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INTRODUCTION

In assembling in the present volume the material pertaining to the Apsaroke and the Hidatsa, the original plan of treatment is not strictly followed; but since these two Siouan tribes were once united, the geographical grouping is sacrificed in this case to one based on close relationship. The separation of these people into two tribes occurred in such recent time that the knowledge of it is much more definite than tribal events usually are when their occurrence is known only by tradition; and, indeed, the dialectic differences between the two tribes are so unimportant as to establish the recency of the change. At no time has either tribe lost sight of its relationship to the other, and there has always existed a strong friendship between them.

A powerful tribe of mountaineers, subsisting entirely by the chase and quite independent of the uncertainties of agriculture, the Apsaroke regarded with more or less disdain their sedentary Hidatsa cousins, who tilled the soil and lacked the strength to carry on extensive predatory warfare. If the doughty No Vitals and his followers were agriculturists when they departed from the Missouri to seek a new home to the westward, they soon forgot their cunning in this industry and acquired contempt for an occupation so menial as tillage, for while nearly all the wandering tribes frowned on agriculture, the Apsaroke seem to have been particularly averse to it.

In the Apsaroke is seen the highest development of the primitive American hunter and warrior. Physically these people were among the finest specimens of their race. They clothed themselves better and dwelt in larger and finer lodges than did their neighbors, and decked their horses in trappings so gorgeous as to arouse the wonder of all early explorers.

In gathering the material for this volume the writer has been fortunate in having the assistance of an interpreter possessing far more than ordinary ability; and fortunate indeed in enlisting the services of Hunts To Die, a veteran of unusual mentality, from whom was obtained a large part of the information respecting the Apsaroke herein recorded. Other old men of the tribe recounted myth, legend, and story of tribal life which served to confirm the knowledge communicated by

Hunts To Die, but the effort of these to unfold the tribal lore may be likened to the attempt of an unthinking man to employ the utterances of a statesman. In early manhood Hunts To Die was a magnificent warrior, who scarcely knew his physical limitations; but at thirty years of age he was so seriously wounded by a Sioux bullet as to be barred from further action on the field of battle, yet he lives to make this portion of the story of the Indian more closely portray the primitive life than has been possible in the preceding volumes of the series.

The narrative of the vigorous life of the Apsaroke, of the camp, the hunt, the war-trail, and the cruel ordeals they underwent to invoke spiritual aid, contributes so much toward laying bare the inner life of this people that it is dwelt upon to the exclusion of folk-tales. Believing that by recording what and how the Indians think and see we can best add to our knowledge of them as a race, it has been the aim in presenting this material to reflect the thought and to preserve as nearly as possible the manner of expression of the narrators. Not alone therefore should the body of this volume give us a rare glimpse of the inner side of Apsaroke life, but the biographical sketches of the men whose portraits are presented, and whose lives are so strongly reflected in the modern history of the tribe, will add largely to our understanding of it.

In collecting the material and preparing it for publication, I have had the able assistance of Mr. W.E. Myers, and of Mr. A.B. Upshaw, my Apsaroke interpreter. Mr. A.F. Muhr has continued his valued services in the laboratory, and Mr. C.H. Levin has rendered faithful aid in the gathering of the Hidatsa material.

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"Introduction to Volume 4"
From
The North American Indian: Volume 4
by Edwards S. Curtis
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