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FRONTIER LIFE

By Ena Palmer Raymonde

Perhaps it is an example of her limitations, but the following dramatic essay is the only surviving account by Ena of her frontier experiences--beyond her private diaries and a poem or two. From her diaries, we know she realized the extraordinary aspects of her life, but, instead of writing of her small world for publication, she continued to turn out numerous romantic poems and Gothic short stories. As far as is known, <sup>this piece</sup> was never accepted for publication, though we know she spent more than a minimum of time upon it, for it exists in two manuscripts. After reading her diaries, the account is obviously flawed. At a time when authors were beginning to write and publish realistic accounts of the West, Ena's actual knowledge is defeated by her romanticism.

Though it is an account of life on the Medicine in 1872 and 1873, it was written, apparently, in 1874. It was written on the odd-numbered pages of her journal. Though some of these pages have been torn from the book, the account is complete. In neither version was the essay titled.

1st

It seems a rather foolish contradiction to apologize for a presumption when it is voluntary and self-asserted; nor do we propose making the attempt in behalf of ourselves as regards the offer we have made to say something this evening of the "wild West" that shall possibly interest and amuse our hearers; still some explanation seems necessary to render plain our rather novel position -- namely, as one whose personal experience amid the wild charms and fascinating freedoms, which throws such a peculiar spell around the lives of the roaming inhabitants of the Plains, is such as to render their knowledge sufficient to offer it, with not unreasonable assurance, to others.

We say not unreasonable -- for, as much as has been said and written on this subject, it is one of such varied interest, we feel encouraged in the hope that it may not yet be exhausted -- at least the observances and experiences of women, intent on seeing whatever was to be seen; and knowing whatever was to be known, or worth to be known in this peculiar mode of Life, has been somewhat limited; and we believe as it is generally conceded that the views of the fair sex, on almost every subject, are peculiar to themselves, thus rendering our knowledge of "Life on the Plains" if not valuable, at least possessing the charm of "newness".

To be brief as regards personal matters -- permit us to at once state that the peculiar drift our life has taken of late years seems but the natural sequence to an odd bent of mind from early childhood: Loving the wild - the beautiful - the free in nature, her wildest haunts would

would at any time possess sufficient allurements to draw us from the gayeties of the Social World -- also a love of the chase had really been a passion since we were old and large enough to shoot a pop-gun and race on a stick (end p.157) horse after imaginary game and dogs! ---

It was amid the tropical wilderness of our native South that we were permitted to freely indulge this passion for hunting. Entire freedom of action being allowed by indulgent parents and friends, of course this early love of the chase was deeply inculcated; and nothing was more delightful, even after attaining womanhood, than to give free rein to the restive bounds of a gallant hunter -- horse and rider alike thrilling to the wild music of a chorus of dogs, as they made the old, grand forest ring with a thousand echoes! --- --- But, change of fortune; and circumstances that saddened the old home led us to lend an eager ear to the stories that whispered of brilliant promise in the "far West" -- And a fertile fancy, busy with gleanings from various writers -- a miscellaneous collection of facts, relative to the discoveries which here of late years has vested the barren, treeless plains of the West with a singular and profound interest, to the lovers of science, as well as the lovers of adventure, soon reared wild dreams that told us we could feed our mind, in its passion for the curious and wondrous in Nature with a rich repast -- besides, perhaps, finding a home, where the broken hopes of Youth might be, in a degree, rebuilt!

The desire of kind parents and our own, that they should bear us company, being mutual, removed all objections to our projected trip; so we were soon on our way to that Land of Promise which had proven an El Dorado to so many homeless ones!

Arriving, and soon becoming dissatisfied with the mixed associations not to be avoided by those living near the great thoroughfares of the West, where wanders from every clime and waifs from every shore meet and (end p.159) separate as the waves of the Sea! we preferred the seclusion and entire freedom of the utterly uncivilized wilds; even though we must take with them their attending dangers. -- For two years ago Southern Nebraska boasted of no other signs that would tell the presence of the "pale-face" than now and then a "doby" hut, lodge or "teepee" of a hunter or trapper -- who if claiming family-responsibilities, owed that dignity to the tawny daughters of the Indian race. --- And it was no unusual occurrence for parties of "red braves", on horse-stealing expeditions to scour the country at frequent intervals -- often skirmishing with one another, and sometimes coming in sanguinary contact with the whites.

So despite the warnings of many -- officers of the Army, as well as citizens -- that it was dangerous to leave the protection of the Forts, we started out. Being under the guidance of a relative and a friend or two, who were "frontier-men" in the common acceptance of the phrase. ---- 40 miles sheer into the wilderness! It was a ride we would not like to forget. A clear, crisp morning in Spring -- and we drank in the pure air as the dusty traveler drinks a grateful draught from the waters of a crystal fountain! And the grand sweep of the vast prairie stretched before us! How free and exultant we felt, and how almost pained with a sense of our own insignificance as we gained an eminence and turned to look on the valley that lay at our feet! A scenery at once soft and imposing -- of such varied beauty as it lay calm and perfect as a picture before us. We shall not attempt a description -- having neither the time nor the words -- but will

suffice the matter by saying that standing thus on a peak of the far south hills, we (end p.161) gained a view that swept the Platte valley for miles: Green and smooth as an emerald sward - while the river winds about it as a broad belt of silver - dotted with an hundred tiny islands and brilliant with the shimmer and sheen of the gorgeous sunlight of morning! And the hills -- far back and looming grandly - wearing that beauty of sternness which stirs the Soul to admiration as nothing else can! Frowning down in their grand immutable beauty, while Nature wantoned in all the charm and change of Spring-time at their very feet; their darkling pockets and yawning cañons rife with a weird mystery that well might give wing to Fancy as she pierces the light and shade of their dizzy depts! But, we could not linger then nor must we now -- tho' how jealously we enjoyed every little incident of the trip! A herd of timid antelope, as they stood and stamped in curious surprise at our appearance -- or perchance a deer, peering from some high cliff to watch us with great soft eyes wide with wonder as our waggon rattled over the smooth "divides", and every now and then driving unceremoniously into the limit of a Prairie-dog town -- and setting the quaint little inhabitants into a bewildered confusion of tiny barks as they wagged their tails at us, or rushed from one hole to another to chatter we suppose, with their friends the rattlesnakes and owls, of this unwanted intrusion!

It was growing dark when we reach Medicine Valley -- Minnie Wau Kaw -- as the Indians have it --- and bearly in time to "pitch camp" before night. Consequently we had but little opportunity to observe the

surrounding country that first day. And on the following morning just as we had risen from a couch of buffalo-ropes and sought our way to the brink of the beautiful little stream that had soothed our (end p.163) slumbers during the night with its musical murmurs, with the intention of bathing hands and face in its clear waters, we caught the Sound of horses feet - bending an ear to the ground we soon discovered that there were many, and rapidly approaching! Full of curiosity we bent an eager gaze into the gloom of the thick woods that borders the stream and shuts off the hills from view. --- Was it a dream, when in a moment after an Indian warrior, painted plumed and bonneted, dashed out in full view, and then quickly reining his gaily - bedecked pony, stood the picture of wonder, as we gazed each other mutely in the face.

No, no dream! but a veritable warrior of the Plains -- Something we had so long desired to see! And in realizing that fact we smiled at the pleasant knowledge of its gratification. An answering smile lighted for an instant the grim features of the Indian and then finding tongue, he said slowly, as if each word was dragged out by sheer astonishment!

"Win - chin - chillo -- waugh-seecha! Lan-canshe! -- Ah - yap -he?" I had learned one sentence in Indian the day before, from a hunter, meaning, I do not understand and in grateful relief I answered

"Slowly ishney."

"Wash - ta -cla -- good!" he ejaculated; giving me in turn the benefit of his extensive knowledge of the English language. By this time, however, arrivals from all sides put an end to this voluble conversation:

--- Our party hurrying up to see this unexpected and early visitor while from the same route he had come appeared some forty or fifty Indians, and in their rear several young and gaily dressed squaws. Also a white interpreter, who explained that they were a "Cut-off" band from the Sioux or (end p.165) Dah-co-ta, Nation, and introduced the chief "Whistler". We had noticed a peculiarity in his, the chief's, appearance before being made acquainted with the dignity of his position. An utter absence of arms, offensive or defensive, and no warpaint to be seen on his grave, kindly face. -- The Peace Chief, as he was called, made it a rule never to carry a war-like weapon, of any kind -- striving thus to practically prove his desire for peace, and thereby more deeply to imbue his young braves with the same kindly spirit. -- We invited the party to a seat at our camp-fire; and the chief with several of his braves and all of the squaws dismounted -- the rest of the party moving on a few miles further. It was an odd company and many "signs" and much laughter was the order of the day. --- They took quite kindly to the "white squaw" - criticising our personal appearance without ceremony and were especially delighted with the silver-mounted pistols we wore in our belt; nor would they be satisfied until they saw whether or not we knew how to use them; and after proving ~~this~~ to their satisfaction, that we could "kill our own meat" they decided that white squaws were not all quite useless, even if they could not dress buffalo robes; and forthwith invited our entire party to join their band. <sup>(joined)</sup> -- Expressing friendship as well as we could, yet declining the proposed honor, they seem satisfied and were preparing to depart, when

one of the braves approached us, and gravely unfolding his handsome "body-robe" from his breast introduced one hand into the darkened recesses of his calico shirt. I looked on silently - striving to conceal the wonder I knew was depicted on every feature - when after searching industriously, first on one side and then the other, he drew forth - not a scalp-lock, nor a gilded tomahawk, nor yet a war plume from the wom-ble-lee (the eagle), but a huge lump of what had been white loaf sugar, but now (end p.167) (page 169 has been cut from the journal) *see 7B*

moccasins. The entire dress was ~~was~~ faultless for its kind -- and certainly sufficiently costly - as the dress alone could not have been bought from her for "four horses", or their equivalent in money - two hundred dollars. This sort of paraphennalia is not common, however - as this was the belle of her tribe, and unusually good-looking, - even to the partial eyes of the "whites". The usual dress of the squaw is of calico and extremely sloven.

On the whole, however, this impromptu visit was very entertaining - the "braves" and their squaws being of mutual and certainly novel interest -- we parted with them on the best of terms -- our good humor most happily enhanced by the pleasant news they called out as they rode away!

"Heap buffalo - coming - "heap" - \_aller way" - pointing to the South hills. Of course we were eager for that far-famed sport -- "chasing buffalo over the plains". -- So, as a consequence the remainder of that day was spent in climbing to the highest peaks of the surrounding hills on the look out for these huge animals.

We could see a plenty of deer an antelope, but it was not until



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-- alas! -- begrimed and yellow with either age or hard useage, yet after all sugar still, and offered it, with an assumption of dignify truly ludicrous, after discovering the nature of the gift. Flushed with the oddest embarrassment, we hesitated to make ourselves the victimx of such a joke; and in pursuance of this thought, moved quickly in front of the lump of sugar, that we might screen it from "eyes impertinent." "Ah-coo-tah, chey-chunke tay!" he softly said -- still extending the sugar. And in their desperation, not understanding one word he said, we took the questionable gift and tried to hide it beneath the short folds of our hunting cloak. But the joke was too good to keep; and our first souvenir of a red warrior was afterwards placed in the forks of a tree -- provoking many a hearty laugh as long as it remained.

For the benefit of announcement of the ladies, permit us to describe the dress of one of the xsquaws present -- a niece of the chief's, we believe: She had on no calico -- a favorite dress with the squaws, now-a-day; but a sort of loose gown, made of antelope skin; and reaching about half-way [down] the leg. It was entirely spotless, and of a rich, creamy color -- that rare yellow that tinges with such delicate beauty the unmistakable lace our grandmothers wore! Soft as velvet, it fell in richly, beaded folds, and gathered gracefully at the waist by a buck skin girdle; adorned with porcupine quills; and holding the painted sheath of a hunting knife. A pair of gaily beaded leggins of the same and something in the fashion of Turkish trousers, were fastened with silver buckles at the delicate ankles; and a pair of dainty feet, that any fair daughter of fashion might be proud to own, were incased in neatly fitting, richly beaded

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several days after that our vigilance was rewarded by seeing about a dozen buffalo approaching the stream quite near our camp. It was early in the morning and we had just risen from a feverish couch -- feeling more than half ill in consequence of the unusual exposure! -- But heavens! who could remember head-aches and fevers, when in five minutes of the discovery of the buffalo<sup>s</sup> our little camp was alive with excitement. Our weary limbs forgot their lassitude and we were in the midst of the rush and skurry for horses, guns, knives and pistols -- In less than "no time" we were off - five of us in party. We felt eager, of course, and tho' our hand as we reined (end p.171) in the fine horse which we had especially selected, was not quite steady as usual, still we were cool enough for "business" - and so we started: Going around a cañon we cautiously climbed a hill, in close defile; as one or two of the party was to try and lariat a calf at the outset. -- Gaining the hill top, reined my horse for a moment and sat looking in silent wonder at the hundreds of buffalos all moving quietly, like some vast army, ~~to water!~~ But there was no time to loose for already the advance guard had sniffed danger, and were raising their ponderous heads to tell from whence!

Not attempting to shoot any of the "head bulls" we made a dash for the main herd, and in less than five minutes they were all, to use a Western phrase, on the "dead go!" Shades of Nimrod! what a wild grand chase it was! Like the rumble of distant waters we could hear the heavy thuds and roar of their feet as the huge mass swept like a black cloak over hills and cañons at a speed that put our horses to their best! -- We did

not attempt to shoot in the first heat of the chase. Riding a powerful horse and one that had perhaps never seen a buffalo before, he became wild with excitement and fright so it was as much as we could do - or care to try to do, to keep our seat and prepare to "fall clear" should he stumble or fall in this break-neck race! And yet we managed to keep him well into the herd that we might see the fun, at least! -- And fun it was -- wild, dangerous -- a reckless toying with life, yet in the heat an passion of excitement, what utter indifference to the risk! The young men of our party "went for them" in true Indian style -- bare-headed and loose rein - as free and as fearless as the buffalo themselves! - Shooting right and left - their trained ponies sideling up to the buffalo in a manner perfectly wonderful to us. Yet our observations came to an abrupt terminous. A sudden desire to stop this head-long race seemed to possess our horse - two or three short <sup>leaps</sup> (end p.173) sheer in the air that nearly unseated me and then rearing about almost upright pawed the air madly with his feet. Realizing the peril of the situation and having nothing else, we caught a pistol from our belt and struck the maddened animal between his ears --- the pistol was heavily mounted and the quick blow from its sharp edged butt was not without effect! Falling heavily to his feet and almost to the ground, he seemed inclined to quiet, and we lost no time in taking the vantage-ground! Nor was it many minutes before we persuaded him into an easy lope, which promised to bring us pretty soon in "sight of the field of action." -- It did - but not in a manner desired. Descending a little ravine suddenly, we saw not ten yds. from us a buffalo prone on the ground

and apparently dead. Our horse stopped short and with legs planted forward and body drawn back seemed stricken with fear -- paralyzed with this sudden fright! But the buffalo was not dead - tho' "wounded unto death"! -- And now with red eyes distended, and long, black mane dripping with purple blood, he up reared his massive head, and with a snort that far around sprinkled the green prairie grass with blood-flecked foam, made one desperate lunge at our luckless steed! It was enough -- fright gave wings to flying feet, and as an arrow shot from a bow, we darted forward! -- On an on -- passed all of the party -- some who tried to get before the runaways. -- But no use -- pass them - passed all, we flew -- until with a shudder of horror, and in but a moment of time we saw massive maned heads and foaming nostrils all around us -- closer and closer -- thicker and thicker became the forms, that were alas! no myth, but a dangerous reality readily accounted for. -- Our insaned beast had taken straight down a narrow divide which was crowded with the fleeing herd. We realized all of the peril but was powerless to escape it. -- Deep (end p.175) rifted cañons yawned on either side -- making the leap down undesired even by buffalo -- and utterly impossible to man or horse. Looking back we could distinguish in the cloud of dust, nothing but a dense mass whirling forward! And before -- the same mass of maddened, fleeing creatures. To stop would have been death even if we could.' And, the thought came shuddering to the heart, should we fall! The fear passed however, and strangely enough in that race for life, until becoming almost as wild as the poor brute, whose springs were not quite so strong as at first, we lent forward, and patting his neck en-

couragingly shouted, "Onward old boy! Onward Falcon! Make yr.self worthy of yr. name, and out strip them all!" And he did out strip them all! -- Soon we could see "Land ahead" to use a nautical phrase, and our dusty companions thinning rapidly. -- The divide was growing narrower too, and the canons less precipitous -- goading our tired horse once more to his best he sprang forward! And we at last had the satisfaction of being ahead in the race! But how to end it was the question that puzzled next: We must evidently get out of the way -- for the short, hard breathings of Falcon told that fright and fatigue were rapidly telling on him! -- There was a narrow pocket and a single Cottonwood growing on the opposite side, not far ahead -- we made for it! -- If Falcon could not make the Leap, he must fall! - for we were getting desperate with the desire to stop! Reining him up well, and vigorously applying the spur we went for it - and made it! Quickly dismounting and drawing the rein over Falcon's drooping head -- we leaned against the cottonwood - determined to seek its protection should there be any need. The buffalos came thundering on! One magnificent old (end p.177) fellow fell in about 20 yds. of us. -- Writhing in the fearful throes of a gory death, his eyes still gleaming with a fierce defiance, how splendid he looked in his massive agony! We admired a while; and then feeling that to kill would be merciful, we took the pistol from our belt and tried its "ability to kill". -- We believe the lordly old fellow did turn his head and look at us, which was about all the notice he deigned to give. But it was waxing late! And tho' we left not much fear of being lost, as our companions, had seen our flight with the buffalos, still we were not sorry when several of the party came dashing up, —

wildly looking for the runaways and withall very much frightened. Having an offer to swap horses -- we did so, and forthwith mounted a sturdy, well-trained hunter -- which was a pleasant change, to say the least, from the frantic chargings of the maddened beast that had so perilously "led the chase." We also took a needle-gun in lieu of the pistols and after one or two fine runs succeeded in bringing down two buffalos, at long range and in fine style. Requesting our accompanying cavalier to get the frontals, tails and tongues, we waited for the gathering of the whole party - showed our prizes -- the trophies we had taken; and after receiving their Westernized congratulations with hearty good will and unaffected pleasure we started for the camp-home -- glad to think of the quiet and rest awaiting us there.

The long-desired buffalo hunt over and what was more, well over; we turned, our fancy somewhat satiated, from the pleasures of the chase, eager to find something new and different -- something that would please and employ the mind.

Whistler's band, being camped quite near, there was frequent visitors from the village; and we had learned to know and like some of the squaws quite well; and to learn their language was (end p.179) was the object that possessed us next; and under these favorable auspices we set studiously to the task -- for two objects mainly -- namely, the better to extend such hospitalities as our camp afforded, to these "Brown Children of the Plains", who seemed to have quite a friendship for Pa-he Minny Minnion, or Curled Hair, and last but not least, to be able to make personal investigations as to the truth or falsehood, as the case might prove, as regards the many

stories told of the poetical and richly metaphorical style of their manner of speech. Now we perfectly understand the ~~nauseous~~ nausea which is felt now-a-day when there is any sentimentality or romance expressed on the time-worn subject of the "Noble Red Man". The day is passed when the heart of the Pale Face would thrill with interest and eagerly drink in the romance vesting the wild, and to many, mysterious life these genuine Americans with savage dignity. Yet living among the Indians, the natural Indians as we have, and striving to discover the poetry of the Indian nature, or life, and at the same time striving as a necessity, if nothing more to ignore its beastality we now see in looking at the pictures Memory evokes many that are true and beautiful with the truth and beauty of Nature's poetry!

For instance we were struck with a conversation chanced upon with an aged squaw. Approaching her teepee after a long walk in search of grouse and turkies to get a drink of water, we were struck with the picturesque beauty of the scene before us. Seated at the door of her gaily painted teepee -- was the we-nux-cha -- the medicine woman of her tribe -- looking indeed as our poet Miller has it -- "As wrinkled and brown as a bag of Leather" -- apparently as indifferent and as ignorant of human sentiment or feeling as the Indian dog that crouched by her side. What can she be thinking of, we (end p.181) //pgs.183 ~~and~~ 185<sup>193</sup> continue another writing; 187, 189, ~~and~~ 191<sup>195</sup> are missing, but the story continues on pg.193// mentally asked. Nothing more profound than when she will have a feast of wo-ze-yappa, (stewed apples and sugar) was the answering thought. After the usual greeting of "umph-how" and getting the water which she pointed at with her lips, instead of the finger, we sat down Indian fashion, by her

side and to put aside ceremony, commenced eating on of the wild turnips she had been peeling and appearing delighted with the flavor.

"Umpa Chees-Chee-la like Dacota eat" she said in their strange broken English.

"What does the we-nux-cha think as she sits so still before her teepee?" We asked, in her own language. --

"Her thoughts are many and toward the setting sun!" She replied, speaking with the easy fluency of her mother-tongue.

"Yr. hands are wrinkled and your hair white like the snow." We continued, adopting the Indian extravagance, as we touched her wrinkled hands-- "Can the we-nux-cha tell me how many snows she has seen?" --

"They are lost!" was the brief pathetic answer, and then continuing sadly "many snows have come and gone since me pappose was chees cheela -- so -- but that tells me nothing of the moons I have seen!"

"But what were you thinking of?" we still persisted:

"This" she answered simply. I took the bit of paper crumpled in her hand -- it was a true pattern of a tiny baby's foot. --

"Me cut it after the pappose sleep!" She explained, meaning after it died -- It was worn and yellow with use or age -- perhaps both. --

"Where does the pappose sleep?" We asked:

"The white man's home is there. -- The bones of ~~all~~ of my people are lost!" This was in her own language, and in a tone deep with (end p.197) unspoken grief! And we turned oddly touched by this little insight into this old squaws inner life. It was strangely suggestive! And as we looked



at the brown old squaw with strange fancies making wild and weird pictures in our busy brain! Suppose one could read the history of her life! Must she not watch the changes that the whites have brought to pass with troubled wonder. She remembers when these vast plains knew only the brown children of her race! Their free plain-life filled with unsleeping excitement -- the very poetry of crime and Savage dignity. - Ah! Life is but another name for change -- constant vast and wonderful change! We turned away saddened with the thought that we too, sooner or later, would be even as the fallen and forgotten Indian! But the grand hills and free, pure air! The song of many birds and the swift freedom of the stately elk; the timid deer and the fleet antelope, will not permit the shadow of Sorrow, Reason and Philosophy to remain long. It was our delight to wander amid the grand solitude of the hills -- Solitary as we before said, save the herds of elk, deer and antelope that roamed everywhere -- their trails the only paths that threaded the rich green of the prairie grass - no roads - no foot-prints accept now and then near a "Buffalo waller" we would find a stray moccasin track. And a special pleasure it was to climb to the highest hill-tops and search for pretty specimens of the pottery to be found only on the high peaks and hill tops - apparently above the wash of the waters that have evidently swept with a second flood these vast breadths of land! It is the province of the geologist to give us supposable data for there relics of a race that have passed away! He may reconstruct (end p.199) //pg.201 used for other writings// past ages! Repeopling these now solitary plains with their ancient inhabitants! It is a glorious work! And the fossil remains found in the Western wilds, here of late, have delighted these

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And this Medicine woman of the Sioux nation -- what a queer piece of humanity she was! We sought to be with and know her every convenient opportunity. More solitary hunts among the hills, we have sometimes chanced upon her usually perched upon the highest cliff or hill-top around. She would wander away thus to watch -- for half of the Indian's life is spent in watching -- it is almost impossible for any living thing to approach their camp without being discovered before reaching it. Also, she would go out thus to talk with the crows -- which seems to be the familiar spirits of the Sioux, as they will not allow one to be killed. One day I found my old friend, the wee-nux-cha -- high up on the side of a hill, with about a hundred "cawking" crows around her. Flying around -- hovering over her head -- thick on the ground at her very feet and raising Bedlam, generally -- yet high above the voices of the crows, was the shrill tones of the wee-nux-cha -- rattling out a wild gibberish utterly unintelligible to us. We listened and ~~xxxx~~ and watched awhile -- when suddenly she turned and beckened to us! The crows flew away -- doubtless knowing we were not a congenial spirit! We asked her what she was doing? Talking to the crows was the reply -- they were telling her what was coming to her people, &c. She was supposed to be a witch or soothsayer -- and in truth, her prophecys and medicine cures were unaccountable!

We grew to be quite friends -- and have had many interesting conversations; too prolix however, to relate! Sitting over her teepee fire, she would relate stories of her tribe -- its dead glories -- with the "light of other days" faintly illuming her wrinkled face, as she would mark out in the ashes of the dying fire the plan of many battles; telling of the valor of their young braves; and bravest among them, her own fearless lover; until her withered arms seemed nerved with the strength of Youth and her faded eyes to burn with the fire of its war-like pride!

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logicians of the Past! Bones, very many petrefied, of the rhinoserno and elephant. Also, of the camel and a smaller race of horses than any we have now -- also, bones of a larger race! -- We have seen some specimens -- found on the Loupe, Snake, Niobrara and White Rivers, and they made our brain "dream-full" deep with hints of olden times! To the geologist it is given to give life to these dusty yet not voiceless fossils! Giving them habitation among a race now passed away. To the beholder all of these things - bones of animals now lost to the living Earth - yawning cañons and cliffed plains tell a different story: - To the uneducated mind the first is merely curious - the latter simply imposing in their awful grandeur - telling of nature in her mightest moods and amplest profusion! But the eye of the geologist sees beyond the mere physical beauty and reads in their varied out-line, with unerring accuracy what he's beneath, hidden though it be by the soil and vegetation of unknown ages! The numerous cemeteries lately discovered of the extinct inhabitants of these plains of thousands of years ago has invested with a singular interest the Ancient life of America. We regard with a reverence, not unmixed with a vague sense of fear the ruins of Rome and the Holy Land - and view with awe and wonder the strange cities found among the grand old forests of Central America! - Yet these remarkable old inhabitants of Nebraska, Colorado, Wyoming and Dakota, were dead and buried untold ages before the people who conceived these ruins had existed! - We bestow high honors of literature on the historians of our own time, Bancroft and others, -- and yet the period of human history is but a day compared (end p.203) with the innumerable ages of the past, with which the geological historian has to deal! It is

a glorious privilage -- a pleasure almost equal to that of creating! A power and knowledge that must awaken enthusiasm in all appreciative minds! -- That it is not our province, however, we are too clearly assured. - Permit us then to pass over the scientific reasonings, that have been so protific as regards these antiquated, and osseous remains that throws such strange and fascinating light on the Ancient Life of America! Supposing a reiteration of published information out of place and useless in this simple narration. We can leave without regret, however these mysty rechords of a Past Age - since we can turn us to the living, glowing reality of a glorious future for this vast land that offers homes to so many homeless, and such a delightful refuge from the crowded marts of busy life - so refreshing to the tired frame and fevered care-worn brain! -- And we enjoyed it to its full extent -- nor did we weary of the self-imposed task of learning the Sioux language -- we found it possissing many paculiar charms, and trully a wonderful vain of the romantic and poetical! -- We, in fact, enjoyed it all to its full extent! -- We learned our lessons from an odd lot of teachers -- and many a hearty laugh these "Children of the Sun" enjoyed at our expense when ever we miss-called a word. And meanwhile an accident, that we chanced upon, aroused an intense desire to see an Indian grave yard, -- and we trust it may not be uninteresting to our listners, to mention the occurance: Riding along one day after a weary hunt, weary because unsuccessful, we were started from the deep reverie into which we had fallen, by our horse shying violently! Right in front of us, and rather back of a little abrupt hill grew a cottonwood, and from its branches we saw extended (end p.205) the skeliton arm of a man. --

Soothing our horse, we urged him up the hill, where we could look almost directly down on this strange and ghastly inhabitant of the tree.

Flapping drearily in the wind was the half of a painted robe, and partially dislodged from its resting place was the corpse of an Indian! Dried and shriveled, there was no appearance of decay, save the hollow, socketless eyes, and parched lips, drawn back and seriveled from the even roc of gleaming teeth. We looked beneath a long pole, and shoe tracks were under the tree -- Some sacrilegious wretch had evidently tried to dislodge the corpse -- and either becoming weary of the ghastly work; or frightened by the arm that had fallen from the loosen robe, which we had seen extended, he ran away; for in the soft earth we could distenctly trace hasty foot prints. He had departed too without securing any of the property of the dead! for on the ground just as they had fallen were two spoons made of buffalo horn; a wooden basin -- two or three medicine bags; and quite a number of painted arrows! -- Around his neck of the dead, a warrior in his prime appearantly, was a handsome string of aroquoise -- worth a horse or two, perhaps - and quite a number of silver ornaments. -- A pipe was still by his side - with a leathern sack or bag of cha-sha-sha, or Indian tobacco; made of the bark of the Red Willow. -- Everything in fact was there, to make him comfortable, according to the Indian idea of comfort, while on his ~~to~~ journy to the Happy Hunting ground! This little adventure aroused quite a desire to see a regular Indian grave yard. -- But owing to the inconvenience attending a trip far into the Sand Hills, the nearest burying ground we could hear of; we gave it up -- contenting ourselves with

a discription given us by a trapper and hunter. The man was educated (end p.207) one of those mysterious characters, often found in that wild country; wo has given up the world; yet still carry with them the evidence of "better days" -- or at least of more worldly days!

"I was packing my traps," he quietly commenced as he knocked the ashes from his pipe, "early in the spring up near Red Cloud's Reservation, when hearing of an Indian Graveyard some miles out of the trail I determined to make the circuit as I'd never seen a Grave Yard in the Air! When I had made the described distance, I discovered a hill and riding up it, I saw hundreds of the dead wrapped in robes, blankets and bark and laid out on scaffold like arrangements made of poles and forked sticks - these scaffolds were seven to eight feet high; ten feet long and four or five wide. It was a weird sight! This strange city of the dead! All was silent --- save flocks of ravens screaming around and brown hawks wheeling in the air! The prairie flowers, springing up from their grassy beds, wafted their sweet breath on the spring-air! -- Yet how unconcious were these silent sleepers! -- Maidens lying side by side with gray old warriors -- young girls in the very dawn of womanhood with their long, black hair falling through the decaying poles, and streaming in the wind! -- Old men - old women - young braves, in all the pride of manhood, with the war paint still unwashed from their faces! -- All resting as peacefully as if they they were in the protected and beautiful cemeteries of the Civilized World -- instead of that wild solitude where the wolves hold high carnival - mingling their wild screams with the mournfal cry of the Death owl! -- I noticed many little buckets and baskets hanging on the scaffolds. -- The

Indian idea is that while on its way to the Happy Hunting Ground the Soul must be fed; and these buckets and baskets had contained the necessary (end p.209) food and water for the "journey!" This was the hunter's description as near as I can remember of an Indian Burial Ground -- And we deemed it worth listening to, by anyone -- And mean while days had lengthened into weeks -- weeks into months and still we were in the wilds of Nebraska! Yet growing less wild every day. -- A woman was a curiosity in that part of the world -- we were the first in the country. -- But ere a year had passed, we could hear of towns, springing up like magic, where only a few months before was one unbroken solitude! We had no excitements worth mentioning! Now and then a war party, swooping in like an eagle, and carrying away its prey -- horses, by twos or threes, or by the dozen as the case happened to be. Buffalo Bill and Texas Jack making it a little interesting by now and then capturing a horse and killing a "red skin" -- or at intervals, parties from the East, would brake the monotony by coming out, and braving Indian dangers that they might say they hunted over the same ground, that Duke Alexis had ridden, and rendered immortially memorable by killing that saddly abused buffalo of his!

But nothing as we said, worth mentioning, until the death of Whistler -- the Peace Chief we have spoken of. He was, as we suppose many of you know basely murdered by a white outlaw -- Going to the camp of this fellow, Whistler with three of his men, stopped for the night. There were three white men also. Incited by that low cruelty, which is only to be found in the heart of a coward, the leader of the white party proposed murdering the Chief and his men. As usual the Chief was unarmed; and not

suspecting treachery, they all fell, easy victims to this cowardly act. The band of the murdered Chief were wild with rage and grief! And we being only a few miles from their village, and entirely unprotected by the troops; being so far from the fort, feared some trouble from them. 1 or 2 families that had moved near us left their homes and sought refuge in the rail-road towns. -- We did not attempt to move, however; and tho' the grief of the Indians was violent and long continued, they committed no act in revenge. -- All night could be heard their wailings of war -- laughter and Song no longer resounded in the village, and the grim faces of the warriors seem to bode no good. -- Not long after "Two Shield", a relative of Whistler, we believe, and a brave that may yet be a Chief, came with "Pawnee Killer" and picked a solitary lodge, for a few days, quite near our camp! Of course none of us felt just easy, and we were anxious to have a conversation with this venerable warrior on the subject of the crime; one day we saw him standing like a Statue at the door of his lodge, his blanket thrown across his shoulders in not ungraceful folds, and his countenance changeless as marble. We approached him quietly; his face was painted black and his countenance expressing stern Sorrow! We spoke of Whistler -- speaking our regrets in his own language.

"The heart of the white man is bad", he replied, "we would not speak of it."

The bitterness of his tone and the dignity of his words silenced us -- his grief words could not mitigate. We turned to look at him as we moved away. It was a scene for an artist -- that tall, stalwart form standing out against the back-ground of the forest -- lighted up



by the beams of the setting sun and rocked by the Summer's gale -- We watched him till out of sight; yet not a motion of his countenance, or a gesture of the body, could we see. We left him amid that quiet and noiseless scene, rigid and moveless as if changed to stone! We should like to have read his thoughts. -- Alas! were there no bitter and just reproaches of the white man who has taken away not only his hunting grounds; but the power -- the pride and lives of nearly all his ill-fated race! --- But a few years more, we communed with our selves, and they will have disappeared forever from these scenes; and will have found a new resting place toward the setting Sun; while this land, now waking from the silence of ages will be filled with the monuments of advancing civilization! -- Yet, "Such is life", and we gladly turn from the sadness of the fact! -- Last summer the fight between the Sioux and Pawnees, was the next Indian panic -- and the Last! It was quite near us, -- the battle ground -- the terrible scene of that bloody massacre! Yet that too passed away; and the tide of immigration flowed on! -- And now herds of cattle by the tens of thousands, roam where the buffalo alone was seen two years ago; the wigwam of the Indian is replaced by the cha-teepee (wood house) of the white man! Some of the whites still fear the Indians; we do not; the Indian is no fool; and as long as there is any hope he will not rush into immediate destruction by a general out-break! Let us look at the picture: Here and there we see remnants of what was once a powerful people -- huddled together upon a few acres of their former vast domains, that they may be fed and plundered, the few remaining

years of a miserable existence, by the dishonest agents and unprincipled speculators who seek them every where as their easy victims! They perish before the grand march of civilization like their former companions, the buffalo -- the elk and the deers! /A few of the/ more numerous tribes are striving, and will strive / / perhaps to keep an independent existence -- but, / / perhaps to keep an independent existence -- but, / / they sullenly retreat before the coming / / until the places that have known them, shall know them no more forever: And as an eloquent writer says "Slowly and sadly they climb the distant mountains, and read their doom in the setting sun"!

And will my kind hearers permit a word here, not for the "noble red man", but the poor Indian! Whom, though" a savage, is still one of God's creatures -- whose birth-right gives him a home in this broad land! Who, tho" belonging to a people that by their cruel deeds have made their very name a monster of terrible dread. Still, the darkness of prejudice should not be allowed to overshadow the light of Justice! We should not forget from whence sprang the incentives to anger, and as a sequence, to treachery. Nor yet should we forget the many, noble and self-sacrificing acts that should immortalize more than one Indian name! -- the records of America, -- listen to the clear voice of a merciful Justice, and kind thoughts and generous purposes will usurp the harshness of an evenging spirit! That the government provides for the Indians an ample sufficiency we know! We also know that what the Indians really get does not suffice for the actual needs of Life!

Do you not think if the Government would inaugurate a policy which would prevent dishonest agents from robbing the Indians, we would probably not hear quite so often of Indian out-breaks? Do you not think there is need of reform in this particular, as well as in our mode of dealing with the Savages? We think all will allow that the system of civil agents seems to be almost unexceptionally bad -- a decided failure! Has it not been tried? And does the results warrant its continuance? The proposition of turning the Indians into a Pastoral race under the care of the War Department, is certainly based on common sense and if tried would no doubt lead to good results! We, who have lived among the savages, certainly wish their salvation, not their annihilation! The people of the far West, as a general thing, feel compassionately toward the Indians & as a rule /no longer/ feel any fear of them! They are proud /of their/ land! They cry, "Let us have immigration /for there is/ plenty of room to share!"

Nebraska is about twenty years old, and has been a state only about seven years. With her rich and unrivaled tillable lands there is room for many more in our Young State. We have fifteen towns with population ranging from 1,000 to 30,000; and probably 50 with population varying from 100 to 1,000.

And Southern Nebraska is yet to astonish the sister counties and States by the wonderful growth of her soil! Medicine Creek winds like a silver thread between the great vallies of the Platte and Republican, -- its narrow but exceedingly rich vally, beautiful with ~~its~~ medows of waving hay; and boasting of more timber than any other stream in the

surrounding country! Medicine Lake -- or Billy Wa-kawn -- Medicine Creek having derived its name from this Lake; and the Lake, its name ~~is~~ "The Waters of the Great Spirit" from the superstition with which the Indians regard it. They say they saw "once upon a time" a bad spirit -- or in English parlance, the devil -- rise up in the waters, convulsing them as he did so, to their very depths; and that the Great Spirit then chained him to the bottom of the lake! The depth of its waters is not known -- it is a wierd looking spot in summer, with its dark waters bearing yet darker shadows cast by the overhanging bluffs! But in Winter it is singularly beautiful, with myriads of stately swan covering its hushed bosom -- their spotless plumage gleaming out in marked contrast to the troops of noisy, gaudy feathered ducks that dodge in and out among their more graceful companions, quacking gaily to one another; yet after all failing to stir ~~sounds~~ ~~which can at any time be heard,~~ ~~apparently issuing~~ haunting stillness of the place; or drown the deep mournful sound which at any time be heard, ~~apparently~~ issuing from the waters. The Indians say the ~~sounds~~ are the groans of the Bad Spirit chained beneath. Hence the name Medicine -- /or myst/erious! We can vouch for the unaccountable /sounds/ that haunt the Lake; but being an / / of ghostly manifestations; nothing more.

Yet that ~~intire~~ country can boast of fine soil; good water; and the best of health! It is very mild - the climate, - scarcely ever freezing the streams, entirely; and not often more than two inches fall of snow. -- Farmers are delighted with the seasons -- and many things not to be grown in the more Northern States can be produced

there without trouble Cattle keep fat all winter without being fed or sheltered! We have seen a hundred bushels of corn produced to the acre. -- and wheat, potatoes, sweet potatoes, as well as Irish, are grown finely! Vegetables of all discriptions -- and fruit trees - apples, peach, pear and grapes are cultivated without trouble. And the fearful storms spoken of, that frighten the Eastern people out of the idea of going west, may have been a terror to this country once; but they are a myth to us; as we have seen nothing to excite fear! True we have seen storms, but nothing to excite fear! And in all of our wanderings no State seems to possess so many advantages as Nebraska, to those who would have a pleasant, independant home! -- It is the place for poor men, as well as rich ones either, to find a pleasant, healthy home. In our part of the state we have heard of no death save a man that comitted suicide, to "start a grave yard" the inhabitants say. We might say much - but the "Beauties of the Platte Valley and the Republican -- Medicine Lake and Frenchman falls have already been trumpeted far and wide! -- Our weak voice can not swell the note of praise -- and for fear that this narration has all ready wieried our kind hearers, permit us to offer sincere thanks for the courteous attention given, and to retire!