in the mail due from Holland with a farther Account from Paris of the four Savages of Mississippi:

On the 28th of November, the four Chiefs, and the Savage Maid were again presented to the Company, (of the Indies) when the Chief of the Illinois, as a Christian, and an ancient Ally of the French, presented his Speech to the Comptroller General, and the three other Chiefs also presented theirs in the name of their Three Nations, which were read by the Company's Secretary.

The speech of the Illinois to the India Company, was as follows:

"The Black Gown* tells me that you are some of the most eminent Men of the French Nation, whom the King has made Chiefs of Mississippi. I am ashamed to be so little in comparison with you. Tho' I am Chief of my Village, and esteemed in my own Country, I am nothing; but I love Prayer and the French. Therefore, you ought to love me and to love my Nation, which has always been allied to the French.

"The French are with us. We have yielded them the country which we possess in Cassakias. We are very well pleased with them, but we don't like to see them come and mingle themselves with us, and to take up their Habitations in the midst of our Village and our Deserts. 'Tis my Opinion that you who are great Chiefs, should leave us Masters of the country where we have placed our Fire.

*Indians commonly called a priest a "black gown."

"I am come hither to see the King in the Name of my Nation and my young People. When shall I see him? All the fine Things I see are nothing if I do not see the King, our true Father and yours, and if I do not hear His Word to report them to my young people.

"I was dead some Days ago, but now I am reviv'd, because great Care has been taken of me. I thank you for it, and hope that you will continue it. In short, because you are our Chiefs, speak kindly to me that my young People may be pleas'd when I see them again, and that they may perceive that you are well disposed towards us. This is what I had to say to you, who am your Son, and a Friend of the French."

CHICAGO.

The following Speech was made to the India Company by the Chiefs of the Indian Nations call'd Missouri, Osages, and Otoptata.

"'Tis now Twelve entire Moons since we set out from our lands to this Country. One of our Chiefs dy'd by the way, the others were left on the Sea Shore.

"We were given to understand that the King and Company demanded some of each of our Nations. We are here now before you, but still ignorant of what you want with us.

"We are ashamed to see that we have nothing worth your acceptance. We brought with us some Skins and the Workmanship of our Wives, which you that have abundance of fine things of more importance would not have valued, but all was lost in the first Ship that was to have carry'd us.

"We can't sufficiently admire the fine things which we see every day, Things which we shall never forget, and which will rejoyce all to whom we relate them.

"We are very well pleas'd with the Treatment we have met with since we came to this Country, but were uneasy till we arrived.

"Our Seniors each for his Nation, have enjoyn'd and charged us to lay their Demands before you.

1. "They desire you not to abandon them, and hope the French will not only furnish their necessities, but maintain their union.

2. "They complain that they never had any Body among them to instruct them to pray, but one White Band** lately come thither, with whom they are well pleased.

3. "They desire you to send us back furnish'd with your Promise. They are all looking this way to see us again.

4. "The French have told us that you consider well in all this Country, and that the Magazines there are yours. We are in your power. Consider how to dispose of your Bodies.

After the reading these Speeches, the Comptroller General ordered his Answer to be read to all of them, which was composed with that Spirit proper for conversing with that People, and the better to be understood by means of their Interpreters. He gave a Copy of it to each of their Chiefs.

Then he caused the presents of the Company to be delivered to them, consisting of a Habit compleatly French, being a blue Coat with Silver Buttons and Buttonholes, scarlet Waste coats, embroider'd with Silver, red Breeches and Hose, Silver Lac'd Hats, some with red and others with blue Feathers, six ruffled Shirts, six Necks, etc. A Savage Habit, consisting of a Cloth Wrapper, five Quarters wide, with Silver Lace two Inches above the List, which is left there, because the Savages reckon it an Ornament, a Braguet, which is a quarter of an Ell of scarlet Cloth adorned with silver Lace above the Selvage. This they make use of to cover their Nudities. And a pair of Mitase, which are Cloth Stockings half blue and half red, which comes up to the Thigh, and are ty'd with Ribbons to their Sashes.

The Dress presented to the Savage Girl, was a Damask Gown of Flame Colour, with Gold Flowers, an under Petticoat of the same, a Panier, two pair of Boddice, six Lac'd Shifts, and Ribbons of Gold and Silver, and a pair of Silk Stockings.

THE ANSWER OF THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF
THE FRENCH INDIA COMPANY, TO THE SPEECH OF
THE FOUR SAVAGES

INSERTED IN OUR LAST, WHICH ANSWER WAS
PRONOUNCED BY THE COMPANY'S SECRETARY.

Hear Illinois, Missouri, Osages and Otoptata:

"I am very glad that you have heard the Speech of the Company, I see you here with Pleasure. The Company will always think of you, and can never forget your saying.

"They know, Illinois, that you are a Man of Prayer. They conjecture that you Missouri, you Osages, you Optata will hear the Words of the Missionaries that shall be sent unto you.

You have seen how many People the great Onontio (King) commands. You cannot but know how his Riches and Magnificence by his Palaces and Gardens where you have been.

"This great Onontio is he whom we all obey. He is our Father and the Governor of Louisiana is his Interpreter. He has kindled the Fire of his Council at New Orleans. 'Tis from thence all our Thoughts ought to proceed. Harken not to any other Words but such as shall be deliver'd to you from the place. They will be the Words of the Great Onontio. If you hear them, the Roads will be free, and you will have very good Hunting.

"The Company, who loves you, and takes you into their very Bosom, gives you Tobacco to make your hearts merry, to disperse any clouds that might overcast your Minds, and to keep you in good Humor till you depart. They also give you Cloaths for you to wear here, and others, after the Fashion of your own Nation. They made the like provision for the good Woman that is come with you."

On the 22d of November these Savages set out for Fountainebleau. On the 24th, they were carried about to all the Princes and Princesses and other Lords and Ladies of the Court, who were fond to see Savages whom to their Surprise they found to have as much Spirit and good Sense as other Men. At night, the Comptroller General carried them to the Duke of Bourbon, to whom the Illinois made the following Speech:

GREAT CHIEF, MY FATHER,

"I know that your Ancestors were mighty Men and great Warriours, who often dy'd their Helmets with the Blood of the Enemies of the French. At this Day you are without your Helmets because there are no Enemies; but you have given to the French their true Mother, who is above all the great women in the World. This is more than beating an enemy. I know also that the Father of the French loves you, and that he commits his Children to your care, and that he hears your Words. Learn therefore of him to be always truly the Father of the French and ours; cause him to think of us, and to love me and my Nation. May you also love us as much as I admire you, and may you be of Opinion that you can never love us too much."

The Duke of Bourbon answer'd the Illinois, That he was much obliged for the advantageous Idea he had of him, and that he could not return a better Answer to his Compliment that by assuring him that he looked upon as a Chief and a great Warriour, and by promising to take Care that he returns away contented, and more attached than ever to the French nation.

His Serene Highness afterwards received the compliments of Missouri, Osages and Otoptata, and when he had return'd a civil answer to each, promised to present them next Day to the King as he came from hunting, which he accordingly did, and introduced them all dress'd in their Savage Habits into the King's Cabinet, when Father Beaubois presented his Majesty the Illinois and a letter from the Grand Chief, and made the following speech:

SIRE,

"This Savage, who has the honor to appear before your Majesty, is no ordinary Man. Yet tho' the Chief of his village, and one of the most considerable of his Nation, he has nothing of that Pomp and Grandeur which surround Princes, and which render them so venerable to the people who are under 'em, these being things unknown in America. But what your Majesty will no doubt value him for is, that this Indian, born as one may say in another World, and brought up in the middle of Forests, could conceive so high an Idea of your Grandeur, as so earnestly to desire to see it nearer, and to come and pay you Homage. An unhappy Shipwreck, which chang'd the minds of those who accompanied him, did not intimidate him, and since he has been in France, the sight of what has been the Astonishment of all Foreigners, has still made him the more eager of seeing the Monarch of so potent an Empire. The most considerable Chief of all the Illinois nation has a thousand times enjoy'd the happiness of this, as himself ingenuously owns to your Majesty, and has, as one may say, a thousand times regretted that he is so necessary to the French nation in his own country. Vouchsafe, Sire, kindly to receive the Letter which he presumes to send to your Majesty, and be pleased to return a favorable Answer.

"For my Part, Sire, I think myself very happy, that I have this Day the Honour of approaching your Throne, there to be Witness of the Wonders which France admires in your Sacred Person. Permit me, Sire, to beg your Majesty's Royal Protection for the Missions of Louisiana, that vast Province, where there cannot be too many for the welfare of your Colony, and to procure to the many Savage nations that inhabit it, the Knowledge of the True God. Lewis le Grand of Glorious Memory, always made it his delight to protect those whom Providence honours with so holy a Ministry, and thereby to demonstrate that Zeal he had for the Propagation of the Faith. Being Heir, Sire, of his Heroick Virtues, as you are of his rich Diadem, do you show the same Zeal, which

cannot but be infinitely glorious to you. We have a Right it seems to expect it from your Piety, which appeared so eminently in the Choice you have made of the most virtuous Princess of the world, to place her by you on the most August Throne in the Universe.
