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W. A. ALLEN, AUTHOR

THE SHEEP EATERS

BY

W. A. ALLEN, D.D.S.

[Pg 1]



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[Pg 2]

*This Book Is Affectionately
Dedicated To My Friend*

[Pg 3]

MRS. CLARA DALLAS.

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THE SHEEP EATERS

CHAPTER I

AN EXTINCT MOUNTAIN TRIBE

The Sheep Eaters were a tribe of Indians that became extinct about fifty years ago, and what remaining history there is of this tribe is inscribed upon granite walls of rock in Wyoming and Montana, and in a few defiles and canyons, together with a few arrows and tepees remaining near Black Canyon, whose stream empties into the Big Horn River. Bald Mountain still holds the great shrine wheel, where the twenty-eight tribes came semi-annually to worship the sun, and in the most inaccessible places may still be found the remains of a happy people. Small in stature and living among the clouds, this proud race lived a happy life far removed from all other Indians. [Pg 7]

The Shoshones seem to be a branch of the Sheep Eaters who afterwards intermarried with the Mountain Crows, a tall race of people who gave to the Shoshones a taller and better physique. From what can be gleaned, the Sheep Eater women were most beautiful, but resembled the Alaskan Indians in their shortness of stature. [Pg 8]

These people drew their name from their principal article of food, Mountain Sheep, although, when winter set in, elk and deer were often killed when coming down before a driving snow storm.

Their home life was simple. They lived in the grassy parks of the mountains which abounded in springs of fresh water, and were surrounded by evergreens and quaking asps and sheltered by granite walls rising from fifty to a thousand feet high. Their tepees were different from those of all other tribes, and were not covered with rawhide but thatched with quaking asp bark, and covered with a gum and glue made from sheep's hoofs. Another variety were covered with pitch pine gum.



WHEEL OF THE HOLY SHRINE, BALD MOUNTAIN, WYO.

In this manner lived the twenty-eight tribes of Sheep Eaters, carving their history on granite walls, building their homes permanently among the snowy peaks where they held communion with the sun, and worshipping at their altar on Bald Mountain, which seems likely to remain until the Sheep Eaters are awakened by Gabriel's trumpet on the morning of the resurrection. [Pg 9]

Never having been taught differently, they believed in gods, chief of which was the sun, and consecrated their lives to them; and their eternal happiness will be complete in the great Happy Region where all is bright and warm. The great wheel, or shrine, of this people is eighty feet across the face, and has twenty-eight spokes, representing the twenty-eight tribes of their race. At the center or hub there is a house of stone, where Red Eagle held the position of chief or leader of all the tribes. Facing the north-east was the house of the god of plenty, and on the south-east faced the house of the goddess of beauty; and due west was the beautifully built granite cave dedicated to the sun god, and from this position the services were supposed to be directed by him. Standing along the twenty-eight spokes were the worshippers, chanting their songs of praise to the heavens, while their sun dial on earth was a true copy of the sun. [Pg 10]

A short time ago I learned that among the Mountain Crows there lived an old woman, who was the very last of her tribe, and who was so old she seemed like a spirit from another world. She had outlived her people and had wandered away from her home on the mountains into the valleys, living on berries and wild fruit as she wandered. She alone could read the painted rocks and tell their meaning, and could relate the past glories of the tribe and the methods of the arrow makers, who transformed the obsidian into the finished arrows ready to kill the mountain ram.

I was very anxious to see this creature, who had outlived her race and her usefulness, and so one day I saddled my horse, Billie, put on my cartridge belt, took my rifle in my hand, and set out for the mountains where I knew a small band of Mountain Crows were hunting buffalo on Wind River. [Pg 11]

After a long ride I passed Bovay Creek and struck the Buffalo Trail, which led directly toward the mountains. It soon headed toward the south and I crossed a mountain stream and headed toward the Big Horn Canyon. I had gone about two miles when I discovered something to my right sitting on the remains of a mountain cedar, and in a moment I was on the scene. I pulled up my horse and dismounted and discovered that I had found the object of my search, the Sheep Eater squaw.

CHAPTER II

THE OLD SQUAW'S TALE

Passing the Big Horn Canyon, where the rushing waters were beaten into spray, and where granite walls were shining like great sapphires reflected in the sun's bright rays, I wondered how many centuries it took to chisel that mighty water way fifty-two miles through this tortuous mountain. Perpendicular walls of fully 2000 feet are standing sentinels above this silvery water which goes roaring and foaming through the narrow abyss. [Pg 12]

The golden eagle closes its wings and falls through space like a rocket from some unknown world, uttering a scream that resounds like a crash of lightning. The Big Horn, proudly perched on yonder crag, bids defiance to all living creatures. For fifteen miles this box canyon has cut through the backbone of the mountains and holds the clear waters as in the palm of one's hand. At the mouth of the canyon, where the waters flow calm as a summer lake, as though tired from their terrible journey, the rounded boulders, the white sands and quartz that have passed through, are resting, peaceful as the wild rose which waves to and fro in the spring zephyrs. [Pg 13]

In the sand lies a dead cedar. Torn from the mountain top and crashing down the canyon, it was carried by the rushing waters out on to the beach and deposited in the sand. Sitting on a branch of this cedar is an old woman. Her white locks hang crisp and short on her bony shoulders; her face is covered with a semi-parchment, brown as the forest leaves, and drawn tight over her high cheek bones; her eyes are small and sunken in her head, but the fire has not yet gone out. An old elk skin robe, tattered and torn, is thrown across her shoulders, with its few porcupine quills still hanging by the sinew threads where they were placed a century ago. The last of her race! Yes, long ago her people have become extinct, passed away leaving her to die. But alas, death does not claim her, and she wanders alone until picked up by the mountain Absarokees. [Pg 14]

I sat down by her side and asked her by sign talk: "Are you a Sioux?" She shook her head. "Are you a Blackfoot?" Again she shook her head, and the effort seemed to tire her. I made many signs of the different tribes, but in the Crow sign she said "No" to them all. Her form seemed to be of rawhide, and on her fingers were still a few old rings made from the horn of the bighorn ram.

I gave her some of my lunch, as I ate, and she munched it with a set of old teeth worn to the gums. She ate in silence until all was gone; then I told her I was a medicine man, and asked her how old she was. She held up ten stubs of fingers, all of which had been partly cut off while mourning for dead relatives, then took them down until she had counted one hundred and fifteen years. Her eyes brightened, and she fronted away to the main range to

a towering crag of granite, facing the north, where Bull Elk Canyon empties into the Big Horn. She held her withered arm high above her head and said in sign language: [Pg 15]

"My people lived among the clouds. We were the Sheep Eaters who have passed away, but on those walls are the paint rocks, where our traditions are written on their face, chiseled with obsidian arrow heads. Our people were not warriors. We worshipped the sun, and the sun is bright and so were our people. Our men were good and our women were like the sun. The Great Spirit has stamped our impressions on the rocks by His lightnings; there are many of our people who were outlined on those smooth walls years ago; then our people painted their figures, or traced them with beautiful colored stones, and the pale face calls them "painted rocks." Our people never came down into the valleys, but always lived among the clouds, eating the mountain sheep and the goats, and sometimes the elk when they came high on the mountains. Our tepees were made of the cedar, thatched with grey moss and cemented with the gum from the pines, carpeted with the mountain sheep-skins, soft as down. Our garments were made from the skins of the gazelle, and ornamented with eagle feathers and ermine and otter skins. [Pg 16]

"We chanted our songs to the sun, and the Great Spirit was pleased. He gave us much sheep and meat and berries and pure water, and snow to keep the flies away. The water was never muddy. We had no dogs nor horses. We did not go far from our homes, but were happy in our mountain abode. Then came the Sioux, who killed the elk and buffalo in the valleys. They had swarms of dogs and horses, and ran the game until it left the valleys and went far away. Their people were always at war and stealing horses, which was very wrong in the sight of our people, who never stole anything. Our men were fearless and brave, and could bring down all kinds of game with their bows and arrows, and were contented; but the Sioux were not contented with fighting their enemies, but came to our mountain home and began to try to ascend the trail. Our chief met them on the steep precipice and ordered them to stop where they were, but they murmured and made signs of battle. Our people had great masses of rock as large as houses, where they could let them loose down the trail and crush the Sioux into the earth as they were all down in a deep canyon. [Pg 17]



**SHEEP EATER SQUAW 115 YEARS OLD "THE
WOMAN UNDER THE GROUND"**

"The Sioux stopped and began a war council, and began to paint and get ready for battle. Our chief got the great rocks ready, and then sent a runner to tell the Sioux that our people never went into the valleys nor killed the buffalo, and that we wished to be apart from all other people. After a long council the Sioux fired a volley of arrows at our runner, and wounded him in the thigh. He came to the chief greatly alarmed at the dreaded Sioux as they were many.

"The ponies in the valley below were strange looking creatures to us; we had never seen them before. The dogs were howling and the valley rang with the wild warwhoop. The time had come for action, and the Sheep Eaters assembled at the narrow trail, headed by their chieftain, Red Eagle, with his bow six feet long, made from the mountain ram's horn, and bound with glue and sinew from the sheep's neck. Great excitement prevailed. The squaws and children had hidden among the rocks with all their robes and earthly

possessions. The wild and savage Sioux knew no fear and were pressing up the narrow trail with war paint and feathers, their grim visages scowling in the sunlight as they came.

"Red Eagle, with that bravery known only to his tribe, waited until they had reached the most dangerous precipice. Then with a great lever that had been prepared years before, he loosened the great rock from its moorings, and with one crash it sped down the canyon like a cyclone, tearing the trees from their roots, and starting the rocks, until the canyon became one great earthquake. The screams of the terrified Indians, the howling of dogs and the neighing of horses were heard in one awful roar. The battle was over. The canyon was a mass of blood, and death was abroad in the valley. Not a living thing was to be seen. [Pg 19]

"Red Eagle took a horn made of red cedar, and gave one long quivering blast which echoed and reechoed through the alps and was carried across the glaciers to every part of the mountain. Then the women and children came back and once more took shelter in their comfortable homes."

I arose and gave the old crone the balance of my lunch, and told her I was going to see that mountain some day and see their houses, but she held up her hand and said, "Away up mountain long time ago, maybe so, no tepee now."

And I went and left her sitting alone on the old tree, waiting for the Great Spirit to come take her to her tribe, over on the happy hunting ground, where scenes of warfare and savage Sioux would never molest them again. As I left her alone on the bank of the Big Horn I could not help feeling a pang of pity for the wild woman of the Rockies, whose life had been spent among the canyons, and on the streams whose waters had chiseled great passages through those granite walls centuries ago. She who was once a belle in her tribe and had lived to see the extermination of her people, and now wandered alone wishing to die and pass beyond. The earth was not to her as it had been in her youth. [Pg 20]

I shall never forget the spell that came over me as she raised her palsied arm and showed me where she had lived a hundred years ago. Something seemed to tell me she was speaking the truth and my trip to that mountain became a living passion from that day.

CHAPTER III

THE GOLD SEEKER IN THE MOUNTAINS

On the apex of Medicine Mountain, whose rugged cliffs hold communion with the fleeting clouds, and where the winds sing dismal songs among the cedar boughs, there the forked lightnings at intervals light up the panorama and a thousand beautiful springs and waterfalls sparkle like myriads of diamonds. The mountain ash and the golden leaves of the mountain quaking asp cast their shadows to make perfect this great wonderland, whose colors are more splendid than the rainbow or the golden setting of the western sun. [Pg 21]

Among such scenery one could live away from the gilded vices and the artificial lives of the crowded cities, and it was close to the god of nature these people lived and carved their history on the mountains and rocks, worshipped the sun because it was warm and bright, and because it lighted the narrow trail through the defiles of the mountains, across [Pg 22]

the streams and through the cool green forests, along the rugged cliffs where the horny hoofs of the elk, deer, and mountain sheep had blazed a trail so narrow and so steep that none but the Sheep Eaters dare travel its rugged heights.

Along these trails could be seen at the four seasons of the year, all of the Sheep Eaters, wending their way to the sacred shrine, the great wheel, with its gates and its gods of plenty and light. Here on an elevated spur a thousand feet above the Porcupine Basin, standing out to the east, is a great look-out, where the great sun dial with its twenty-eight spokes representing the twenty-eight tribes of the Sheep Eaters, overlooking the great Grey Bull country, the Ten Sleep Mountains and the Teton Peaks sweeping down toward the Big Horn Canyon. There the Grey Bull and Wind River and Sage Creek are sweeping through Big Horn Canyon, with its chiseled walls, more than a third of a mile in height, and its serpentine trail fifty-two miles into the Big Horn River, and thence into the Yellowstone and Missouri and on to the ocean. [Pg 23]

Here nature's god had spread with lavish hand the richest and the greatest blessings to the Sheep Eaters. The buffalo down in the valleys, the antelope on the plains, the gazelle along the streams, and the elk, black-tail and big horn on the mountains, the mountain grouse, and the streams filled with trout, camas root for bread, cherries, raspberries, and strawberries, made a Garden of Eden for these people until a thousand years had passed, and the tribes increased to twenty-eight before the onward march of the Sioux across and beyond the Mississippi and Missouri brought them into the Sheep Eaters' country.

Around the base of these mountains were many alluring deposits of gold, and small gold camps had started at Fire Springs, Bear Creek and on the east and west forks of the historical Little Big Horn, all in or near the beautiful Porcupine Basin. But the alluring grains of the precious metal could not be found in paying quantities and the miners had quietly packed their plunder and "hiked the trail" to more plentiful paying "diggings." [Pg 24]

The entire village was deserted except for the venerable Captain Jack, who still drew a pension from the English Government which, small as it was, supported him in this beautiful country.

As we swung down the trail which passed near his cabin door, we were hailed by the old veteran, coming wet from his claim with a pan of sand, which showed many grains of bright gold.

"Just took up a small pan, it's sure rich," he said, "get down and we will have supper and some deer steak."

This was too much, for we were all hungry and tired, and the large black-tail deer hanging in the corner of his cabin told only too well that venison was in the larder. Our horses were soon picketed, the packs stored away, and we were all straining our eyes to see the precious gold. [Pg 25]

There were many colors, but all but two or three were very fine. They had lured thousands to the Basin, but the yellow metal could not be found in anything like paying quantities. Mr. McKensy told the Captain that I was quite an expert in placer mining and had been in the Black Hills, Virginia City, and Old Alder Gulch. This was enough and I had to agree to stay over a day and see a wonderful clean-up, which would be tomorrow. I wanted to see more of the wonderful Basin and so decided to stay over and see the Captain make his week's clean-up, which should run from seventy-five to a hundred dollars, all told.

The Captain was seventy years of age, rheumatic, and slightly bent. Only when speaking of the English Army he straightened his shoulders and was all soldier. His eyes were a steel grey, and his hair was long and white, hanging on his shoulders, and he wore a long thin beard. He was well educated and loved the mountains with a love only known to the old pioneer and miner. With assurances of a fine clean-up in the morning we retired. [Pg 26]

Morning brought the sweet refreshed feeling only known to the tired mountaineer, and after our breakfast of venison, coffee, fried potatoes and bacon, we were off for the sluice-boxes laden with the precious metal.

As we walked along, the Captain told me that the geological formation was something wonderful in that region, but with my lifetime of experience I could see no reason for placer gold in the mountains. The decomposed mountains showed considerable erosion but the rocks seemed entirely devoid of granite or quartz, and there was no volcanic action to be seen. There was considerable iron and sandstone, but no sign whatever of gravel wash. The small particles of gold had surely been deposited by some glacial wash from the north in the early formation of the earth.

Soon we reached the cut where the Captain had done some wonderful work in the shale rock. Where a large spring came out of the ground he had piled the rock ten feet high on either side, and his dump where he had piled tons of dirt was in splendid shape. Here was a notice framed in the miner's style describing the veins, lodes, dips and spurs, running fifteen hundred feet to the north-west and south-east, corner posts, etc. [Pg 27]

The sluice-boxes were soon cleaned and the sand and gravel reduced until we could almost see the bottom of the pan—but no gold. After the entire contents was retorted with quicksilver and burned out there was not twenty-five cents worth of gold. The Captain assured me that his partner had taken several ounces out of the claim and had sent it to the assay office for melting and refining.

I said, "Captain, you are an old man and should go to the settlements and enjoy the remainder of your life." He replied, "There is no place on this earth so dear to me as these mountains. Here is where I have lived and here is where I shall die—close to the nature god and his beautiful works, among the flowers and birds of summer and the storms and evergreens of winter." [Pg 28]

It was enough. I caught the inspiration and could have remained with him had I been so unconventional. But life held something dearer and I was soon headed toward the cabin.

"Well, Captain," I said, "you will never find gold in these mountains, but if you love the crags, and the wild winds and the deer, nature in all its purity, the bursting of the buds in springtime, the flowers on a thousand hills, the cold pure water, the frisking squirrels, the pure air; then stay in the home of the miner, the prospector, the hunter and the nature lover, until you cross the great divide which is allotted to all men."

Our visit with the Captain was at an end, and we must say good-bye, perhaps forever. Our horses were ready and our packs were lashed on with the diamond hitch. I got my saddle horse and we moved down the trail, the Captain talking about his placer. At last we came to the steep trail, and he straightened up and said, "Well, when the snow flies I will see you at your home in the city of Billings, and then I will show you some gold that will convince you that I am right." [Pg 29]

"Captain," I said, "the latch-string hangs out for you, and if you will only come and spend

the winter with me I shall then endeavor to even up the score with you for this favor, as I know I can do it in no other way."

He replied, "Well, I am glad that you know it, and when you photo the great paint rocks of the Sheep Eaters, their Wheel or Holy Shrine, their tepees and landmarks, send me a copy of their wonderful works. And may the Great Spirit keep you until we meet again. So long, Doctor."

"So long, Captain, and may your days be full of sunshine."

CHAPTER IV

STARTING FOR THE PAINT ROCKS

Slowly we traveled down the trail full of rounded boulders and stone, our horses scarcely able to keep their feet, and finally we walked and led our horses until we reached a valley far below the apex of the mountain. Here a clear cold stream of water went tumbling down the valley, and here we unpacked and made our camp for the night. [Pg 30]

While McKensey cooked supper I went after a black bear, whose tracks I had noticed on the sand at the water's edge. I took a course as near north-west as possible, and was soon among the trees and rocks which I loved so well, and which brought remembrance of other days among the mountains.

After some wandering I struck a heavy game trail, and could see deer and bear tracks not over a day old. I filled the magazine of my rifle and plunged along at a fast pace. Here and there were thick clumps of quaking asp, mountain birch, and on the creek banks were choke cherries and plum trees. Great springs of water bubbled out of the earth, and by one of these springs I found some of the Sheep Eaters' lodges. They were decayed and fallen to the earth, but the rounded stones with which they warmed the water were there, where the great medicine lodges had stood years before, and where, unmolested, they had passed happy days among the hills and valleys. [Pg 31]

The old woman's stories of her people were being proved true, and as I passed onward mile after mile I was entranced with the richness of the land, the abundance of game that had once held sway among the hills, shown by the antlers of the elk parched white by the suns, which lay on every side and the rams' horns often seen by the stream. A few bones of the little gazelle were among the remains, and a heavy buffalo trail cut the mountains where once the buffalo passed through this land out onto the Yellowstone. [Pg 32]

I had wandered a long way and now cut across the country to the camp through rocky canyons and dense cedar growth. I started a bear from his bed but could not find him, and then found that the bear had started a large band of black-tail deer, which ran about a half a mile and then walked leisurely along, cropping the bunch grass here and there. About a mile from camp I jumped a bunch of fourteen of all kinds, and when they broke cover out of a plum thicket I shot a two-year-old spike buck, cut off his hams and carried him to camp, where I found the boys waiting for some venison.

Our camp fire already lit up the valley, and the clear running stream glistened as it passed over the granite and quartz of the Porcupine Basin. Great shadows were thrown among

the trees like the ghosts and goblins on the ride of Tam O'Shanter, who reveled among the witches and warlocks. But we were hungry and happy and turned our attention to the broiling venison and brewing coffee. [Pg 33]

After supper we began a study of the mountains and the probable cause of gold being distributed all along the streams in such small quantities. Some said it was deposited by a great glacier from the north, or some volcanic action on or near the natural park, but no theory seemed wholly satisfactory.

When the sun illumined a thousand peaks the next morning, after a delightful rest, we rode away from this Holy Grail of the Sheep Eaters, and it was not hard to imagine the character of the little men who lived among these hills and valleys.

When we reached the top of the divide we took a south-eastern course for the famous Paint Rock country, near Shell Creek and its tributaries. Our route lay through the sage brush of the Bad Lands, and some of the party were very anxious to stop at a mountain stream and catch some trout. There were some old sluice-boxes and deserted cabins, which were very interesting to the average sightseer. [Pg 34]

But we pulled on for the Paint Rock, and after ten hours hard ride we arrived on this sacred and historic ground. We picketed our tired horses, piled our packs under a cottonwood tree, and were soon trying to unravel the mysteries of an extinct race. Strange to say no horses were visible on the great calendar of rocks, but men, women, children, and hieroglyphics were crowded on all available places that one could get to register some fact or fancy of this tribe.



SHEEP EATERS PASS TO THE HOLY SHRINE

CHAPTER V

A TALK WITH LITTLE BEAR

The term Paint Rocks will convey various meanings to the average reader. A description seems in order to make more plain what these rocks are like.

Just imagine a stream of clear, pure water running through a canyon, small and narrow, with a smooth-surfaced rock face, cut by the water when the earth and stone were young and tender, on which one could write as on a black-board in a school room. Here the Sheep Eaters came to record their history. Here father and son came to write the traditions of their tribe; and here came that old squaw, whose name in her own tribe, as translated by the Crow chief, Pretty Eagle, was, "Under-The-Ground." Emblems, original with their tribe, were cut with the obsidian arrowhead in irregular semicircles. The outlines of men and women were about three feet in height. In some places the storms, the wind and the water, had erased parts of the engraving. In other places hunters had built their smoking camp-fires against the face of the rock and blurred the markings, or had wantonly fired bullets into the faces and destroyed the work of the Indians. [Pg 35] [Pg 36]

As I was getting my camera arranged to get a picture of one group, an old Indian came riding up the creek on a pinto pony. Soon came dogs, and squaws dragging their tepee poles, and without so much as a "How," they began tearing off their packs and setting up their lodges. The packs consisted of old kettles, stale meat, old elk skins made into robes, parfleashes filled to the brim with pemmican, made of elk fat, choke cherries, and jerked elk half dried and half horsehair. Several young puppies, too young to walk, were tied with soft thongs just under the fore legs of the ponies.

Within half an hour the whole Little Basin was filled with the smell of spoiled meat and musty old blankets, spread in the sun to dry, and the whole camp looked like the dump ground of a small town. [Pg 37]

The old chief turned the entire care of the horses, dogs, provisions and camp over to the squaws, and while they were busy, he came slowly toward the camera, watching every move I made in trying to get a picture of the Paint Rocks. He was about five feet tall, heavy set and rather dark. His good, round head well set on fine shoulders, was covered with long, heavy hair, carefully braided in small braids, which hung below his waist. At intervals these braids were cemented with some wax and painted red and green, which gave them the appearance of being bound with straps. The sternness of his large mouth, square chin, and heavy jaw was relieved by the large, brown eyes. Three scars on his face told of a battle fought many years ago, as also did the knife scar on his breast and the old gun-shot wound. On his wrist were brass wristlets, and three missing finger joints told of mournings for his dead. A medicine bag and a half dozen elk teeth swung at his throat; these and beaded moccasins and leggings showed him to be a chief. An Indian he was all through. [Pg 38]

As I turned to look at him he straightened himself to his full height, and I had taken him in from head to heel when he put his right arm out in front of him closed his hand, and gave it three rapid motions up and down, which, in sign talk, is "How do you do." Quick as a flash I straightened my arm out, laying my thumb across my little finger, made a half curve, out from the body inward, then an angling sweep down, which means "Good." A twinkle came in his eye, and he answered by giving me the same sign.

I knew him, but twenty years had passed over his head since I last saw him, and it was twenty-eight years since he and Sitting Bull fought a duel with knives, on the Big Horn.

I gave him a challenge and called him a Sioux, which is done by straightening the fingers of the right hand, laying the thumb close into the palm, making a rounded curve outward, [Pg 39]

then a quick sweep across the throat. He found and gave me the answer "No." Then he came very close to me, and when he saw the powder in my face, he gave a grunt of satisfaction.

I took off my glove and held out my hand. He grasped it quickly and said in the Crow language, "Long time ago," then paused—"long—time—ago, many moons, you heap good to me and my braves."

"How many moons?" I asked.

He stopped and his mind was busy running over the many years, many camp-fires, the wrongs he had sustained from the British Government which compelled them to leave their homes and come to the United States. With a sigh he held up one hand, and with the other hand pulled down three fingers, saying, "Ten, ten, ten."

I gave him the sign of correct, then his face brightened, and as the boys gathered around us, he said, "Do you know who it is?" [Pg 40]

"Yes," I replied, "I know you, you are Little Bear, the chief of the Cree Nation." He held up his hands and began making rapid signs. "It was you," he said, "who were our friend when our braves were arrested for killing buffalo on Razor Creek."

"Yes," I replied.

"We never forget our friends," said he. He then gave me a beautiful peace pipe. The stem was two feet long, with animals engraved on it; and the bowl was made from Minnesota pipe-stone rock, inlaid with silver.

Our camp fire was going, and we all sat around it and smoked the pipe of peace, which is done as follows: The pipe is filled with the bark of a red willow, and when lighted is handed to the highest or head chief. He takes one or two long whiffs; then, as he raises his head and blows the smoke in clouds toward the heavens and the Great Spirit, he passes the pipe to his guest on the right. This is continued until the pipe is empty, and all is done with the greatest reverence toward the Great Spirit. [Pg 41]

After the peace smoke, Little Bear, with his squaw and his son, took dinner with us. We had fresh venison, potatoes, onions, hot pancakes and maple syrup, canned pineapple and coffee. Little Bear ate a hearty dinner and said it was good, and to meet friends made him very happy.

After the meal I took some pictures of the rocks, and Little Bear asked me what I wanted them for. I told him those marks were a history of an ancient tribe of people.

"Yes," he said, "many, many, moons. Our tribe knew nothing of them. Long, maybe so, heap years, much old squaw live with Mountain Crows. Crows call her 'Under-The-Ground.' She tell much of little folks way up mountain. Much eat Big Horn sheep. Much pray sun and heap Great Spirit. Old squaw say, little squaw much good face, all time good, bucks no fight, yes." [Pg 42]

I told him I had been upon the Medicine and Bald mountains and had seen their shrine wheel, and where they had lived in the Big Horn mountains. I told him I had also been far up Clark's Fork, where their sheep pens were, "Yes," I said, "they are all gone. Great chief, Pretty Eagle, and I were old friends, and he told me all about the little Indians, their bows and arrows, and many things the old squaw had told him about their lives on the

mountains; but Sheep Eaters, all gone now."

"Ugh," he replied, "by and by, maybe so, Crees all gone, Crows all. Heap bad for Injins."

I told him it would be a long time before that happened, and that some day perhaps the Government would let the Crees come and live with the Crows, on the beautiful Little Horn.

"Yes," he said, "that would be very nice. If the Great Father at Washington would only say the word, we would come and work very hard. We do not like our reservation in the north-west. It is too cold and the land is poor and the Red Coats are not good to Injins." [Pg 43]

When our visit was over and the Indians were preparing to move, I turned the camera on the camp. A squaw who was watching me, gave a grunt, turned her back, and ran; and the others, alarmed scattered like dry leaves before a wind. They did not return until I had taken the camera down and put it away. Little Bear explained that they were afraid, because they thought the camera a bad spirit.

As the little band moved off toward the north, Chief Little Bear came and grasped my hand and said, "You have always been my friend, good-bye."

As they rode away with all their worldly goods packed on a few poor cayuses, I could not help contrasting their present condition with that of thirty years ago. Then the red man owned the country. The plains, the rivers, the trees were his; and his, too, were the wild horse, the buffalo, the elk, the deer, and the fish. Self reliant, free, happy, he was then; today, a beggar. Everything taken from him, his tribal relations broken, left alone. The hardest stroke of all was to have the tribal relations broken, and to be forced under the control of the hated and despised pale face. Happy indeed were the Sheep Eaters never to have been driven from their mountain home and never to have known the power of the pale face! [Pg 44]

CHAPTER VI

CURIOSITIES AROUND PAINT ROCKS

For two days we camped among the Paint Rocks, studying them, but could find nothing that indicated battle or fighting. Neither did we find any dead, nor graves, nor even bones. If, like the Crows, they buried in the trees, the last trace was gone. There were no mounds of earth, or indications of earth burials. The rocks were mostly covered with likenesses of nude men, women, and children, and with emblems. In places the artist evidently stood on some elevation of wood or stone, for the carving was higher than the average man could reach. Along a crest of sandstone I saw some very odd formations; they looked like huge inverted cones, that some giant sculptor had carved there. Perhaps they were formed by the erosion of centuries, or it may have been the wear caused by the rubbing of the buffaloes, for we found many of their bones there, and I have often seen telegraph poles rubbed to the breaking point. When the buffalo is annoyed by buffalo gnats and his great coat is filled with mud and sand, he soon wears away a pretty strong pole. [Pg 45]

This was a strange place, and in our search we found geodes, petrified snakes, and short sections of fish. We also found several petrified jaw-bones, of what looked to be wolves, [Pg 46]

still containing the teeth, and fossils of many kinds. Some looked like vegetables, some were hexagonal, and some looked as though made of floor tiling. We found many water and moss agates of various sizes. The ground was covered with some meteoric rock full of iron.

Here we passed the day hunting for some graves, but it was no use. Tree burial seems to have been their method of disposing of the dead. In this method of burial the body is taken to some low bushy tree, rolled in fine robes and blankets, and with green strips of elk hide, wrapped to two or more limbs. This secures it very firmly, and as the sun and wind dry out the skin the thongs tighten, until only years of sun and rain, mice and bugs, eat away the thongs, and the blankets, bones, and skins are carried away by the wind. In this method of burial the body lasts about twenty years or less. [Pg 47]

We were tired and hungry when we returned to camp, but we soon had a blazing fire with all the odors of good things on the breeze. Just as we sat down to eat, I heard a horse's footfall, and turned to see who it was. A young brave rode into the trail, and I caught up my gun. His hands went up like a flash giving me the sign of a Crow. As all the hunters and trappers in the west, north and south of the Yellowstone River, know the Crows to be peaceful, I put up my gun and gave him the sign that I understood what he said.

Young braves are always the very hardest members of the tribe to engage in conversation, except a young girl of marriageable age. Both do all their courting by making eyes at each other. [Pg 48]

I knew him. He was a chief's son. Years before I had got some papers to Washington for his father. Also I knew he could talk some broken English and Crow, and was a superb sign talker.

We began to eat and I made signs for him to picket his horse and join us at supper. I knew he was trailing the camp outfit, which had gone and was many miles away by this time. He pretended not to understand, but looking much disappointed, started to ride away. I hailed him and told him to go back and get his packs, and come have supper with us, and picket his horses with ours. His face remained blank, and he showed no sign of understanding till I added that I was a friend of the Little Bear chief, and had kept the officers from arresting his braves at Razor Creek many moons ago. Then his face lighted up. "Ugh, me see you before. How you know me got pack horses? You no see 'em." [Pg 49]

"Never mind, I know Injin," I replied, "I heap plenty see."

He turned down the trail and soon returned with three good looking packs, well loaded. I showed him a good place to unpack and he made short work of it. And then what a supper that Indian did eat!

After supper I told him the story of the Reil rebellion in Canada, and how when they got whipped the halfbreeds and Indians came across the line into the United States; and the history of his grandfather, the Big Bear, and his father, the Little Bear. All of this amused him and put him on very easy terms for the night. I asked him why he would not talk with me when he first came up.

He said, "Sometimes Injin say too much. Me no talk much. Better so. Some white man want to know heap too much. You my friend. You Little Bear friend, my papa."

"Yes," I said, "I understand, but you can talk like the pale face some, and you have a Cree alphabet." [Pg 50]

"Me no can say what you mean," he replied.

I took a paper and showed him some of the letters which ran like this ▽ ▷ △ ▷

"Yes, me heap understand."

"I got some letters from Canada, which were written to your father. Your sister read them to me in English, and I sent letters to the Great Father at Washington, to get a place for your tribe with the Crows."

"Yes, me heap savy now," he said.



ROCKY MOUNTAIN BIG HORN

CHAPTER VII

THE STORY OF AGGRETТА AND RED ARROW

On my return I passed the Little Horn, swung to the west, and traveled up the Big Horn to the canyon, where I found some mixed Indians who were busy catching and drying white fish. There were River Crows, Shoshones, and a few Mountain Crows camped along the river in their summer homes or wickyups. [Pg 51]

After I had dismounted, taken off my packs, and turned my horses loose to eat the bountiful bunch grass with which the ground was carpeted, I went up the river to where some rocks projected into the water and soon caught a dozen fine trout, and began getting my supper. Just as all was ready, I saw the old Sheep Eater squaw sitting on the ground

not far away. I went over to her and, taking her by the arm, led her to my camp fire and helped her to a portion of my broiled trout, potatoes, and coffee. She kept her eyes on me for a while as she ate, then said in sign talk, "I know you now." [Pg 52]

I answered, "Yes?"

When she had finished eating, she drank her coffee and setting the tin cup down, said with a sigh, "Heap good." Then, after giving me a long and earnest look, "Me heap know you, yes, long time ago; heap talk about mountains and Sheep Eaters, yes."

This was my chance, and I was not slow to take it. "Yes," I said, "and I should like to know more of your people," and as she made no reply I went on, "about the young people, about how they get married."

Still without looking at me, she answered: "Me all time know about young Chief Red Arrow, Papoose, and the beautiful young squaw, Aggretta; face all time like sun, all time beautiful eyes like stars, Aggretta bring springtime and flowers, heap. Yes I tell pale face about Red Eagle Papoose and Aggretta." [Pg 53]

By this time many braves were standing around the camp-fire listening to the old Sheep Eater, who rarely talked of her people. She settled herself more comfortably, pulled her blanket around her shoulders, and began her tale in a dull, listless way, but as scene after scene came before her mind, she forgot her audience and herself and lived again those days of her girlhood. As I watched the flush come to her cheeks and the light kindle in her eyes, I lost sight of the withered old relic of a tribe now passed away, and saw only the beautiful girl of the past taking part in the scenes she so vividly described.

This is the story she told: "Red Eagle papoose no name yet. He never do anything to get name. Papoose boy must do something good, save some life, do some great act before he can be great man. Aggretta get name because she so beautiful. Papoose go see Aggretta, stay long time, give her beautiful eagle feathers and beads, but Aggretta no make beautiful eyes at him. Come summer time, Aggretta go to mountain top to pray to sun. Come dark night, storm, Aggretta get lost among clouds. The great storm swept all over mountains and snow fell on ground, on mountain top." [Pg 54]

"When Red Eagle papoose find out Aggretta lost on mountain, his heart on ground. He get dried sheep and roots and great bow and arrows, flint arrows, and go to Aggretta."

Fascinated, I listened, oblivious to everything but her story, which I shall have to put into my own words: "Swift as the mountain ram he climbs the rugged rocks and takes the trail to the great shrine wheel. Soon he finds her moccasin tracks, and with all the fleetness of an Indian runner he climbs the rocky trail, here and there stooping to find a footmark, the breaking of a piece of moss, or the displacing of a small stone. The bent grass in places showed the direction in which Aggretta had gone. With bow and arrow he glided on and up. Soon he came to the snow line, where the trail became more precipitous and the snow deeper. He stopped and wildly blew his cedar horn, but no answer came. The storm had abated and the sun's warm rays were making the snow soft. All impressions and trails were obliterated. The reflection of the sun on the snow was blinding. After a careful survey, he struggled on up the trail, whose serpentine twists wound in and out through trees and canyons and dazzling snow until he was almost blinded." [Pg 55]

"Entering a narrow canyon filled with fir and spruce trees, he stopped in this haven to rest his tired eyes. When his vision had cleared, his heart gave a bound; he thought he could

see a moccasin track ahead in the trail. He was off like a deer, and in a moment he was scraping the soft snow away to find—the tracks of a terrible grizzly. Now he knew there was trouble ahead, for he felt sure the bear would follow Aggretta's trail. His suspicions proved correct, and mile after mile he followed the trail, until he came to the camping ground where the Sheep Eaters met twice a year to worship. Just as he reached an elevated spot he heard the scream of his Aggretta, and starting in the direction from which it came, he saw the grizzly coming straight for him. He brought his long bow to his face and placed the great jagged arrow against the sinew. Dropping on his back, with both feet against the bow and both hands on the sinew, he bent the bow until the arrow was just at full length and the flint touched the bow; then, letting the bear have the shaft full in the breast, he jumped like a cat to one side, and the bear passed. One terrible roar told that the grizzly had been hit in a vital place. [Pg 56]

"The bear turned and started after the young brave, who was bounding along toward the scrub fir tree where Aggretta was perched. On came the bear, with the blood streaming from his mouth, steadily gaining on the brave, until it seemed certain he would catch him before the tree was reached. Aggretta, watching the race, gave a cry of warning, and the brave turned suddenly and bounded away down the hill. The bear, infuriated with pain, rushed after him. When the distance between them was short, the brave leaped aside with the agility of a coyote, while the weight of the great monster carried it down the mountain side. Before the bear could make the turn, the brave was beside his Aggretta in the tree. But no sooner had he cleared the ground than the monster was underneath the tree, tearing at the lower limbs, while the shaft remained buried in his vitals. [Pg 57]

"The brave took another arrow from his quiver and with deliberate aim he drove the arrow with its obsidian shaft into one of the bear's eyes, cutting it entirely out. The great brute rolled over and with his paws tore the arrow from his eye, but the inward bleeding was fast filling his powerful lungs.

"The two lovers sat together trembling like forest leaves, as the grizzly rolled over the snow with his life blood oozing away. The young brave drew another shaft and was about to send it home, when Aggretta said, 'Wait, he will not live long now, and you may need your arrows. We are far from our people and there are many wild beasts between us and our lodge.' [Pg 58]

"He replaced the arrow in his quiver, saying, 'Aggretta speaks wisely, like her father, Black Raven.'

"At last the lovers came slowly down from the tree. Cautiously the brave crept forward and made sure the bear was dead. Then he grasped the shaft, and exerting all his strength pulled it from the breast of the dead brute, whose lungs it had penetrated. Holding the bloody arrow in his hand, the young brave told Aggretta this was his first great bear.

"'Yes,' said Aggretta, 'now you have won a name, and Aggretta the daughter of chief Black Raven, will name you the Red Arrow.'

"After taking the claws of the bear to make a necklace for himself, they started down the trail in their homeward journey. Young and fleet of foot, they went, at a swift pace down the mountain, hand in hand. After covering many miles, Red Arrow called a halt at a mountain spring, where he took from his buckskin shirt some dried sheep, and they ate heartily while they talked of the great rejoicing there would be in the Sheep Eaters' lodges when they returned. [Pg 59]

"After lunch they started on down the trail, Aggretta keeping pace with Red Arrow. Once the stillness was broken by the faint blast of a red cedar horn; but it was not until they had stopped to rest in a great park, where the snow had melted away, that they heard a blast that echoed and reechoed through the wild hills and canyons and the farthest glen. Red Arrow recognized the blast as coming from his father's horn, and took from his belt a horn made from the mountain ram's horn. Filling his powerful lungs, he placed it carefully to his lips, and blew one long quivering blast which burst through the air like a rocket, penetrating the canyons and the forests, echoing far down through the valleys where the Sheep Eaters had built their lodges among the crags.

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"As they rested under a great tree with the sunlight filtering through its branches, making lacy patterns on the moss at their feet, and the magpies and squirrels scolding and chattering in the nearby trees, Aggretta told of her wanderings on the mountains, and her escape from the bear, the despair she felt of ever being rescued, and her joy when she saw him, Red Arrow, coming. Red Arrow's heart was too full for utterance, and when she had finished, he sat looking into her beautiful brown eyes, while his heart throbbed almost aloud. At last he said, 'Red Arrow look heap on Aggretta?'

"Casting her eyes around like a frightened fawn, she moved closer to her lord of the forest.

"'Aggretta much good, and great father say me have Aggretta,' he continued.

"She nestled still closer and he slipped his arm around the trembling maiden and drew her to him. His pleading eyes looked straight into hers, and through into her very soul, as he said, 'You give me much good name, now do you give me Aggretta?'

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"Softly her arm stole round his neck, the black head went down on his shoulder while tears of joy slipped down her cheeks. Words could not add to the rapture of these two hearts drawn together by the wonderful love known only to the children of nature, and they sat in silence until the cedar horn was heard again. This was the signal to move on. Down through the beautiful ferns and wild flowers the lovers sped, leaving behind the mountains and the snow. Hand in hand they pressed forward down the winding trail, beaten deep into the earth by the buffalo, the elk, the deer, the sheep. The goldenrod nodded in the breeze. Little squirrels went frisking up the nut pines, gathering the rich nuts, and the ruffed grouse safely hidden among the brown leaves, quietly viewed the scene.

"Tired and breathless the two Sheep Eaters reached the park a few miles above the village and were met there by the rescuing party. The great chief, Red Eagle, folded Aggretta in his arms. Then taking his son, he embraced them both and blessed them with his richest blessings. The horns were brought forth, and their notes bursting upon the air apprised the waiting villagers of the finding of Aggretta. When the royal pair had been escorted from the mountain park to their lodges, the whole village joined in song and praise for the young chief. Then all the chiefs assembled, and before them and the young brave, Aggretta bashfully told the story of how she was driven to the forest by the storm, lost among the great fir trees, followed by the bear, escaped into the fir tree, and her rescue by the young papoose when she had given up all hope. She described his race for life and the courage and ingenuity with which he outwitted the bear, and of his sending the arrow to the creature's heart. She told how, when he had pulled the arrow from the brute's heart all dripping with blood, she had named him Chief Red Arrow.

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"The chiefs, after listening to her story, agreed that the papoose had won the right to a

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name; and he was then and there christened Chief Red Arrow.

"The next day Chief Red Arrow selected a beautiful tepee, made of the best of lodge poles, cemented together with pine pitch and glue from the mountain ram's hoofs, and in it he stored his earthly stock of goods. He carpeted the floor of his new lodge with the skins of the mountain ram, the cougar, the red deer, the elk, and the bear, while the walls were hung with robes from the mountain bison, the otter, the beaver, the mink, and the martin. The villagers watched with interest while he worked. He drew a rawhide thong across the center of his lodge, facing the door. On this he hung the prize trophies of the chase, making a partition for his lodge. In the center he left a door-way, over which he hung a beautiful spotted elk calf robe for a door. The lodge was located in an ideal spot, where the green mountain ferns covered the ground and a spring of clear water sparkled and bubbled close at hand. On either side stood a large, low, spreading pine, protecting the lodge from the summer suns and winter storms.

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"While Red Arrow was still busy decorating his lodge for his young bride-to-be, sixteen of the best hunters were sent into the forest and mountains and directed to bring in the choicest game to be found and the skin of the great bear that had come so near killing Aggretta.

"All this time Aggretta was nowhere to be seen. It was a custom among the Sheep Eaters that the prospective bride must seclude herself and prepare for the coming ceremonies.

"Four days later the lodge was completed and all but three of the hunters had returned loaded with mountain sheep, elk, and deer. On the fifth day came the three with the skin of the great bear which had given Red Arrow his name.



A SUMMER HOUSE OR LOVERS' RETREAT

"The great skin was placed on the ground. Red Arrow brought Aggretta out, and before the whole village she repeated the story of her terrible experience on the mountain and her rescue by Red Arrow. Then the great Red Eagle, in all his splendor, stepped upon a rock and announced that his son, Red Arrow, now had a name, won by bravery shown in the saving of the life of Aggretta, and in ten sleeps the Red Arrow would bring this beautiful maiden, daughter of the Black Raven, to his lodge, at which time there would be great rejoicing and feasting among the Sheep Eaters. When he had concluded three blasts were blown on the cedar horns and the crowd quietly dispersed to their lodges. [Pg 65]

"The next ten days were busy ones in the village. Every Indian had his share in the preparations for the great event.

"On the morning of the tenth sleep, before even the birds had begun their morning chants,

thirty braves in their gala dress, stole silently forth from their lodges and assembled in the open space before the village. When the first faint blush of dawn appeared in the east, a blast from thirty cedar horns broke the stillness of the beautiful mountain village. As the last notes died away two processions from opposite ends of the village started toward the bridal lodge. Aggretta, in her bridal gown of skins and beads, black hair down to her moccasin tops, came with the step of a queen from her father's lodge, attended by twenty-eight lovely maidens, each the choice of her tribe. From the other end of the village came Red Arrow out of the lodge of Chief Red Eagle, attended by twenty-eight braves, all splendid in their wedding garb.

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"Never bride pledged her troth amid greater beauty. Overhead a canopy of blue, with here and there a fleecy cloud daintily edged with pink. Round about were walls of massive, towering rock, stately evergreens and the thousand surrounding lodges, and under foot a carpet of grass and ferns and flowers.

"Just as the sun's rim cleared the horizon, the lovers met at the door of the lodge and stood side by side on the great bear skin, while the blowing of horns and the chanting of twenty-eight maidens and twenty-eight braves made the mountains ring with joy. Then a thousand voices swelled the chorus of praise to the young aristocrats.

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"The great medicine chief came forward and performed the rites of the tribe. The pair knelt on the bear skin with their faces to the sun, while he joined them together in marriage. The ceremonies finished, the brave and his bride entered the lodge he had prepared, while the villagers went to their tepees, chanting songs of praise to the new made bride.

"At evening, when the sun had gone to rest and the stately peaks had changed from pink to lavender, from gold to copper, and from purple to gray, when the evening star had cleared the horizon and had begun to wink and beckon to the laggard moon, then again the village awoke to life, and the royal feast began. Fires were kindled and great flat stones were heated. Choice cuts of elk, the tenderloin and tongues and hams of sheep were roasted. Venison steak and ribs were broiled to a turn. The bridal couple came forth and once more took their place on the bear skin. The singers and dancers in the center of the great throng began their weird chants and slow rhythmical steps. The tom-tom burst forth, the chants became louder, the dance swifter. The maidens took up the chant, first low and sweet, and as it grew higher and louder, the young braves added their voices, then the older people joined the chorus. Torches of cedar, burning like rockets, were thrown into the air, the tom-toms pealed out their muffled notes, and from a thousand throats rolled the great wedding song, until the tepees shook, and the hills and valleys echoed with the sounds of rejoicing. They danced and chanted and feasted while the stars came out till the sky seemed crowded, while the camp-fires leaped and blazed. They danced and feasted and sang, until the camp-fires smouldered and died out, and the night birds made their last faint twitterings before seeking rest. They sang and feasted and danced when all else was still save the Grey Bull River, murmuring as it swept along over its gravelly bed, the far off hoot of an owl, or the cry of the coyote still lingering for his share of the wedding feast. When the little stars had gone to rest and the larger ones were beginning to slip away, then quietly, in groups, the throng dispersed, wishing the newly married pair good night and happy days, as they passed.

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"When the last one had gone, Red Arrow turned to his bride, and taking her by the hand, led her into his lodge. Looking into her brown eyes, so full of love and trust, he said, 'This is our home, and I know we shall always be happy here, for our people all love us

and the great spirit is well pleased.'

"Then he let the skin fall loosely over the door, and the great day of the Sheep Eaters had passed. The silent night became more silent, the owl ceased calling to his mate, the coyote skulked into his lair, the birds ceased their chirping, the great forest trees seemed in a trance, not a flower or fern moved, all nature was at rest.

"The Great Red Eagle, chief of the twenty-eight tribes, sent runners to all his people with the message that in the spring, when the warm sun should come again, all the tribes were to assemble at the great Sun Dial to worship and rejoice over the wedding of his son to the beautiful Aggretta. [Pg 70]

"The warm sun came, and a great camp-fire was kept burning for two nights on Bald Mountain, where it could be seen by the tribes many miles away, even into Wyoming. Then came the greatest gathering that had ever assembled in the mountains.

"Day after day came the people, eager to see the young chieftain and his squaw, who were to rule the people when the great Red Eagle was no longer able to rule. Songs to the sun began to rise from the great rock-ribbed mountains, and the royal family, with Red Arrow and the beautiful Aggretta, took their places on the great stone spokes of the wheel, facing the east. They began their worship by moving along until they came to the rim, when the men turned to the right and the squaws to the left, singing their chants to the sun. The sun chant begins very low, but as they go around the wheel it becomes louder and louder until the climax is reached, then a new company takes the wheel, and the first worshippers retire to their seats, watching and joining in the chants until the foothills and canyons and plains resound with the music. [Pg 71]

"Thus the days and nights were passed until the end of their fourteen day holiday had come. The chief and his squaw had become acquainted with the leaders of the twenty-eight tribes, and after the annual worship was over and the customary gifts had been made to the young chief, Red Arrow, and his bride, each tribe, headed by the subchief went to their homes among the mountains."

CHAPTER VIII

CLOSING WORDS

One evening, when the old squaw seemed to be in a friendly mood, I made some inquiries as to where the several tribes had lived, and she said: "You white man want to know heap about Sheep Eaters. Why for you know so much?" [Pg 72]

I told her I was very much interested in her people. Then I gave her a pretty bead necklace of regular crow beads, ornamented with paint. She put them on and a smile lighted the wrinkled old face.

"White man heap good," she said, patting the beads; then after admiring the beads for a time, she turned her attention to me. "White man find many camps of Sheep Eaters on Paint Rocks. Sheep Eaters make much squaw and papoose on rocks. On Great Mountain, white man find many tepees and sheep pens where Indian catch much sheep to eat. Many rivers away up in mountain, find much Indian work. Away up close to bad spirit country, [Pg 73]

you find many tepee, much rich plenty. (National Park.) Our people think bad spirits always at war in the earth, so our people scarcely ever went into that country, although our great men fetch obsidian from there to make arrows. Our men make arrows of the most beautiful design. We were called the arrow makers. We made the most beautiful fur garments and our tanned skins were the best."

"Tell me who you are, are you a chief's daughter?" I asked.

She turned her eyes away at the question, and sat for a long time with that vacant look on her face as though seeing all her past; then suddenly she turned, and looking squarely at me, she said, "Me Red Arrow's squaw."

I was amazed, but could not doubt her word, as she had told me the truth so far as I had investigated. It seemed impossible that this most haggard of old women could have been the most beautiful girl of her tribe. But a hundred and fifteen years of life can change much, even the beautiful curves of the human body and the roses on the cheek and lip. A hundred and fifteen years! But this was the chance of a lifetime, I must not let it slip away while I dreamed. [Pg 74]

"Where did your people go?" I asked; "what became of your tribe?"

"One beautiful day," she replied, "when sun warm and earth green, white man got lost and his ponies come into our camp. White man very sick. Medicine man put him in big tepee and take care of him, give him much bath in hot water. Man got very red like Indian man, face much all over spots. By and by he die. Then sickness all over camp. Sheep Eater run off in forest and die. Some run to other villages, they all die. Sheep Eater all much scared and run away. Many tepee standing alone, all dead inside. Red Eagle die, Red Arrow die, me no die, me very much scare, go off in mountains, eat berries, cherries, root. Me find many Sheep Eater dead in woods. By and by Sheep Eaters not many. They go to other Indian tribes down in valley on river, where much big water runs, and eat heap buffalo, ride pony, marry heap squaw. Sheep Eater have one squaw, other Indians many. Then Sheep Eater no more, no more papoose, no more squaw, all gone. Cold winds go, spring come, wild geese come back to lakes. Sheep Eater no come back, all gone. Tepee rot, rain, wind, snow, sun, on bones, on blanket, tepees, skins, bows, arrows. By and by all gone too. Indian no go there long time, many moon." [Pg 75]

So passed away the proudest race of Indians that ever lived on earth. They left behind no trace of history except the Paint Rocks among the canyons of Wyoming, near Basin City, and in Cradle Creek Basin, Montana, on which we might read of a thousand historical deeds if we could but find the key. These, and the great shrine wheel on Bald Mountain, the sheep pens where the wary sheep were caught, and here and there along the mountain trails, stone blinds behind which the hunter lay in ambush for game, are all that is left to remind us of a tribe now extinct. [Pg 76]

From those visible signs, and the tales of the old squaw and stories extant among other tribes, we find the Sheep Eaters were a strong, brave, peaceable race of people, clean morally and physically. Provident and inventive, excelling in all the Indian arts. They lived as brothers. No poor were ever known among them, all sharing alike except the chiefs, who had larger tepees and more robes that they might care for visitors. Death was meted out to the woman who broke her marriage vows, and after death she was condemned to live in darkness and never again to see the sun they worshipped.

They never knew the use of alcohol in any form. It was left to the *proud, civilized whites*

to bring that curse to the Indians. This favored people never saw but the one white man, and he only brought death to their bodies, leaving their souls unashamed to face their Maker. [Pg 77]

It seems very fitting that this most perfect tribe of which we know should have lived out their little span of life among the most perfect surroundings, building their homes in the crags and rocks among those towering mountains, whose lofty heads are covered with perpetual snow, on whose sides great glaciers lie half hidden, like monsters of the deep. Dark stretches of timber fringe the canyons where the bald eagle, silent as the grave, seeks its prey. To the south the black forest clings to the shoulders of the mountains where the snow goes whirling across the peaks, along the table land, and into the valleys. Always and always the silent Rockies towering among the clouds on the one side and the majestic Big Horn on the other. Sentinel peaks, capped with the eternal snows, stand like hoary-headed giants. Great piles of God's masonry wall in this emerald vale with one ever-astounding, sometimes appalling, always changing vista of mountain, forest, river, lake, crest, gorge, and peak. Crouched in this empire of solemnity by night and grandeur by day, was the home of the Sheep Eaters. [Pg 78]

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