

of sharing the expense which I had already provided for. I gave him room, at his request, in my fort to build a house to lodge all his people? On the return from our journey on the 15th of the month, the fort and houses being completed, I thought of making everything ready for our departure. Mr. de la Marque told me he had brought Mr. de Louvière to the Fork with two canoes to build a fort there for the accommodation of the people of the Red River. I approved of it, if the Indians were notified. On the 16th I had the drum beat to arms, to pass every one in review and to select such as were necessary for my expedition. After the inspection of the arms, I published your orders regarding the post; I selected twenty men, ten of Mr. la Marque's and ten of mine. I warned them to keep themselves in readiness for the 18th, gave them a pound of powder and twenty balls each, shoes, an axe, a kettle to be used on the journey; gave to $\frac{1}{4}$ each man, French and Indian, a bag of powder, sixty balls, two fathoms of tobacco; some small wares, more for present necessities than for anything else, as awls, gun-flints, gun screws and steels. I had put into a leather bag what I wanted for present use, that a wife of our guide carried for me, and all that was of use for myself, my servant and my slave carried. That settled, I had Sans Chagrin received as commander in my absence, as a man of wise and prudent mind, who fills the office of sergeant. Taking my two children with me, I left him two soldiers and ten hired men as a guard for the fort, ^{and} then gave him orders and instructions in writing of all he was to do ~~in~~ ^{during} my absence. On the 18th, all being in good order in the fort, I made all our people set out, with orders to encamp not far off, and afterwards to leave with Mr. de la Marque about noon, encouraging the Indians whom I left at the fort to hunt cattle, the beaver not being yet good, to furnish provisions to the French whom I left. Our small band consisted of 52 persons, twenty hired men, all good men, Mr. de la Marque, his brother, my two children, my servant and a slave, the rest Indians. The third day after leaving, a village of forty Assiniboine huts joined us, with the intention of speaking to me. The chief asked me to grant him the favour of remaining for the day, to have the pleasure of seeing us and of showing their hospitality. I agreed, on the solicitation of our guide. I made him a small present of powder, and made the same statement to him as I had done to all the others. He testified much gratitude, promising wonders; that he would carry provisions to the French, and would hunt to the utmost, so as to supply their wants. On the 21st we continued our route, as far as the first mountain, twenty-six leagues distant from our fort, still to the south by south-west; from the ^{first} mountain to the second west ^{and} by north-west, 24 leagues. From the point of the second mountain to go direct to the Mandans we must keep to the south-west. But we were obliged to do much more, as on a road which is two leagues in a straight line, we made three or four from our fort. It may have been a hundred and twenty leagues to the west south-west that our guide lengthened the road by from fifty to sixty leagues and a number of stops to which we were obliged to agree, making us spend the finest weather in autumn staying still, so that we took forty-six days to go a distance we should have done easily in sixteen or twenty days at the most. We had, perforce, to have patience; all that I could say to our guide to make him hasten was to no purpose. He made us take for the height of happiness twenty-two leagues of a road which was taking us off our route, to get to a village of a hundred and two huts which he had gone to look for, and had brought us eight men, whom the chiefs of the village had sent to beg me to join them, that they were all inclined to accompany me to the Mandans, telling me that the Sioux often visited in that direction and that I had need of an escort. We had to make up our minds to go there. We arrived there on the 18th of November, in the afternoon. A number of messengers had gone before us and we were received with great joy. They led us, Mr.

de la Marque, his brother and my children, into the hut of a young chief, where every one was ready to receive us. They made a great feast for us and for all our people, who did not want for a good appetite. On the 19th I assembled the chiefs and head men of the village in the hut where I was, I gave them a present in your name of powder, balls, knives and tobacco, telling them that I received them into the number of your children; that if they had sense you promised not to abandon them; that the French were now established on their lands and would provide for all their wants; that they must hunt the beaver and keep to their lands; that you did not wish for war at present, desiring to make all the lands smooth, so that all our children might live in peace, of whom I would increase the number every day. I made the same recital to them that I had made to all the others. There was great thankfulness, with many tears and ceremonies, by passing their hands over my head, taking me in your room and place as their father, and our Frenchmen as brothers by again passing the hands over our heads, all weeping. This ceremony ended, the orator said: We thank thee, ~~my~~ father, for so willingly taking the trouble to come to us; we are all going in thy company to the Mandans to bring thee to thy fort; we have sent four men to warn them who are about to arrive who report that the Mandans are greatly rejoicing at thy coming amongst them and are to come to meet thee. We have sent other four young men to bring them to the place we have selected for them; we will go quietly to the hunting to have fat on arriving ~~other~~ there, to eat with the grain of which they always eat much, having seldom meat or fat. I thanked them for their good will, and encouraged them to send us on quickly; that they could see as well as I, the very advanced season. Knowing that the Mandans had no supplies of fat, I purchased it in the village to give all our people whatever they would carry, and made the Indians carry for us, for which I paid them; I warned our Frenchmen that I intended to spend part of the winter among the Mandans; that if they did not take a good load of fat, they must eat their wheat and beans with water. On the 20th, the whole village set out on the march to go the seventeen leagues where the meeting place for the Mandans had been chosen; every day they entertained us with the tale that the whites we were going to see were Frenchmen like ourselves, who said they were our descendants. All they told us gave us good hope of making a discovery which would deserve attention. Mr. de la Marque and I made plans along the road from what they were telling us, believing that to be true, from which we had to deduct much. I observed to Mr. de la Marque the good order in which the Assiniboines march to prevent surprise, marching always on the prairies, the hillsides and valleys from the first mountain, which did not make them fatigued by mounting and descending often in their march during the day. There are magnificent plains of three or four leagues. The march of the Assiniboines, especially when they are numerous, is in three columns, having skirmishers in front, with a good rear guard, the old and lame march in the middle, forming the central column. I kept all the French together as much as possible. If the skirmishers discovered herds of cattle on the road, as often happens, they raise a cry which is soon returned by the rear guard, and all the most active men in the columns join the vanguard to hem in the cattle, of which they secure a number, and each takes what flesh he wants. Since that stops the march, the vanguard marks out the encampment which is not to be passed; the women and dogs carry all the baggage, the men are burdened only with their arms; they make the dogs even carry wood to make the fires, being often obliged to encamp in the open prairie, from which the clumps of wood may be a great distance? On the morning of the 28th, we arrived at the place selected for the meeting ~~with~~ the Mandans, who arrived towards evening—a chief, with thirty men and the four Assiniboines. The chief, after having from the top of a height considered for some time the extent of our village, which appeared of a good size, I had him

brought to the hut where ~~I~~ was, where a place had been prepared to receive him on one side of it. He came and placed himself near me; one of his people then, on his part, presented me with a gift of Indian corn in the ear, and of their tobacco in rolls, which is not good, as they do not know how to cure it like us. It is very like ours, with this difference, that it is not cultivated and is cut green, everything being turned to account, the stalks and leaves together. I gave him some of mine, which he thought very good. I acknowledged that I was surprised, expecting to see different people from the other Indians, especially after the account given me. There was no difference from the Assiniboines; they are naked, covered only with a buffalo robe, worn carelessly without breech clout. I knew from that time that we had to make an allowance for all we had been told. The chief spoke to me in Assiniboine, testifying the joy which I had given to all their nation by my arrival among them; that he begged me to accept them among the number of your children; that he wished afterwards to have to do only with us; that I might dispose of all he had; that he begged me to remain at his fort, that it was the nearest and smaller than the others, but well supplied with provisions; that there were six forts belonging to the same nation; that it was the only one not far from the river. He told me he had received two belts from me; that they had been shown to me on my arrival as they had always hoped to see me. I thanked him for all his civilities and offers, telling him that I had come from a long distance to form a friendship with them, and that I would speak to them so soon as I should have arrived at the ~~fort~~. He immediately played us a trick; having examined our village on his arrival, as I have stated, judging that there would be many people, and if they all came to his fort, there must be a great consumption of grain, their custom being to feed liberally all who came among them, selling only what was to be taken away, he gave many thanks to the Assiniboines for having brought the French among them; that it could not have happened more opportunely; that the Sioux would not be long of arriving among them, having been warned, begging me, like the Assiniboines, to assist them, hoping much from our valour and courage. I was entrapped, like the Assiniboines, with this difference, that the Assiniboines stood confounded, whilst I rejoiced, believing that I had found an opportunity to be avenged on that accursed nation. I promised him every assistance from myself and our Frenchmen should they come whilst we were with them, for which he thanked me. He was sent for to come to the feast and questioned respecting the Sioux. The Assiniboines, numerous, strong and robust men, are not brave; they greatly fear the Sioux, whom they think to be braver. The Mandans know their weakness and profit by it, as opportunity arises. The council was held to discuss what should be done. The most decided opinion was that it was not necessary to go further than to warn me of the risk I was about to run if I wished to pursue our course. An old man rose firmly: Do not think that our father is a coward; I know him better than the ~~others~~ others do; I have been with him ever since he left his fort; do not believe that the Sioux can frighten him or any of his people. What will he think of us? He has lengthened his road to join us, agreeing to our wish for his company among the Mandans and to bring him back to his fort. He would have gone to-day if he had not listened to us, and you would think of abandoning him by letting him go alone, which cannot be. If we fear the Sioux let us leave our village here till our return; let every man ~~be~~ able to march follow our father. All agreed in the old man's opinion; it was decided that only a few should remain to protect the women; all the rest would accompany me. I was notified of the result of the council; word was sent throughout the village to warn every one to be ready to ~~be~~ march the day after to-morrow, the 30th of the month, thus making a little longer delay among the Mandans, who knew how to profit by it by the sale of their grain, tobacco, peltry, and painted plumes, which they ~~know~~

the Assiniboines greatly value, who had brought and now gave in exchange muskets, axes, kettles, powder, balls, knives and awls. They are much craftier in trade than the Assiniboines and others, who are constantly their dupes. We left on the morning of the 30th, about 600 men, several women without children, the best walkers. On the evening of the third day of our march, about seven leagues from the first fort of the Mandans, I was informed that an Assiniboine had taken the bag from my slave on the road, under pretext of relieving him, and had returned to the village. My box, in which were my papers, and many things of use to me, were in the bag. I immediately engaged two young men to run after him, whom I paid, making them promise to bring the bag to the Mandans, where I would wait for them. They set out during the night, overtook the rascal, who had already decamped from the village, made him return everything and came back to their village to keep the whole, hoping to restore it to me on my return, not daring to come after me, being afraid of the Sioux. I saw myself deprived of many things which were of daily use. The orator gave notice that we must leave before four in the morning in order to arrive early at the fort. I found at a league and a half, about noon, near a small river, a number of people who had come to meet us had lighted fires, expecting us, and had brought coarse grain cooked and flour made into a paste, with pumpkins, to give all enough to eat. Two chiefs had made a place ready for me near the fire and presented me first with something to eat and to smoke. Mr. de la Marque arrived shortly after me. I asked him to sit near me and to eat whilst resting. We remained fully two hours resting. We were warned that it was time to go. I made one of my children take the flag painted with the arms of France, and march at the front; and ordered the French to follow in ranks. The Sieur Nolant relieved my son in carrying the flag, each taking it in turn. The Mandans would not let me march, but offered to carry me, to which I had to consent, being requested by the Assiniboines, who told me I would displease them greatly if I refused.

At four acres from the fort, on a small height, the old men of the fort, accompanied by a great number of the youth, were waiting to present me with the calumet and to show me the two belts I had sent them four or five years ago. They gave a seat to me and to Mr. de la Marque. I received their compliments, which related only to the joy they felt at our arrival. I ordered my son, the Chevalier, to make all our Frenchmen draw up in line, the flag four paces in front; all the Assiniboines who had muskets placed themselves in line like our Frenchmen. After compliments had been paid, I saluted the fort with three volleys. Many people came to meet us, but nothing in comparison with what appeared on the ramparts and along the trenches. I marched in good order to the fort, into which I entered on the 3rd of December at four in the afternoon, escorted by all the French and Assiniboines. We were led into the hut of the head chief. It was certainly large, but not enough to hold all who wished to enter. The crowd was great that they crushed one another, Assiniboines and Mandans. There was only the place where we were, Mr. de la Marque, his brother and my children, free of them. I asked that the crowd should retire, to leave our Frenchmen clear, and to put their baggage in a place of safety, telling them they had all time to see us. Every one was put out, but I had been too late. The bag of goods had been stolen, in which were all my presents, through the fault of one of ~~the~~ hired men in whose care I had placed it before reaching the fort. He had unloaded on entering the hut without looking out for the bag, which he had put beside him in the great crowd. I felt rather confounded; my box lost, my bag of presents, which was very necessary for the place, and there were upwards of 300 livres inside. The Assiniboines seemed greatly annoyed and at once made a strict but useless search. Their fort is full of caves, well suited for concealment. The chief of the Mandans appeared to be greatly moved at my loss,

and said for my consolation that there were many rascals among them. He would do his utmost to discover something about it. Had I accepted the offer of the Assiniboines, I might have had it found in a little time by force, but I preferred to lose it and to make peace about everything, as I wanted to spend a part of the winter with them to get a knowledge of the more distant country. On the 14th I had the principal Mandans and Assiniboines assembled in the hut where I was. I gave them my present of powder and balls, telling them that I could give them nothing else; that they all knew that what I had brought to give in presents had been carried off. I declared to them that I was inclined to remain some time to gain a ~~more~~ knowledge of the country according to our orders, which I could not do in a day. The Mandan testified their joy, assuring me that I need not be afraid of fasting, that they had provisions in reserve, far more than were necessary for us, and that their whole fort was well supplied, that I might dispose of it being master among them. The elder of the Assiniboines, the orator of the village, said to me: My father, we have brought thee here; I do not doubt that thou mayest be well here; we flatter ourselves with bringing thee back to thy fort; thou art the master to do what thou shalt consider suitable; we will come to seek thee, so soon as thou shalt wish it. Speaking then to the Mandans: We are leaving our father; take great care of him and of all the French; learn to know them; they know how to do everything; he is a spirit; we love and fear him; do like us. We leave much grieved at the theft which has been committed on our father by entering ~~among~~ among us; what can he think of us; we cannot deny that it is an unworthy thing. The Frenchmen came to see us and you robbed him; we are pleased that our father should be good or it would not have passed in that way. I do not fear to tell you so; we could have found the bag had he wished it; there is still time if he will. I made him finish, as I saw the old man was getting heated. One of the Mandan chiefs answered: Neither I, nor my people have any share in what you accuse us of; I do not answer for others; I am vexed enough; I have had every search made by my young men; I have ~~had~~ nothing to reproach myself with. Who knows if it is not an Assiniboine? There were some of both in the crowd; thou canst answer for nothing. Be not uneasy as to what regards our father and all his people; he is here master as if he were at home. We beg him to number us among his children. This I did at once, by putting my hands on the head of each chief, which is the usual ceremony, answered by loud shouts of joy and thanks. I then said to the Assiniboines: I am sending four Frenchmen to my fort to give my news there; I recommend you to get them to that place as soon as you can. I have left powder in the village and all that is necessary to have them brought. The council ended with loud thanks from both parties. As the Assiniboines did not yet speak of leaving, although they had purchased all they were able to do, such as painted ox-robés, deer skin, dressed buckskin, and ornamented furs and feathers, painted feathers, and peltrey, wrought garters, circles for the head, girdles. These people dress leather better than any other of the nations, and work in furs and feathers very tastefully, which the Assiniboines are not capable of doing. They are cunning traders, cheating the Assiniboines of all they may possess, such as muskets, powder, balls, kettles, axes, knives or awls. Seeing the great consumption of food daily by the Assiniboines, and afraid that it would not last long, they set afloat a rumour that the Sioux were near and that several of their hunters had noticed them. The Assiniboines fell into the trap and made up their minds quickly to decamp, not wishing to be obliged to fight. A Mandan chief let me understand by a sign that the rumour about the Sioux was to get rid of the Assiniboines. At six in the morning they all left in great haste, believing the Sioux were near and fearing that the road might be blocked up. The chief with whom I had lodged brought five men to remain with me, saying: My father, I hope that you will ~~yet~~ join us for a little; I march peaceably. Here are