

Incidents of Lewis and Clark Journey

SACAJAWEA sank wearily down upon her pallet of furs and nestled her head in her hands. Like most of the days since she and her husband, Chaboneau, had joined the party of Lewis and Clark at Mandan, it had been a day of great fatigue; but unlike them, it had been one of great joy, too. All day long she had plodded onward under the scorching August sun, carrying her fretful child in her arms, instead of, as usual, on her back, to shelter it from the glare and the heat. At times she had been compelled to wade waist deep in the cold mountain streams, or to lend a hand in getting the boats around or over obstructions, for they were dragging them along in hopes of finding a navigable stream on the other side of the divide.

But in the middle of the afternoon Captain Lewis, who had gone on ahead five days before, had returned, bringing with him an escort of Shoshone Indians. His joy at being thus united with his girlhood friends was inexpressible. Instead of slipping, however, they had pushed on till night, and then camped on the bank of the Lemhi River, on the western side of the divide, with a large band of Shoshones.

While Sacajawea was renewing with the women the friendship of earlier days and recounting to them her experiences while a captive among their traditional enemies, the Minnetarees, a messenger arrived from Chief Camekwait and summoned her to the council tent. As she entered the circular tent pitched on the bank of the river under the willow trees, they were just finishing smoking the pipe of peace.

A huge fire crackled in the middle of the tent, for, although the days may be very hot in the Rockies, the nights are cold and frosty, even in August. By the light of the fire which brought into relief the faces of all, she beheld Captains Lewis and Clark seated on a large white robe and flanked by their company. In the corresponding semicircle sat Chief Camekwait and his dusky braves. All had removed their moccasins and placed them in rows near the fire.

Sacajawea stepped into the circle of light and paused. Captain Lewis motioned her to be seated, and then requested her to interpret his words to the chief. As she began to repeat what he said she looked at the chief. She stopped speaking, leaned forward, rose to her feet, rushed up to the chief and embraced him. Throwing her blanket over him and kneeling before him, with tears and sob and cries of joy, she made known to them that she had recognized him as her brother. Camekwait was deeply affected also, and restrained his emotion. Rising to his feet, he lifted her up gently and led her back to her place near the two Captains. Then, turning his seat on the other side of the fire, he signified that the ceremony was to go on.

Until very late they sat there, the captains and the chief speaking in turn, and Sacajawea interpreting for them. At last the conference ended, and Sacajawea, wearied by the toil of the day and the strain of the night, crept away to her couch.

Inured by long experience to tell and excitement, and accustomed to let neither interfere with rest or sleep, since she never knew what demands the morrow would make upon her, she was soon sleeping peacefully. A few minutes later the flap of her tent was stealthily raised, and Camekwait slipped inside. By the light of the fire he looked at her through the aperture at the top, he gazed not so much at her face as at her hands, and, rousing her, motioned her to follow him. Without a word she rose and, taking her baby with her in order that it might not cry and awake her husband and thus apprise him of her absence, followed her brother.

He led her a short distance away from the camp to a secluded spot on the bank of the river.

"My sister," said he, looking down at her, "the Great Father is good to bring you back to us. We have these many moons given you up for dead or never to return."

"Ah, my brother," she replied, "I have been a long, long way. I have traveled far toward the Southland and toward the rising sun. I have climbed many mountains and crossed many waters. But all the time my heart has been strong within me, and I felt that some day I should see my own people again. Yes," she added, with a sigh, "the Great Father has been good."

"You sigh, Sacajawea," he said, tenderly. "Is it that you are not glad to be once more among the Shoshones?"

"No, Camekwait, I am light at heart to be among my people, but I am sad because I was thinking of the many times when I could not say that the Great Father was good to me."

"In the joy of having you back again, little sister, I was forgetting all that you must have endured since you were stolen away from us. When we slipped back to the village after the Minnetarees had left, and when we had promised her before she was captured by the Minnetarees, her heart was not there, our hearts were sore with grief. We knew that they had taken you with them, and we wished that we had found you with the dead."

Sacajawea shuddered at the recollections of the days of her captivity and wandering.

"How often I wished that, too, my brother! But let us not talk of that. I was so young then, or I could not have lived through my sufferings. But now that the Great Father remembers me again and smiles upon me, I have promised him in my prayers not to think of the days when he seemed to have forgotten me. And they were such cruel days, Camekwait! It frightens me even now to hear you speak of them."

"We will not speak of them, then, my sister. But I would know how you escaped from the Minnetarees, and how it is that you journey with the two Captains to the great river and the land of the setting sun. You will tell me that?"

"Yes, I will tell you that. I did not escape from the Minnetarees. Many moons after the Minnetarees carried us away with them, they brought us to the land of the Mandans, where the Sioux and the Mandans and the Minnetarees and the Assinibones and the Wahpetons and the Choyennes and many other tribes live close together. The snow lay deep on the ground, and it was very cold. One day, when Otonata was very young, a man came to our village, and he brought blankets he bought us, Otonata and me, from the Minnetarees, and led us away with him."

"And this man, what tribe was he of?"

"Of no tribe, my brother. He was one whom we call a paleface."

"A paleface! And you went with him, Sacajawea?" he asked in surprise.

"Yes. Do you forget, Camekwait, that it was for me to with him or remain with the Minnetarees?"

His manner softened at once under this gentle rebuke.

"And where did he lead you?" he asked.

"To his home, and with him when he went to hunt for the skins of the beaver and the otter and the marten. I was yet only a child, but one day when I had become a woman—"

She paused and smiled at some happy recollection.

"And then?" he persisted.

"And then one day when we were at the village where the two Captains came the next time the snow fell, he married me."

"Married you! You would take a husband from the palefaces?"

"Yes," she answered, without any show of the shame or regret he expected. "He had taken me from the Minnetarees."

"And this paleface, whose is it?" he inquired sternly, advancing and uncovering the face of the sleeper.

"It is mine and his."

"You and whose?"

"My husband, Chaboneau's."

"His face is dark."

"I am a Shoshone."

"But he is a paleface, your husband."

"Camekwait!" she exclaimed, surprised and hurt.

"It is not some Minnetaree's!" he asked, fiercely.

"Camekwait!" Again that exclamation accompanied the time by such a look of infinite scorn and intense indignation that she was convinced.

"It is well," he replied. "I shall not kill it."

She shrank back, frightened at what his reply showed to have been in his mind, and pressed the child close to her bosom. She edged away from him, but he stopped her with a gesture.

Reassured by his manner, she waited for his next words, which were slow in coming, for he saw difficulties ahead of him.

"Sacajawea," he said, after a long silence, "go back to your tent and sleep. Tomorrow we go to join the rest of the Shoshones."

"Tomorrow?" she asked, disappointment clearly shown in her manner. "Why so soon? I have scarcely spoken with my old friends. I have so much I would tell them, and they must have more to tell me."

"But you can do that as we journey," he replied.

"Oh, then, you journey toward the setting sun?" she asked joyfully.

"No, we journey toward the southland."

"But the two captains? You have persuaded them to go with you?" she asked hopefully.

"No, they will go on with the rising sun at their backs."

Instead of agreeing that the two parties should separate the next day, it had been agreed at the conference that the white men were to remain some time with the Indians, as indeed they did for her. The loneliness of the past months rose up before her and pleaded with her to consent.

"Tell me, Tarajawea, why is it you would go away from the Shoshones?"

"Because I would keep you from loneliness and would comfort you, Sacajawea," she replied.

"And you would do this for me?" Sacajawea asked, searching her friend's face.

"Yes," Tarajawea answered, without raising her gaze from the ground.

"No, no, it is not so!" Sacajawea exclaimed, seizing the other by the shoulders and peering into her eyes. "You have some other reason, Tarajawea. Tell me."

"Tarajawea, I want before that you say, 'I want to go with the party of the two Captains,' she said.

"You love one of their men?" Sacajawea asked.

"Yes, Will you let me go, Sacajawea?" Sacajawea forgot her own future in looking at Tarajawea's. She took only a moment to decide.

"No," she answered. "You must not go, Tarajawea."

"Oh, Sacajawea, you make heavy my heart. I thought you would understand."

"It is because I do understand, Tarajawea, that I say what you say."

Then in a few words Sacajawea told of all the difficulties they had to overcome and all the dangers and privations they had to endure. She pictured also what she was giving up leaving her own people. But she could not frighten Tarajawea into relinquishing her desire.

"No, you do not stay behind for these, Sacajawea."

"No, I love my husband and must go with him."

"I, too, love someone," Tarajawea replied pathetically.

"Tarajawea," said Sacajawea, throwing aside all subtleties, "listen. You think you would be happy. Maybe you would for a little time, but not for even one whole moon. He would forget you when his stomach grew empty. He would beg you for having eaten the food he wanted. He would not love you long."

"Oh!" exclaimed Tarajawea. "Does Chaboneau treat you as you say?"

Sacajawea did not answer the question. "Look here, Tarajawea, I am married. You would not be. Did this paleface go to your father and ask him for you, giving many presents to him? No. Did he beg you to go with him? No. Did he want you to go with him? No. Why? Because he knows the Nez Percés live where he is going, and there are many maidens among them."

"It is a lie!" Tarajawea exclaimed. "He loves me. He loves me. You speak with the shade of the Shoshone, the light-haired captain and ask him to let me go, and she started to overtake the party."

Sacajawea ran after her and stopped her. "No, no, you must not do that. The light-haired captain would be angry. He doesn't want women with them. He lets me go only because I am Chaboneau's wife and they have need of me to talk for him. He would not let me go if I would send someone not the one you love, to take you back to your father. And then your father and my brother, Camekwait, would punish you for running away with the paleface."

"No, no, I will not run away with the Shoshone women to leave the Shoshones."

Tarajawea began to weep, and Sacajawea saw that she was really weeping. Embracing the other girl—she herself was not yet out of her teens—she kissed her and said, "Go back now, Tarajawea, to the Shoshones, and never let it enter your heart to leave them. They are your own people. Stay with them. And some day, maybe, when the two Captains have found the Great Water, we will come back, and then you will thank me for what I do. Farewell, Tarajawea, farewell!"

Tarajawea walked slowly toward the Shoshone camp, weeping bitterly. Sacajawea, with tears streaming down her cheeks, looked after her regretfully, and then, feeling her isolation and loneliness all the more keenly because of the companionship she had voluntarily deprived herself of, set out to overtake Captain Lewis and his men. At intervals throughout the day tears glistened in her eyes, but she brushed them away and toiled onward.

It pleased her.

"Tell me what you really think about me," she spoke, Geraldine Jenson looked anxiously into the eyes of Clarence Callister.

"I want you to be honest with me," she said. "This world is so deceptive, and it's so hard to find out the truth. Tell me what I really am—if you can."

"I think I can, dear," said Clarence, taking her hand in his, "and I will endeavor to be more than frank. I can appreciate thoroughly how you feel. In the midst of a world of artificiality, you are tired of the false, and wish to test my sincerity. Well, then, listen. I cannot say that you are the most beautiful woman I ever have seen. The Venus of Milo, I think, in some respects, outranks you. So far as your disposition goes, I know that you are not perfect. It is true that I have never actually seen you ruffled, but I can imagine that under some circumstances you might be out of temper. I suppose, also, that some girls are more stylish than you. I have never seen any one who is, but my observation has been limited, and it is, of course, possible that in intellectual brilliancy others may surpass you. I don't doubt that all this may be so. Do you mind my being so frank? I'm not hurting your feelings, am I, dear?"

She put her delicate hand upon his arm. "No, indeed!" she replied earnestly. "I cannot begin to tell you how glad I am to find one man at least who dares to tell me the whole truth about myself."

"Hark! Hark! the Lark."

William Shakespeare.

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had been said all around, for many friendships had been formed during the month the two companies had spent together, they resumed the journey westward. Naturally the heart of Sacajawea was heavy with grief. She was leaving for the second time her own people, not for the camp of a foe, it is true, but for the inhospitable wilds of an unknown country. She realized that there was small chance of ever seeing any of them again. Yet she had calmly chosen her course of action and resolutely adhered to it.

As the little cavalcade turned a bend in the river, she dropped behind to wave a last adieu to her friends. She tried bravely to smile, but the tears came to her eyes and welled out upon her cheeks. She turned to follow the party, her attention was attracted by a rustling in the bushes near her. Fearful lest it be some wild animal, she started to run. But she had taken only a few steps when she heard her name called. She looked back and saw her dearest friend, Tarajawea.

"Ah, Tarajawea," she said, "it is you. You have come to tell me farewell alone. You are very good."

"No, Sacajawea," the other replied, "it is not to say farewell that I have come."

"Not to say farewell?" Sacajawea exclaimed. "For what, then?"

"To go with you," and Tarajawea laughed to conceal her excitement.

"To go with me?" she repeated in amazement. "Oh, but that cannot be. You—go with me?"

For a brief moment Sacajawea allowed herself to think of it and of all it would mean to her to have another woman with her. The loneliness of the past months rose up before her and pleaded with her to consent.

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"Yes," Tarajawea answered, without raising her gaze from the ground.

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