

At the portage between the Ouisconsin and Fox rivers, canoes and boats are drawn over a level, rich prairie, but so much subject to inundation that during high water canoes have been known to pass from one river to the other without obstruction. The land being perfectly level, and there being nothing to obstruct excavation, Mr. Tanner thinks that the two rivers might be united by a canal of only one mile in length, the greatest depth of which need not exceed seven feet. At this prairie the Fox River does not exceed sixty feet in width, and is usually from three to ten deep, has little current, and is full of a thick growth of wild rice. It abounds with some geese and an immense quantity and variety of ducks. This river passes through a low country of prairie, usually a sandy barren, and is almost destitute of timber, till, passing down the river, you arrive at Ox Lake,* a distance of about fifty miles. This lake is twelve miles long and one and one-half broad. The river becomes a little wider at the lower end of the lake. Mr. Tanner relates the following curious ceremony, performed by the Winnebago Indians who were in company with him:

Near the lower extremity of the lake is a small river, called Devil's River, which discharges itself into Fox River. As soon as the canoe approached in sight of it, the Indians dropped their paddles, and one of them commenced speaking apparently in the form of a prayer, and continued until they came opposite the river, when they strewed the surface of the water with tobacco, feathers, painted hair, and other articles by them considered valuable. After which, they chanted a kind of hymn and then resumed their paddles. Mr. Tanner was informed by a half-breed, who was in company, that this ceremony was a sacrifice to the evil spirit, to propitiate and secure his favor. Other religious ceremonies, which are frequently performed by the Umbago† Indians, are various kinds of smoking. These ceremonies are performed by puffing volleys of smoke towards the object they wish to adore—to the sun, because he gives them light and heat—to

* Buffalo Lake, Marquette County; and Devil's River, referred to, is now known as Duck Creek, the mouth of which is at Montello. L. C. D.

† Doubtless Winnebagoes. L. C. D.