

the Blackfeet. They are properly a collection of five tribes, that have become one nation, rather from the force of circumstances than by any premeditated plan, or natural bond of union. These five tribes are, the Gros Ventres of the prairie, who, however, are not to be confounded with the Gros Ventres of the Missouri, who speak the Crow language; the Pilgans, or Pikani; the Blood Indians; the Surcees; and the Blackfeet proper. The Pilgans, Blackfeet, and Blood Indians, speak the same language; while the Surcees and the Gros Ventres have one of their own. Their union took place within the memory of the oldest living members of the tribe.

The Gros Ventres are the most numerous, the Blood Indians next, then the Pilgans, and last the Blackfeet, who, however, in the year 1840, numbered nearly six hundred and fifty lodges. The whole number of the five tribes is supposed to be no less than twenty thousand; but this is doubtless much exaggerated. These tribes are constantly at war with their Indian neighbours, as well as with the whites; and although an impression has been entertained that the Blackfeet are hostile to the Americans alone, this is not the case, for they make no distinction between white men. I have been told by gentlemen of the Hudson Bay Company, that they are equally formidable to British traders, and have cut off a number of their trappers; yet, notwithstanding this, some whites are established among them, and have great influence in the nation; although they cannot at all times protect others who fall into their hands. It is dangerous for stragglers to pass through the country ranged by the Blackfeet, as it is said to be not uncommon for the tribe to have out thirty war-parties at a time.

From some of the officers of the Hudson Bay Company, I learned that there were many Delawares and Shawanese among the Blackfeet, and that the former, known by the name of the "Shaved Heads," were much dreaded by the other tribes. The Blackfeet appear to have obtained their reputation for prowess from the advantage acquired by the use of fire-arms, which they obtained sooner than the Oregon Indians, among whom they then made great havoc, and whom they inspired with corresponding fear. Since the latter, however, have also obtained these weapons, the disparity no longer exists.

The Blackfeet principally inhabit that part of the Rocky Mountains between the head waters of the Columbia, and those of the Missouri and Yellowstone rivers.

The Snakes, or Shoshones, are widely-scattered tribes, and some even assert that they are of the same race as the Camanches, whose separation is said to be remembered by the Snakes: it has been ascer-