

From: David Thompson, *Narrative of his Explorations in Western America 1784-1812*. Ed. J.B. Tyrell (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1916).

### [Religion of the Nahathaways]

In the following account I have carefully avoided as their national opinions all they have learned from white men, and my knowledge was collected from old men, whom with my own age extend backwards to upwards of one hundred years ago, and I must remark, that what [ever] other people may write as the creed of these natives, I have always found it very difficult to learn their real opinion on what may be termed religious subjects. Asking them questions on this head is to no purpose, they will give the answer best adapted to avoid other questions and please the enquirer. My knowledge has been gained when living and travelling with them and in times of distress and danger in their prayers to invisible powers....

My knowledge of their religion I collected from being present at their various ceremonies, living and travelling with them, and my lovely wife is of the blood of these people, speaking their language, and well educated in the English language, which gives me a great advantage; it was only in danger and distress that I heard much of their belief. [This paragraph is from an early version of the *Travels*.]

After a weary day's march we sat by a log fire, the bright Moon, with thousands of sparkling stars passing before us, we could not help enquiring who lived in those bright mansions; for I frequently conversed with them as one of themselves; the brilliancy of the planets always attracted their attention, and when their nature was explained to them, they concluded them to be the abodes of the spirits of those that had led a good life.

A Missionary has never been among them, and my knowledge of their language has not enabled me to do more than teach the unity of God, and a future state of rewards and punishments; hell fire they do not believe, for they do not think it possible that any thing can resist the continued action of fire: It is doubtful if their language in its present simple state can clearly express the doctrines of Christianity in their full force. They believe in the self existence of the Keeche Keeche Manito (the Great, Great Spirit) they appear to derive their belief from tradition, and [believe] that the visible world, with all its inhabitants must have been made by some powerful being: but have not the same idea of his constant omnipresence, omni-

science and omnipotence that we have, but [think] that he is so when he pleases, he is the master of life, and all things are at his disposal; he is always kind to the human race, and hates to see the blood of mankind on the ground, and sends heavy rain to wash it away. He leaves the human race to their own conduct, but has placed all other living creatures under the care of Manitos (or inferior Angels), all of whom are responsible to Him; but all this belief is obscure and confused, especially on the Manitos, the guardians and guides of every genus of Birds and Beasts; each Manito has a separate command and care, as one has the Bison, another the Deer, and thus the whole animal creation is divided amongst them. On this account the Indians, as much as possible, neither say, nor do anything to offend them, and the religious hunter, at the death of each animal, says, or does, something as thanks to the Manito of the species for being permitted to kill it. At the death of a Moose Deer, the hunter in a low voice, cries "Wut, wut, wut"; cuts a narrow stripe of skin from off the throat, and hangs it up to the Manito. The bones of the head of a Bear are thrown into the water, and thus of other animals; if this acknowledgment was not made the Manito would drive away the animals from the hunter, although the Indians often doubt their power or existence yet like other invisible beings they are more feared than loved....

The Sun and Moon are accounted Divinities and though they do not worship them, [they] always speak of them with great reverence. They appear to think [of] the Stars only as a great number of luminous points perhaps also divinities, and mention them with respect; they have names for the brightest stars, as Sirius, Orion and others, and by them learn the change of the seasons, as the rising of Orion for winter, and the setting of the Pleiades for summer.

The Earth is also a divinity, and is alive, but [they] cannot define what kind of life it is, but say, if it was not alive it could not give and continue life to other things and to animated creatures. The Forests, the ledges and hills of Rock, the Lakes and Rivers have all something of the Manito about them, especially the Falls in the Rivers, and those to which the fish come to spawn....

There is an important being, with whom the Natives appear better acquainted with than the other, whom they call "Weesarkejauk" (the Flatterer) he is the hero of all their stories always promising them some good, or inciting them to some pleasure, and always deceiving them. They have

some tradition of the Deluge, as may be seen from the following account related by the old men. After the Great Spirit made mankind, and all the animals, he told Weesarkejauk to take care of them and teach them how to live, and not to eat of bad roots; that would hurt and kill them; but he did not mind the Great Spirit; became careless and incited them to pleasure, mankind and the animals all did as they pleased, quarrelled and shed much blood, with which the Great Spirit was displeased; he threatened Weesarkejauk that if he did not keep the ground clean he would take everything from him and make him miserable but he did not believe the Great Spirit and in a short time became more careless; and the quarrels of Men, and the animals made the ground red with blood, and so far from taking care of them he incited them to do and live badly; this made the Great Spirit very angry and he told Weesarkejauk that he would take every thing from him, and wash the ground clean; but still he did not believe; until the Rivers and Lakes rose very high and over flowed the ground for it was always raining; and the Keeche Gahme (the Sea) came on the land, and every man and animal were drowned, except one Otter, one Beaver, and one Musk Rat. Weesarkejauk tried to stop the sea, but it was too strong for him, and he sat on the water crying for his loss, the Otter, the Beaver, and the Musk Rat rested their heads on one of his thighs.

When the rain ceased and the sea went away, he took courage, but did not dare to speak to the Great Spirit. After musing a long time upon his sad condition he thought if he could get a bit of the old ground he could make a little island of it, for he has the power of extending, but not creating anything; and as he had not the power of diving under the water, and did not know the depth to the old ground he was at a loss what to do. Some say the Great Spirit took pity on him, and gave him the power to renovate everything, provided he made use of the old materials, all of which lay buried under water to an unknown depth. In this sad state, as he sat floating on the water he told the three animals that they must starve unless he could get a bit of the old ground from under the water of which he would make a fine Island for them, then addressing himself to the Otter, and praising him for his courage, strength and activity and promising him plenty of fish to eat, he persuaded the Otter to dive, and bring up a bit of earth; the Otter came up without having reached the ground: by praises, he got the Otter to make two more attempts, but without success, and [he] was so much exhausted he could do no more. Weesarkejauk called him a coward of a weak heart, and [said] that the Beaver would put him to shame: then, speaking to the

Beaver, praised his strength and wisdom and promised to make him a good house for winter, and telling him to dive straight down, the Beaver made two attempts without success, and came up so tired that Weesarkejauk had to let him repose a long time, then promising him a wife if he brought up a bit of earth, told him to try a third time; to obtain a wife, he boldly went down and staid so long, that he came up almost lifeless. Weesarkejauk was now very sad, for what the active Otter and strong Beaver could not do, he had little hopes the Musk Rat could do; but this was his only resource: He now praised the musk rat and promised him plenty of roots to eat, with rushes and earth to make himself a house; the Otter and the Beaver he said were fools, and lost themselves, and he would find the ground, if he went straight down. Thus encouraged he dived, and came up, but brought nothing; after reposing, he went down a second time, and staid a long time, on coming up Weesarkejauk examined his fore paws and found they had the smell of earth, and showing this to the Musk Rat, promised to make him a Wife who should give him a great many children, and become more numerous than any other animal, and telling him to have a strong heart; and go direct down, the Musk Rat went down the third time and staid so long that Weesarkejauk feared he was drowned. At length seeing some bubbles come up, he put down his long arm and brought up the Musk Rat, almost dead, but to his great joy with a piece of earth between his fore paws and his breast, this he seized, and in a short time extended it to a little island, on which they all reposed....

The Nahathaway Indians have also another tradition relative to the Deluge to which no fable is attached. In the latter end of May 1806, at the Rocky Mountain House, (where I passed the summer) the Rain continued the very unusual space of full three weeks, the Brooks and the River became swollen, and could not be forded, each stream became a torrent, and [there was] much water on the ground: A band of these Indians were at the house, waiting [for] the Rain to cease and the streams to lower, before they could proceed to hunting; all was anxiety, they smoked and made speaches to the Great Spirit for the Rain to cease, and at length became alarmed at the quantity of water on the ground; at length the rain ceased, I was standing at the door watching the breaking up of the clouds, when of a sudden the Indians gave a loud shout, and called out "Oh, there is the mark of life, we shall yet live." On looking to the eastward there was one of the widest and most splendid Rainbows I ever beheld; and joy was now in every face. The name of the Rainbow is Peeshim Cappeah (Sun

lines). I had now been twenty two years among them, and never before heard the name of the Mark of Life given to the rainbow (Peemah tisoo nan oo Chegun) nor have I ever heard it since; upon enquiring of the old Men why they kept this name secret from me, they gave me the usual reply, You white men always laugh and treat with contempt what we have heard and learned from our fathers, and why should we expose ourselves to be laughed at; I replied I have never done so, our books also call the Rainbow the Mark of Life....

I found many of the Men, especially those who had been much in company with white men, to be all half infidels, but the Women kept them in order; for they fear the Manitos; All their dances have a religious tendency, they are not, as with us, dances of mere pleasure, of the joyous countenance: they are grave, each dancer considers it is a religious rite for some purpose; their motions are slow and graceful; yet I have sometimes seen occasional dances of a gay character; I was at their Tents on business, when the Women came and told me they wanted Beads and Ribbons, to which I replied I wanted Marten Skins; early the next morning, five young women set off to make Marten Traps; and did not return until the evening. They were rallied by their husbands and brothers; who proposed they should dance to the Manito of the Martens, to this they willingly consented, it was a fine, calm, moonlight night, the young men came with the Rattle and Tambour, about nine women formed the dance, to which they sung with their fine voices, and lively they danced hand in hand in a half circle for a long hour; it is now many years ago, yet I remember this gay hour.

Every man believes or wishes to believe that he has a familiar being who takes care of him, and warns him of danger, and other matters which otherwise he could not know; this imaginary being he calls his Poowoggan; upon conversing with them on the Being on whom they relied; it appeared to me to be no other than the powers of his own mind when somewhat excited by danger or difficulty, especially as they suppose their dreams to be caused by him, "Ne poo war tin" (I have dreamed); too often a troubled dream from a heavy supper; but at times they know how to dream for their own interest or convenience; and when one of them told me he had been dreaming it was for what he wished to have, or to do, for some favor, or as some excuse for not performing his promises, for so far as their interests are concerned they do not want policy....

[C]ourage is not accounted an essential to the men, any more than chastity to the women, though both are sometimes found in a high degree. The greatest praise that one Indian can give to another, is, that he is a man of steady humane disposition, and a fortunate hunter, and the praise of the women is to be active and good humoured; their marriages are without noise or ceremony. Nothing is requisite but the consent of the parties, and Parents: the riches of a man consists solely in his ability as a Hunter, and the portion of the woman is good health, and a willingness to relieve her husband from all domestic duties. Although the young men appear not to be passionate lovers, they seldom fail of being good husbands, and when contrariety of disposition prevails, so that they cannot live peaceably together, they separate with as little ceremony as they came together, and both parties are free to attach themselves to whom they will, without any stain on their characters; but if they have lived so long together so as to have children, one, or both, are severely blamed. Polygamy is allowed, and each may have as many wives as he can maintain, but few indulge themselves in this liberty, yet some have even three; this is seldom a matter of choice, it is frequently from the death of a friend who has left his wife, sister, or daughter to him, for every woman must have a husband. The children are brought up with great care and tenderness. They are very seldom corrected, the constant company and admonition of the old people is their only education, whom they soon learn to imitate in gravity as far as youth will permit. They very early and readily betake themselves to fishing and hunting, from both men and women impressing on their minds, that the man truly miserable is he who is dependent on another for his subsistence....

### **[Beavers and Men]**

From this long digression, I return to my travels in the Nut Hill: on a fine afternoon in October, the leaves beginning to fall with every breeze, a season to me of pleasing melancholy, from the reflections it brings to the mind; my guide informed me that we would have to pass over a long beaver Dam; I naturally expected we should have to lead our Horses carefully over it; when we came to it, we found it a narrow stripe of apparently old solid ground, with short grass, and wide enough for two horses to walk abreast: we passed on, the lower side showed a descent of seven feet, and steep, with a rill of water from beneath it. The side of the dam next to the

water was a gentle slope. To the southward was a sheet of water of about one mile and a half square of area, surrounded by moderate, low grassy banks, the Forests mostly of Aspin and Poplar but very numerous stumps of the trees cut down and partly carried away by the Beavers. In two places of this Pond were a cluster of Beaver Houses, like miniature villages. When we had proceeded over more than half way of the Dam, which was a full mile in length, we came to an aged Indian, his arms folded across his breast; with a pensive countenance, looking at the Beavers swimming in the water, and carrying their winter's provisions to their houses, his form tall and erect, his hair almost white, which was almost the only effect that age appeared to have on him, though we concluded he must be about eighty years of age, and in this opinion we were afterwards confirmed by the ease and readiness with which he spoke of times long past. I enquired of him how many beaver houses there were in the pond before us, he said, There are now fifty two, we have taken several of their houses; they are difficult to take, and those we have taken were by means of the noise of the water on their houses from a strong wind which enabled us to stake them in, otherwise they would have retired to their burrows, which are very many. He invited us to pass the night at his tent which was close by, the Sun was low, and we accepted the offer.

In the Tent was an old man, almost his equal in age with women and children; we preferred the open air, and made a good fire to which both of the old men came, and after smoking a while conversation came on. As I had always conversed with the Natives as one Indian with another, and been attentive to learn their traditions on the animals, on Mankind, and on other matter in ancient times, and the present occasion appeared favorable for this purpose. Setting aside questions and answers which would be tiresome; they said, by ancient tradition of which they did not know the origin the Beavers had been an ancient people, and then lived on the dry land; they were always Beavers, not Men, they were wise and powerful, and neither Man, not any animal made war on them.

They were well clothed as at present, and as they did not eat meat, they made no use of fire, and did not want it. How long they lived this way we cannot tell, but we must suppose they did not live well, for the Great Spirit became angry with them, and ordered Weesarkejauk to drive them all into the water and there let them live, still to be wise, but without power; to be food and clothing for man, and the prey of other animals, against all which his defence shall be his dams, his house and his burrows: You see how

strong he makes his dams, those that we make for fishing weirs are often destroyed by the water, but his always stands. His House is not made of sand, or loose stones, but of strong earth with wood and sometimes small stones; and he makes burrows to escape from his enemies, and he always has his winter stock of provisions secured in good time. When he cuts down a tree, you see how he watches it, and takes care that it shall not fall on him. "But if so wise, for what purpose does the Beaver cut down large trees of which he makes no use whatever?" We do not know, perhaps an itching of his teeth and gums.

The old Indian paused, became silent, and then in a low tone [they] talked with each other; after which he continued his discourse. I have told you that we believe in years long past away, the Great Spirit was angry with the Beaver, and ordered Weesarkejauk (the Flatterer) to drive them all from the dry land into the water; and they became and continued very numerous; but the Great Spirit has been, and now is, very angry with them and they are now all to be destroyed. About two winters ago Weesarkejauk showed to our brethren, the Nepissings and Algonquins the secret of their destruction; and that all of them were infatuated with the love of the Castorum of their own species, and more fond of it than we are of fire water. We are now killing the Beaver without any labor, we are now rich, but [shall] soon be poor, for when the Beaver are destroyed we have nothing to depend on to purchase what we want for our families, strangers now over run our country with their iron traps, and we, and they will soon be poor

### [Courtship Customs]

The Women, until they have children appear to be the property of the strongest Man, that has no woman: One day in the latter end of February, a Chepawyan called the Crane and his Wife came to the House, he was well named; tall, thin, and active, he at times hunted for us. His wife was a good looking young Woman, they appeared to love each other but had no children. Six, or seven of us were sitting in the guard room talking of the weather, the Crane was smoking his pipe, and his Wife sitting beside him, when suddenly a Chepawyan entered, equally tall, but powerfully made. He went directly to the Crane and told him "I am come for your woman, and I must have her, my woman is dead, and I must have this woman to do my work and carry my things;" and suiting the action to the word, he

twisted his hand in the hair of her head to drag her away; on this the Crane started up and seized him by the waist; he let go the woman and in like manner seized the Crane; and a wrestling match took place which was well maintained by the Crane for some time; but his adversary was too powerful, and at length his strength failed, and he was thrown on the floor, his opponent placing his knee on his breast, with both hands seized his head and twisted his neck so much, that his face was almost on his back, and we expected to see it break; in an instant we made him let go, kicked him out of the house, with an assurance that if he came back to do the same, we would send a ball through him. He seemed to think he had done wrong, upon which we told him that he was welcome at any time to come and smoke, or trade, but not to quarrel. After standing a few minutes he called to the Crane; You are now under the protection of the White Men, in the summer I shall see you on our lands, and then I shall twist your neck and take your woman from you; he went away and we saw no more of him....

Early in the month of December, past midnight, a Chépawyan of middle stature, of about twenty five years of age, came into the house alone, he brought a bundle of Beaver and Marten skins; he looked about with suspicion; and enquired if any of the Natives were near the house. We told him, there had been none for several days; he then traded his furs for necessaries, except a few Martens for Beads and Rings. He told me he had a Wife and two children; and enquired if I knew a certain Indian. I said I did; "Then when you see him, tell him we are all well, he is my uncle, and the only man who is kind to me." After smoking, I offered him a Bison Robe to sleep on, but he told me he must set off directly; which he did, having staid only about an hour. There was something strange about him which excited my curiosity. About a month afterwards his Uncle came to the House; I told I had seen his Nephew, and that he had come alone in the night to trade, and desired me to say they were all well, and then enquired the reason of his hasty leaving the House after trading; he smoked for some time; and then said My Nephew is a man, but he has not been wise, he is not strong, about five winters ago, a young woman was given to him, and after a few moons, we camped with some other tents of Chépawyans, where there was a tall strong young man who had no woman. He went to my nephew and demanded him to give up his wife, which he refused to do, upon which the other took hold of him, threw him on the ground, and began twisting his neck; we told him to let him alone and take the woman; she was unwilling to go with him, upon which he laid hold of her hair to

drag her away; my nephew sprung up, took his gun and shot him dead, and made the ground red with man's blood, which he ought not to have done; We all pitched away and left the place: since which he lives alone, and is afraid to meet any tents, for they take every thing from them, and leave them nothing but the clothes they have on; he has been twice stripped of all he had; and therefore keeps away by himself. I told them that if I had a wife, and any one came to take her away, I would surely shoot him; Ah, that is the way you White Men, and our Neighbours the Nahathaways always talk and do, a Woman cannot be touched but you get hold of guns and long Knives; What is a woman good for, she cannot hunt, she is only to work and carry our things, and on no account whatever ought the ground to be made red with man's blood. Then the strong men take Women when they want them; Certainly the strong men have a right to the Women. And if the Woman has children; That is as the strong man pleases. So far as the Women are concerned they are a sett of Brutes. The expression "the ground red with Man's blood" is used by all the Natives of North America as very hateful to see; but by the southern Indians, accustomed to war, it is limited to that of their relations and tribe; yet it has a meaning I never could comprehend in the same sense as the Natives use it, for they seem to attach a mysterious meaning to the expression. In the latter end of March, this forlorn Native, again came to the House alone; he had made a good hunt of furs and traded them in clothing for himself and his family, ammunition and tobacco, not forgetting beads and other articles for his wife. I enquired of him, if what his uncle had told me was true, he said it was, that he had twice been pillaged, and that the Women were worse than the Men; you see I have again come to you in the night, and before I came into the House, I made sure there were no Chepawyans, for if I had met any they would have taken the whole of my hunt from me, and left me with nothing. I enquired why he did not tent with the Nahathaways who think much of their women, and love brave men. He was at a loss what to say, or do.

With regard to the immortality of the soul; and the nature of the other world, the best evidence of their belief I learned from a woman; her husband had traded with me two winters. They had a fine boy of six years of age, their only child; he became ill and died; and according to their custom she had to mourn for him twelve Moons, crying in a low voice "She azza, She azza" (my little son) never ceasing while awake, and often bursting into tears.

About three months after, I saw her again, [making] the same cry, the same sorrowful woman, her husband was kind to her; About six months after this I saw her again, she no longer cried “She azza,” and was no longer a sorrowing woman; I enquired of her the cause of this change. She replied, When my little son went to the other world, there was none to receive him, even his Grandfather is yet alive; he was friendless, he wandered alone in the pitching track of the tents, (here she shed tears) there was none to take care of him no one to give him a bit of meat. More than two moons ago, his father died, I sorrowed for him, and still sadly regret him, but he is gone to my son, his father will take great care of him. He will no longer wander alone, his father will be always with him, and when I die I shall go to them. Such was the belief that comforted this poor childless widow, and in which I encouraged her, and telling her that to be happy in the other world, and go to our relations, we must lead good lives here.

These people though subject to great vicissitudes yet suffer less from extreme hunger than the Nahathaways. The latter pride themselves with living by hunting animals, look on fish as an inferior food, and the catching of them beneath a Hunter. The former pride themselves on being expert anglers, and have made it their study; the great Lakes of their country yield the finest fish, and when the Deer fail they readily take to angling, altho’ it affords them no clothing....

### [A Diplomatic Victory]

About the middle of November two Peagans crossed the Mountains on foot and came to the House, to see how I was situated; I showed the strength of the Stockades, and Bastions, and told them I know you are come as Spies, and intend to destroy us, but many of you will die before you do so; go back to your countrymen and tell them so; which they did, and we remained quiet for the winter; I knew the danger of the place we were in, but could not help it: As soon as the Mountains were passable I sent off the Clerk and Men with the Furrs collected, among which were one hundred of the Mountain Goat Skins with the long silky hair, of a foot in length of a white color, tinged at the lower end with a very light shade of yellow. Some of the ignorant self sufficient partners of the Company ridiculed such an article for the London Market; there they went and sold at first sight for a guinea a skin, and half as much more for another Lot, but there were no more. These same partners then wrote to me to procure as

many as possible, I returned for answer, the hunting of the goat was both dangerous and laborious, and for their ignorant ridicule I would send no more, and I kept my word.

I had now to prepare for a more serious visit from the Peeagans, who had met in council, and it was determined to send forty men, under a secondary Chief to destroy the trading Post, and us with it, they came and pitched their Tents close before the Gate, which was well barred. I had six men with me, and ten guns, well loaded, the House was perforated with large augur holes, as well as the Bastions, thus they remained for three weeks without daring to attack us. We had a small stock of dried provisions which we made go as far as possible; they thought to make us suffer for want of water as the bank we were on was about 20 feet high and very steep, but at night, by a strong cord we quietly and gently let down two brass Kettles, each holding four Gallons, and drew them up full; which was enough for us: They were at a loss what to do, for Kootanae Appee, the War Chief, had publickly told the Chief of this party, (which was formed against his advice) to remember he had Men confided to his care, whom he must bring back, that he was sent to destroy the Enemies, not to lose his Men: Finding us always on the watch, they did not think proper to risque their lives, when at the end of three weeks they suddenly decamped; I thought it a ruse de guerre, I afterwards learned that some of them hunting saw some Kootanaes who were also hunting, as what was done was an act of aggression, something like an act of War, they decamped to cross the mountains to join their own Tribe while all was well with them: the return of this party without success occasioned a strong sensation among the Peeagans. The Civil Chief harangued them, and gave his advice to form a strong war party under Kootanae Appee, the War Chief and directly to crush the white Men and the Natives on the west side of the Mountains, before they became well armed, They have always been our slaves (Prisoners) and now they will pretend to equal us; no, we must not suffer this, we must at once crush them. We know them to be desperate Men, and we must destroy them, before they become too powerful for us; the War Chief coolly observed I shall lead the battle according to the will of the Tribe, but we cannot smoke to the Great Spirit for success, as we usually do; it is now about ten winters since we made peace with them, they have tented and hunted with us, and because they have guns and iron headed Arrows, we must break our word of peace with them: We are now called upon to go to war with a people better armed than ourselves, be it so, let the Warriors get

ready; in ten nights I will call on them. The old, and the intelligent Men, severely blamed the speech of the Civil Chief, they remarked "the older he gets, the less sense [he possesses]." On the ninth night the War Chief made a short speech, to have each man to take full ten days of dried provisions, for we shall soon leave the country of the Bison, after which we must not fire a shot, or we shall be discovered: On the tenth night he made his final speech, and exhorting the Warriors and their Chiefs to have their Arms in good order, and not forget dried provisions, he named a place, there I shall be the morrow evening, and those who now march with me, there I shall wait for you five nights, and then march to cross the Mountains; at the end of this time about three hundred Warriors under three Chiefs assembled; and took their route across the Mountains by the Stag River, and by the defiles of another River of the same name, came on the Columbia, about full twenty miles from me; as usual, by another pass of the Mountains, they sent two Men to see the strength of the House; I showed them all round the place, and they staid that night. I plainly saw that a War Party was again formed, to be better conducted than the last; and I prepared Presents to avert it: the next morning two Kootanae Men arrived, their eyes glared on the Peagans like Tigers, this was most fortunate; I told them to sit down and smoke which they did; I then called the two Peagans out, and enquired of them which way they intended to return. They pointed to the northward. I told them to go to Kootanae Appee and his War Party, who were only a day's journey from us, and delivering to them the Presents I had made up, to be off directly, as I could not protect them, for you know you are on these lands as Enemies; the Presents were six feet of Tobacco to the Chief, to be smoked among them, three feet with a fine pipe of red porphyry and an ornamented Pipe Stem; eighteen inches to each of the three Chiefs, and a small piece to each of themselves, and telling them they had no right to be in the Kootanae Country: to haste away; for the Kootanaes would soon be here, and they will fight for their trading Post: In all that regarded the Peagans, I chanced to be right, it was all guess work. Intimately acquainted with the Indians, the Country and the Seasons, I argued and acted on probabilities; I was afterwards informed that the two Peeagans went direct to the camp of the War Party, delivered the Presents and the Message and sat down, upon which the War Chief exclaimed, what can we do with this man, our women cannot mend a pair of shoes, but he sees them, alluding to my Astronomical Observations; then in a thoughtful mood he laid the pipe and stem, with the several pieces of Tobacco on the ground, and said,

what is to be done with these, if we proceed, nothing of what is before us can be accepted; the eldest of [the] three Chiefs, wistfully eyeing the Tobacco, of which they had none; at length he said, You all know me, who I am, and what I am; I have attacked Tents, my knife could cut through them, and our enemies had no defence against us, and I am ready to do so again, but to go and fight against Logs of Wood, that a Ball cannot go through, and with people we cannot see and with whom we are at peace, is what I am averse to, I go no further. He then cut the end of the Tobacco, filled the red pipe, fitted the stem, and handed it to Kootanae Appee, saying it was not you that brought us here, but the foolish Sakatow (Civil Chief) who, himself never goes to War; they all smoked, took the Tobacco, and returned, very much to the satisfaction of Kootanae Appee my steady friend; thus by the mercy of good Providence I averted this danger; Winter came on, the Snow covered the Mountains, and placed us in safety: The speeches of the Indians on both sides of the Mountains are in plain language, sensible and to the purpose; they sometimes repeat a few sentences two or three times, this is to impress on the hearers the object of the speech; but I never heard a speech in the florid, bombastic style, I have often seen published as spoken to white men, and upon whom it was intended to have an effect.

### [Mountain Views]

*January 10th.* Ther + 16. A day of Snow and southerly Gale of wind, the afternoon fine, the view now before us was an ascent of deep snow, in all appearances to the height of land between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, it was to me a most exhilarating sight, but to my uneducated men a dreadful sight, they had no scientific object in view, their feelings were of the place they were; our guide Thomas told us, that although we could barely find wood to make a fire, we must now provide wood to pass the following night on the height of the defile we were in, and which we had to follow; my men were the most hardy that could be picked out of a hundred brave hardy Men, but the scene of desolation before us was dreadful, and I knew it, a heavy gale of wind much more a mountain storm would have buried us beneath it, but thank God the weather was fine, we had to cut wood such as it was, and each took a little on his sled, yet such was the despondency of the Men, aided by the coward Du Nord, sitting down at every half mile, that when night came, we had only wood to make a bottom, and on this to

lay wherewith to make a small fire, which soon burnt out and in this exposed situation we passed the rest of a long night without fire, and part of my men had strong feelings of personal insecurity, on our right about one third of a mile from us lay an enormous Glacier, the eastern face of which quite steep, of about two thousand feet in height, was of a clean fine green color, which I much admired but whatever was the appearance, my opinion was, that the whole was not solid ice, but formed on rocks from rills of water frozen in their course; westward of this steep face, we could see the glacier with its fine green color and its patches of snow in a gentle slope for about two miles; eastward of this glacier and near to us, was a high steep wall of rock, at the foot of this, with a fine south exposure had grown a little Forest of Pines of about five hundred yards in length by one hundred in breadth, by some avalanche they had all been cut clean off as with a scythe, not one of these trees appeared an inch higher than the others. My men were not at their ease, yet when night came they admired the brilliancy of the Stars, and as one of them said, he thought he could almost touch them with his hand: as usual, when the fire was made I set off to examine the country before us, and found we had now to descend the west side of the Mountains; I returned and found part of my Men with a Pole of twenty feet in length boring the Snow to find the bottom; I told them while we had good Snow Shoes it was no matter to us whether the Snow was ten or one hundred feet deep. On looking into the hole they had bored, I was surprised to see the color of the sides of a beautiful blue; the surface was of a very light color, but as I descended the color became more deep, and at the lowest point was of a blue, almost black. The altitude of this place above the level of the Ocean, by the point of boiling water is computed to be eleven thousand feet (Sir George Simpson).<sup>\*</sup> Many reflections came on my mind; a new world was in a manner before me, and my object was to be at the Pacific Ocean before the month of August,<sup>†</sup> how were we to find Provisions, and how many Men would remain with me, for they were dispirited, amidst various thoughts I fell asleep on my bed of Snow.

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\* The altitude is 6, 023 feet.

† This is the only statement of Thompson's as yet discovered with regard to the date on which he expected to reach the mouth of the Columbia river. It argues against any extremem haste on his part to forestall the Astor party. [T.C.E.]