

TO THE  
DRIVING CLOUD

Gloomy and dark art thou, O chief of  
the mighty Omahas;

Gloomy and dark as the driving cloud,  
whose name thou hast taken!

Wrapt in thy scarlet blanket, I see thee  
stalk through the city's

Narrow and populous streets, as once by  
the margin of rivers

Stalked those birds unknown, that have  
left us only their footprints.

What, in a few short years, will remain  
of thy race but the footprints?

How canst thou walk these streets, who  
hast trod the green turf of the prairies!

How canst thou breathe this air, who hast  
breathed the sweet air of the mountains!

Ah! 'T is in vain that with lordly looks of  
disdain thou dost challenge

Looks of disdain in return, and question  
these walls and these pavements,

Claiming the soil for thy hunting-grounds,  
while down-trodden millions

Starve in the garrets of Europe, and cry  
from its caverns that they, too,

Have been created heirs of the earth, and  
claim its division!



Back, then, back to thy woods in the re-  
gions west of the Wabash!

There as a monarch thou reignest. In autumn the leaves of the maple

Pave the floors of thy palace-halls with gold, and in summer

Pine-trees waft through its chambers the odorous breath of their branches.

There thou art strong and great, a hero, a tamer of horses!

There thou chasest the stately stag on the banks of the Elkhorn,

Or by the roar of the Running-Water, or where the Omaha

Calls thee, and leaps through the wild r vine like a brave of the Blackfeet!

Hark! What murmurs arise from the heart of those mountainous deserts?

Is it the cry of the Foxes and Crows, or the mighty Behemoth,

Who, unharmed, on his tusks once caught the bolts of the thunder,

And now lurks in his lair to destroy the race of the red man?

Far more fatal to thee and thy race than the Crows and the Foxes,

Far more fatal to thee and thy race than the tread of Behemoth,

Lo! The big thunder-canoe, that steadily breasts the Missouri's

Merciless current! And yonder, afar on the prairies, the camp-fires

Gleam through the night; and the cloud of dust in the gray of the daybreak

Marks not the buffalo's track, nor the Mandan's dexterous horse-race;

It is a caravan, whitening the desert where dwell the Camanches!

Ha! How the breath of these Saxons and Celts, like the blast of the east-wind,

Drifts evermore to the west the scanty smokes of thy wigwams!