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The Wars of the Sioux

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THE WARS OF THE SIOUX

Submitted

To The Graduate Council of
Jacksonville State College in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for a Master's Degree

BY

Dorothy Holland Adderhold

December, 1958

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INTRODUCTION

THE WARS OF THE SIOUX

For over forty years the Plains Indians fought to preserve their homeland and their ancestral way of life. They were continually being pushed westward from the more desirable lands, and the treaties they signed were being broken by the government.

The Indian question came to be a serious one as men passed through the Plains on their way to Oregon and California in search of homes or timber, and later in search of gold in California and Montana.

The United States Army was forced to police the Plains from Canada to Mexico for twenty-five years after the close of the Civil War. This region was the scene of many conflicts between the red men and the white. The two strongest tribes were the Sioux in the north and the Apaches in the south. The Sioux were hostile toward any movement of the white man to cross their hunting grounds. Finally disease and diminishing food supplies, rather than bullets and soldiers, brought about the Indian's downfall.

CHAPTER I

CULTURE OF THE PLAINS

"The Plains Indians" is a general term used to describe the many different peoples who built their life around the buffalo, the horse, and the camp circle, and special customs adapted to the wide open country which stretched from the Mississippi to the base of the Rocky Mountains.¹

Of all the tribes, the Sioux were the most dreaded and formidable because of their large number and war-like character. They were a free wandering race of strong warriors and hunters, shifting from camp to camp, and gaining a living by hunting buffalo and plundering neighbor tribes.² The pursuit of game and the dependence upon wild nature made the life rugged and daring.

The buffalo influenced the Sioux habits, art, and beliefs. We see pictures of the buffalo-hunter of the Plains, dressed in beaded vest and leggings, galloping

¹Edwin R. Embree, Indians of the Americas (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1939), p. 130.

²Livingston Farrand, Basis of American History, 1500-1900, Vol. II of The American Nation: A History, ed. A. B. Hart (28 vols.; New York: Harper and Bros., 1904-18), pp. 133-34.

bareback on his mustang and aiming his iron pointed lance straight at the buffalo. Yet the white man introduced the horse, iron, and beads; without them the picturesque and vivid culture of the buffalo hunter would not have risen to such importance.³

No true agriculture was practiced, yet a certain amount of tobacco was raised. Nuts, wild grains, and roots were collected and eaten, while berries and fruits were dried for winter use. Fishing was not important, but tribes caught fish with willow traps or bone hooks.⁴ Fish lines were made of wild hemp, sinew, or horse hair. The Sioux snared, speared, or shot fish with bows and arrows. The Indian would not eat birds or fish raw. Usually the meat was broiled over the coals on a stick, or roasted over an open fire. Sometimes it was cooked in the ashes under a big fire. The Indians were able to boil without pots or kettles. The game consisted mainly of small birds, rabbits, squirrels, and grouse.⁵

The principal weapon was the bow and arrow; yet tribes used the tomahawk, club, flint knife, short spears, and long bladed lances. All used the circular

³Ruth M. Underhill, Red Man's America (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 144.

⁴A. Hyatt Verrill, The American Indian: North, South, and Central America (New York: The New Home Library, 1943), p. 298.

⁵Charles Hamilton, Cry of the Thunderbird (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1950), pp. 37-41.

buffalo-hide shields.

None of these nomadic tribes used real canoes, but all made the skin boats for crossing wide streams. On land the baggage, tents, and household utensils were carried on two poles, or travois; one end of each pole was attached to a horse.⁶ Horses were not ridden by the Indians until some time after 1600. However, after the horse came into use, people were drawn from every language and every background to the Plains. The Plains became a meeting place where different tribes joined together in the pursuit of the buffalo. The Spaniards in New Mexico had sheep, goats, and horses. While they did not allow their Indians in slavery to own horses, they soon began to trade horses to more distant tribes. The Indians ate them at first, but soon saw that it was to their advantage to keep them. Numbers of horses went wild and roamed the Plains in herds. The Spaniards later called the horse, "bronco"; the Indians called it, "mystery dog" or "mustang". Year by year, the horses, traded, stolen, or caught wild on the prairie, appeared in the north. As rivalry on the Plains increased, the Indians neglected their pottery and agriculture, and spent more time fighting both Indians and Whites.⁷

⁶Verrill, op. cit., p. 299.

⁷Underhill, op. cit., pp. 144-52.

The Teton Dakota, or Sioux, were the last to leave their cornfields and their pottery and move into the Plains. They left the woods of Minnesota and gradually moved westward until they reached the Missouri River about 1775.⁸

There were probably several reasons for the exodus of the Sioux. Either the pursuit of the buffalo led them westward and dispersed them over the plains, or the pressure of the Chippewas pushing westward with muskets drove them out of the timbered country at the western end of Lake Superior in Wisconsin and Minnesota. They in turn started to dispossess the Cheyenne and Kiowa whom they found in the Black Hills.

Wealth was measured or expressed in food, not money. Therefore, the Plains Indians were ranked among the richest Indians in America. The buffalo gave plenty of meat which could be sun-dried as jerkee and kept for months. Pounded fine and mixed with fat and dried berries, it became the staple pemmican. The tough skins made an ideal covering for the tepee. The typical tepee consisted of three poles from fifteen to thirty-six feet in height, tied near the top, with an additional number of poles arranged over the apex of the triangle.⁹

⁸Ibid., p. 153.

⁹Ibid.

An interior lining protected the occupants from draughts of cold air. Back rests made of willow rods and supported on tripods were usually provided. If the camp was to be used for some time, raised couches were built which were supported on forked sticks.¹⁰ Skins also made robes or bedding. Scraped skins furnished shields, boats, meat bags, pipe holders, or material for painted records. Sinew was used for sewing; bones, for tools; and horns, for cups. With a little deer-skin for clothing, and some herbs and roots to balance the diet, the Indian needed little else. The buffalo seemed inexhaustible. Soon the Plains culture was built around the buffalo and the horse. It reached its height about 1800, but due to the presence of the white man, it began to wane by 1850.¹¹

Most Plains tribes worshiped the sun as the pre-eminent deity. The most characteristic and widespread ceremony of the Plains was the Sun Dance. It was a mass ordeal by young men, who after several days of fasting, danced, looking at the sun, and torturing themselves in the hopes of a vision. Celebrants pierced their skin with wooden skewers attached to a central pole by thongs, then writhed and twisted until the flesh gave

¹⁰Verrill, op. cit., p. 300.

¹¹Underhill, op. cit., pp. 154-55.

way and they dropped to the ground. The sky, the moon, the earth, and the wind were also personified as gods. Lesser supernatural beings were the ruling spirits of the buffalo and the bear, lightning, thunder, rain, and whirlwind.¹²

¹²National Geographic Society on Indians of the Americas (Washington, D. C., 1955.) See also Farrand, op. cit., p. 139.

CHAPTER II

TREATY OF 1851 AND ITS OUTCOME

The Forty-Niners had passed through the buffalo pastures, cut down the scanty timber, burned the grass, and killed or swept away the game. In 1849, Fort Laramie had been purchased and garrisoned.¹

By 1850 the Indians who wanted no part of the white man's civilization and who refused to be corralled in reservations were getting ready to fight. In Montana, in the Dakotas, on the great plains, and on the deserts of New Mexico and Arizona, they were soon to stake their lives and hopes against the military power of the United States. The Indians wanted peace, but immigrants overran their hunting grounds in a mad rush to reach the California gold fields. Angry warriors attacked the immigrant trains, as the covered wagons rolled west. Soldiers were sent to subdue the Indians, and the great tribes of the plains, the Cheyenne, Sioux, and Comanche, fought desperately to preserve their way of life.²

All the principal tribes living between the

¹Stanley Vestal, Warpath and Council Fire (New York: Random House, 1948), p. 9.

²Hamilton, Cry of the Thunderbird, p. 172.

Yellowstone and the Arkansas Rivers, between the Missouri River and the Rocky Mountains, gathered for a great council in 1851 at Fort Laramie, Wyoming. There in September, our wars with the Plains Indians began with a great Peace Conference and ended nearly forty years later with the Massacre at Wounded Knee.³

Colonel D. D. Mitchell, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, and Major Thomas Fitzpatrick, Indian agent and two Commissioners, presided at the council. Stirring Bear was named Chief of all the Sioux tribes by the commissioners. Twenty-seven wagons were unloaded; the cannon roared; and everybody took his place in the huge circle surrounding the goods. Uniforms and swords were given to the chiefs who in turn distributed the presents to their people.⁴

Here for the first time the Indians were promised annuities of \$50,000 a year for a period of fifteen years.⁵ Bassett states the treaty promised an annuity of goods worth only \$18,000 a year.⁶ In return the Indians were to allow roads and military posts within their country. Boundaries which they must observe were

³Vestal, op. cit., p. 10.

⁴Ibid., pp. 19-20.

⁵Underhill, Red Man's America, p. 169.

⁶cf. John Bassett, A Short History of the United States (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1929), p. 684.

set for each tribe. The Indians scarcely understood what they had signed. The treaty was not ratified by the Senate, but was observed by the Indians; therefore, they were at peace for a while. The Indians learned that as government forts were erected and more soldiers and travelers came, the buffalo began to disappear at a surprising rate.⁷

Stirring Bear tried to keep the peace, but he reported a minor incident to the post commandant which cost him his life. A footsore cow, driven by a Mormon, became scared and bolted into the circle of the Brules Camp. Straight Foretop killed the cow, and he and his friends ate it. The next morning Stirring Bear with several of his headmen went to the fort, but the Mormon had been there before the Chief. Stirring Bear told the commandant that fresh meat had been scarce and that the young brave meant no harm.⁸

Young Lt. J. L. Grattan, a graduate of West Point, eager for a fight and ignorant of Indian warfare, begged to be allowed to arrest the man who killed the cow.⁹ With a few soldiers, a drunken interpreter, and two wagons, he foolishly pushed his way into a peaceful Sioux camp and never came out again. Stirring Bear went

⁷Underhill, loc. cit.

⁸Marie Sandoz, Crazy Horse: The Strange Man of the Oglalas (New York: Hastings House, 1955), pp. 9-14.

⁹Vestal, op. cit., pp. 21-24.

out to meet the soldiers and urged the officers to keep the soldiers out of the camp. He said they should sit and smoke as friends with him, and settle the trouble. The officer would not have it so. The Bear even asked Grattan to go away until the agent could come and decide what should be done. He offered a good mule from his own herd for the cow and sent the camp crier around to collect some horses. The officer didn't want the mule or the horses, he only wanted Straight Foretop. The young Indian didn't wish to make trouble, so he asked the Chiefs to take the people away and leave him with the soldiers. The interpreter did not use the right words. A shot was fired; a brother of Stirring Bear fell, but Grattan was not satisfied. He aimed the wagon guns himself, and ordered his row of soldiers to fire. This time Stirring Bear fell and the blasts from the cannons tore through the tops of the lodge. Spotted Tail led some hidden warriors up over the bank, poured a wall of arrows into the soldiers, and wiped out the lieutenant and his thirty men.¹⁰ Stirring Bear had met the fate he foresaw when he was appointed head Chief of all the Sioux at the Council of 1851.¹¹

A different story reached Washington. Colonel William

¹⁰Sandoz, op. cit., pp. 22-44.

¹¹Vestal, loc. cit.

S. Harney was sent out to punish the Sioux. He repeated the conduct of Lieutenant Grattan. Not being able to find the murderers of Grattan, he pitched into the first Sioux that he could find and killed many innocent people, destroyed their camp, and carried off seventy women and children. The Indians have been severely criticized for taking vengeance on innocent parties, but the troops did the same thing. It was almost impossible for the troops to find the hostiles, and always easy to reach the friendly bands.¹²

In 1856, Colonel Harney had councilled with the Sioux and named Bear Ribs, head chief of the Sioux. Bear Ribs took the government goods from the Indian agent, although the Sioux chiefs had agreed not to take anything because the government had broken so many of its promises. Bear Ribs took the goods at the insistence of the agent because he felt to refuse would show cowardice. He was killed by the hostiles who felt that he had too much influence with the Whites. It was a warning to every chief on the Plains. "Make friends with white man," they said, "then, if his soldiers do not shoot you, the hostiles will."¹³

¹²Vestal, op. cit., pp. 25-27.

¹³Ibid., pp. 40-41.

CHAPTER III

FIRST SIOUX WAR, 1862-1863

The family was the basis of the organization of the Sioux. The members of the family travelled, hunted, and fought together. A tribe would number from two to forty bands which were remotely connected by blood. The tribes that were still more remotely connected constituted a nation, such as that of the Sioux. The Sioux Nation was made up of seven tribes or divisions; the Brule, Teton, Oglala, Minniconjou, San Arc, Hunkpapas, and Blackfeet.¹

In 1861, the Sioux attempted to burn their agency, but were interrupted by troops from Fort Randall, and withdrew.² The cause of the Sioux outbreak in Minnesota in 1862 was the failure of the Government to keep its promise to the Indians, who were depending upon it for the payment of money due them for their lands. They were in actual need and after waiting as long as they could, and seeing no prospect of relief, they broke out

¹Francis Drake, Indian History for Young Folks (New York: Harper and Bros., 1927), p. 379.

²Hubert Howe Bancroft, History of Washington, Idaho, and Montana, Vol. XXXI (San Francisco: The History Co. Publishers, 1890), p. 693.

into open hostility.³ The Government had called the Chiefs to Washington in 1858. Finally, they agreed to the cession of all their reservations north of the Minnesota River for \$166,000. Not a penny was paid until four years later, when \$15,000 in goods was sent to the Lower Sioux, and this was deducted from what was due them under a former treaty.⁴ Shortly after the Civil War, all but a few of the Indians had been settled on reservations. Some few were self-supporting, but most of them had to depend upon the army for food and clothing.

The Lower or Redwood Agency was fourteen miles above Fort Ridgely on the Minnesota River. A secret organization, "Soldiers' Lodge", stirred up the tribe and on August 18, 1858, a party of one hundred and fifty Sioux under Little Crow, began an indiscriminate massacre of the whites on both sides of the river. All the buildings at the Agency were burned.⁵ Among the Sioux, a chief was chosen for life tenure, and his duties were to speak and act for his followers. Little Crow accepted the leadership of his people reluctantly. He sent out messengers to other Indian bands to join him. The Sioux

³Drake, op. cit., p. 375.

⁴Nelson A. Miles, Personal Recollections and Observations (New York: The Werner Co., 1896), pp. 136-38.

⁵Drake, loc. cit.

murdered hundreds of people and killed more than seven hundred troops in battle. They nearly took Fort Ridgely and did set fire to the town of New Ulm.⁶ Chief Red Iron, at the risk of his own life, opposed the outbreak of 1862, but the tide was too strong against him. The uprising was to avenge the wrongs that the Indians had suffered.⁷

Captain Marsh of the Fifth Minnesota Volunteers left Fort Ridgely with forty-eight men for the Agency. They were surrounded by the Sioux at the ferry opposite the Agency and one-half of them were killed. The people at the mission station six miles above the Upper Agency had been warned by a converted Indian and fled before the raid. On the very day of the outbreak, just a day too late, the \$72,000 for the payment of the Indians reached Fort Ridgely.⁸

In September General Henry H. Sibley's troops fought the battle of Wood Lake which ended the contest. He imprisoned 1500 Sioux who took part in the Massacre. Three hundred and seven were sentenced to death, but President Lincoln commuted all but thirty-nine of these sentences. Congress expropriated the land and made the Sioux move out. Many of the Minnesota Sioux sought refuge on the

⁶Vestal, Warpath and Council Fire, p. 47.

⁷Miles, op. cit., p. 139.

⁸Drake, op. cit., p. 376.

plains beyond the Missouri. Little Crow stayed behind to steal horses to make the trip and was shot down in a berry patch.⁹ Drake said that Little Crow, Little Six, and their followers escaped to the British possessions.¹⁰

The next year some of the Sioux and Blackfeet combined forces, totaling some fifteen hundred warriors. They were committing outrages on the Minnesota settlers. An expedition was sent against them under General Alfred Sully. Upon Sully's approach the Indian Camp scattered and the battle raged in every direction far into the night. The next morning it was discovered that the Indians had gone, leaving their dead and wounded, their plunder, and all their property. This battle of White Stone Hill was the worst blow that the Sioux had ever received. The casualties were one hundred killed and wounded, one hundred and fifty-six prisoners, three hundred lodges, one thousand ponies, and all their meat for the winter. Of General Sully's men only twenty were killed and thirty-eight wounded.¹¹ General Sully pursued the Sioux as far as Montana and fought on the Yellowstone, but without the force to impress them.¹²

⁹Vestal, loc. cit.

¹⁰cf. Drake, op. cit., p. 377.

¹¹Ibid., p. 379.

¹²Bancroft, op. cit., pp. 693-94.

CHAPTER IV

SECOND SIOUX WAR, 1865-1867

Generals Harney and Sanborn made a fairly satisfactory treaty with the Sioux in 1865. It guaranteed the Sioux, Cheyenne and Arapaho, the Powder River country. It included all those lands lying between the Yellowstone River and the Rocky Mountains, and the Black Hills; it extended eastward from the foothills of the mountains to the Little Missouri. This was the best buffalo country in all the Northern Plains.

Times were changing so rapidly that this treaty did not represent the interests of the white man. When gold was discovered in Montana, the miners took a road that led directly through the Powder River country. The government started building a road from Fort Laramie, Wyoming, to Bozeman, Montana, - the so-called Bozeman Trail.¹

In 1865 General Conner met the Sioux on the Powder River and punished them severely for killing immigrants on the Bozeman route which had just been opened. Military divisions had been stationed there to keep the

¹Vestal, Warpath and Council Fire, pp. 90-91.

Indians away.²

When the Sioux learned that garrisons were about to be erected on the routes to the Montana gold fields, they went on the warpath with the help of the Northern Cheyennes. The Sioux were well mounted and numerous, and for two years they raided settlements, annoyed the railroad builders, fell on unprotected posts and cut off travelers.³

In 1866 the military department of Missouri covered the vast region between the Mississippi and the Rocky Mountains. For the protection of the emigrants who followed the Powder River route, the military posts of Phil Kearny and C. F. Smith were established in the Sioux territory. A treaty was tried with the Sioux. Some Indians signed, but Red Cloud, their great chief, refused and withdrew from the council.⁴

Red Cloud, chief of the Oglala Sioux, was one of the most famous and powerful chiefs in the history of the Sioux nation. He was born at the forks of the Platte River, Nebraska in 1822. He rose to power by his own force of character as he had no claim to hereditary chiefship. He led the opposition for his tribe when the

²Bancroft, History of Washington, Idaho, and Montana, p. 695.

³Bassett, A Short History of the United States, p. 685.

⁴Drake, Indian History for Young Folks, p. 381.

government undertook to build the Bozeman Trail, because he knew that the Whites would destroy the best remaining buffalo grounds. The first small party of troops sent out to begin construction were practically held prisoners for more than two weeks. Twice commissioners were sent to the Oglala for permission to build the road, but Red Cloud refused to negotiate.⁵

Red Cloud was six feet and six inches tall and possessed wonderful eloquence. His numerous warriors in their red blankets and paint were said to have "covered the hills like a Red Cloud", hence his name. He was made a chief for his bravery, and claimed to have fought in eighty-seven battles; he was wounded several times. After a long and harassing war, he gained his point and the United States troops were withdrawn; the road through the region was abandoned.⁶

On June 16th, Colonel Henry B. Carrington marched his command into Fort Laramie to draw all the ammunition he could get for the muskets of his infantry. He had garrisoned Fort Reno, and in July, was building his new post on Big Piney Creek. The men and officers at Fort Kearny knew very little of Indian warfare. The Indians ran off most of their horses before they got into the

⁵Frederick Webb Hodges, Handbook of American Indians, Vol II (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), pp. 358-59.

⁶Drake, op. cit., pp. 381-82.

camp. In the fight several men were killed and wounded.⁷

Captain William J. Fetterman, who had boasted, "With fifty men I could ride through the whole Sioux Nation..", took forty men out to bring in a wood train.⁸ The orders given by Colonel Carrington were to relieve the wood train, but not to pursue the Indians over Lodge Trail Ridge. Fetterman disobeyed instructions and took upon himself a responsibility which not only cost him his life, but the lives of every man and officer with him. In less than two hours not a single one of the soldiers or citizens was alive.⁹ Carrington and his surviving handful took all precaution to defend themselves from another assault. That night, through a blinding blizzard, Portugee Phillips set out alone to carry the news of the disaster two hundred and thirty miles to Fort Laramie.¹⁰

The following year in August, (1867), the Wagon Box Fight occurred. Captain James W. Powell and thirty-two men of Fort Kearny were detailed to guard the woodcutters who went out each day. He took off the wagon

⁷Vestal, op. cit., pp. 93-95.

⁸Hamilton, Cry of the Thunderbird, p. 175.

⁹Bancroft, op. cit., p. 698. For a more detailed account of the Massacre see Sandoz, Crazy Horse, pp. 196-204.

¹⁰Vestal, op. cit., pp. 96-100.

boxes as only the running gear of the wagons was used to transport cordwood. The fourteen boxes were arranged in a wide circle where the woodcutters were working. On August 2nd, they were attacked by large parties of Sioux under the leadership of Red Cloud. New Springfield breech-loading rifles had just been issued to the soldiers and the Indians were unaware of their existence.¹¹ The thirty-two soldiers with their magazine rifles behind the wagon boxes stood off three thousand Sioux.¹²

¹¹Hamilton, op. cit., p. 176.

¹²Leland Baldwin, The Stream of American History, Vol. II (New York: The American Book Co., 1957), p. 55.

CHAPTER V

THE INDIAN COMMISSION

By an act of Congress on July 20, 1867, a peace commission of four civilians and three army officers was created to deal with the hostile tribes. For a year this commission tried to remove the cause of friction by friendly conference with the Indian Chiefs. Segregation of the tribes on reservations seemed to the commission the only solution of the problem. Various treaties were made and others proposed to remove the tribes from the highways of continental trade. These only increased unrest among the Indians.

In 1868 another commission was appointed to come to terms with Red Cloud. Finally, a treaty was drawn up defining the limits of the Sioux, but Red Cloud refused to sign until the garrisons had been withdrawn. After he signed his signature at Fort Laramie, November 6, 1868, he kept his word to live at peace with the Whites.¹ The Sioux were given the hunting grounds from the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming to the Missouri River

¹Hodges, Handbook of American Indians, II., p. 359.

in South Dakota, including the Black Hills.² Red Cloud and the other treaty makers had thought that the Powder River was unsuitable to occupation by the Whites.³

The Peace Party sent Chief Red Cloud to Washington in 1870, when the newspapers carried headlines of a Sioux war scare. The President and Mrs. Ulysses S. Grant held a reception at the White House. The twenty-five guests of honor, Indian Chiefs and their wives dressed in full regalia, made a splendid appearance. Grant hoped to impress the delegation with the white man's strength. It had already been hinted that there was gold in the Black Hills, and Grant wanted to make friends with them.⁴

The next day President Grant advised the Indians to go back to the Missouri River and start plowing. The Secretary of the Interior explained to them that by the terms of the Treaty of 1868, they must settle down and farm, be counted in a census, and must not oppose the building of railroads off the reservation, and that the reservation was to be in the barren, gameless country along the Missouri River. The Sioux felt that they had

²Baldwin, The Stream of American History, II, p. 55.

³Vestal, Warpath and Council Fire, pp. 186-89.

⁴Katherine Turner, Red Men Calling on the Great White Father (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), pp. 116-22.

been cheated and the story goes that Red Cloud tried to commit suicide.⁵ The Indians were to be changed from a hunting to a farming people, and they were not ready to come in and settle down upon a reservation with arbitrary bounds. The chiefs were ashamed to return to their people with the story of this deception.⁶

In the summer of 1874, General George Armstrong Custer was sent to lead a military expedition into the Black Hills to find a suitable site for a military post as a threat to the Indian villages if they raided the settlements. Bishop Hare of the Episcopal Church, who had visited the agencies, warned President Grant that war would follow, but Grant did nothing to interfere with the War Department's plans.

The miners moved in and the Army made little pretense of driving them out. All the work of the Indian Bureau for the past thirty years soon was undone by Custer's March. General Custer set out to make what one of the Sioux bitterly called, "That Thieves' Road". He seemed more interested in the mining and farming resources than in the military routes.⁷ Gold was discovered on the French Creek on July 30, 1874. The discovery was made official in 1875 by Professor Walter P.

⁵Vestal, loc. cit.

⁶Turner, op. cit., p. 123.

⁷Vestal, op. cit., pp. 191-92.

Jenney, acting as government geologist. After that thousands of people came rushing into the mountains to get rich even though it was in direct violation of Federal Mandate and the treaty.⁸

The Indian Commission went to the Black Hills to offer to purchase the Hills outright for \$6,000,000 or to pay \$400,000 a year for the mining rights. The chiefs refused to consider the proposition. During the seven years following the treaty the government had spent at least \$13,000,000 to pacify the Sioux, but to no avail.⁹

The Sioux and Northern Cheyennes had secured the right to hunt on their old territory from the Peace Commission in 1868. Nevertheless, General Sheridan ordered them to give up their hunting grounds and go on a reservation. They stood upon their rights and resisted, and another Sioux War was the result.¹⁰

Another reason why the Indians fought was the slaughtering of the northern herd of buffalo. The railroad builders lived on the buffalo as they passed through the plains. There were many that slew the buffalo for sport and others for the hides. In three years, 1872-1874, it is estimated that 4,500,000 buffalo were killed,

⁸Robert J. Casey, The Black Hills (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc., 1949), p. 27.

⁹Vestal, op. cit., pp. 193-207.

¹⁰Drake, Indian History for Young Folks, p. 388.

two-thirds of these, for hides. The government ignored this wasteful slaughtering of the Indians' food supply.¹¹

¹¹Bassett, A Short History of the United States, p. 683.

CHAPTER VI

THIRD SIOUX WAR, 1876-1877

The Third Sioux War is better known as the Sitting Bull War. E. C. Watkins, a United States Indian inspector, toured agencies and recommended that a thousand soldiers be sent to attack the Indian camps in winter. This attack could punish and capture the Sioux. On December 3, 1875, the Secretary of Interior wrote to the Commission of Indian Affairs that unless the Sioux be removed within the bounds of their reservation before January 3, 1876, "...they would be deemed hostile and treated accordingly by military force".¹ General Sheridan whose headquarters were in Chicago was not familiar with the treaty that was drawn in 1868, so he tried to punish those who hunted off the reservation and ordered all Sioux Indians to return to their reservations by January 31, 1876. They replied that they were hunting buffalo and would return in the spring. The Sioux on the reservation were ordered to give up their ponies and their guns.²

¹Vestal, Warpath and Council Fire, p. 209.

²Bassett, A Short History of the United States, p. 687.

General Crook was sent out to bring the Sioux back to the reservation. He marched in a winter campaign and met Crazy Horse, Chief of the Oglala, leading a band of the Sioux. The Sioux were aided by the Cheyennes and numbered about five or six thousand by spring.³ The winter of 1875-1876 was extremely bitter. Sitting Bull's camp was at least 240 miles from the Standing Rock Agency. Neither Sitting Bull nor Crazy Horse, the leaders of the hostiles, were willing to drag their families and possessions through snow blizzards for hundreds of miles across the barren plains and badlands.⁴ Three columns of troops under Generals Crook, Terry, and Custer were sent against them in May, 1876. Crook fell back to the Tongue River after an indecisive action against the Sioux. Sitting Bull was at this time between the headwaters of the Rosebud and the Big Horn.⁵ General Crook, who commanded the southern column with fourteen hundred troops and some Indian scouts, fought desperately on June 17th with Crazy Horse, but was forced to fall back.⁶ The cavalry charged three times only to find themselves completely surrounded by the

³Ibid., p. 689.

⁴Vestal, op. cit., p. 210.

⁵Drake, Indian History for Young Folks, pp. 388-90.

⁶Baldwin, The Stream of American History, II, p. 56.

Indians. Only courage and discipline saved them. With perfect steadiness the troops moved on, and finally regained their position. This was called the Battle of the Rosebud.⁷ Sitting Bull of the Hunkpapa, exhausted from participation in a Sun Dance, carried a rifle and wore feathers, but Crazy Horse directed the operations. However, Sitting Bull's voice was loud in urging on his warriors.⁸

Custer, commanding the Seventh Cavalry, with twenty-eight officers and nearly 700 men left camp to follow Sitting Bull's trail. He was under orders from General Terry to proceed from the mouth of the Rosebud and scout for the hostile camp, then supposed to be near the Little Big Horn. The Ree and Crow scouts of Custer located the hostile camp, and told him that he was out-numbered by the Sioux. To reassure the scouts "Long Hair," as Custer was called by the Indians, revealed his secret ambition of becoming President of the United States, the Grandfather, and that he was staking his whole career upon this battle.⁹

The Custer Battle on June 25, 1876, is the most

⁷Drake, loc. cit.

⁸Stanley Vestal, Sitting Bull, Champion of the Sioux (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), pp. 152-58. cf Sandoz, Crazy Horse, pp. 312-16.

⁹Vestal, Warpath and Council Fires, p. 237.

disputed battle in history. Custer has been accused of disobeying orders, of being too impatient and rash, but General Miles said these accusations were groundless and unjust. All that was known of the fate of Custer's command for two years was from the evidence found upon the field after the engagement.¹⁰

Custer divided his forces before attacking the Indians. Major Reno led a battalion of three troops, Captain Benteen commanded three troops, and five troops with about 213 men were led by General Custer. Major Reno charged the Indian camp first, but was driven off with heavy losses. His men entrenched on a hilltop and were saved by Captain Benteen's forces.¹¹ Major Reno had been ordered to cross the river above the Indian village and attack, while Captain Benteen's troops were to scout on Reno's left and attack the Sioux camp from the southwest.¹² General Gibbon found the remnant of Major Reno's forces two days after the battle.¹³

The gathering of the hostile Indians on the banks of the Little Big Horn was one of the greatest ever seen on the plains. There were four to five thousand warriors

¹⁰Miles, Personal Recollections and Observations, p. 198.

¹¹Hamilton, Cry of the Thunderbird, p. 196.

¹²Vestal, op. cit., pp. 240-43.

¹³Hamilton, loc. cit.

and innumerable ponies.¹⁴

Custer led the five remaining troops downriver on the high east bank, and planned to cross below and attack from that side. Nine young braves attempted to defend the ford. The reason why Custer halted is a mystery, but the moment for a successful charge had passed. Every Indian that witnessed the battle agreed to the unflinching valor of Custer's men. His battalion was wiped out. Not a single man escaped. Benteen summed it up as "Too many Indians, good shots, good riders, and the best fighters the sun ever shone on".¹⁵

There was no trap laid, no strategy. Gall came up the ravine from the south end of the camp to meet Custer. Two Moon and Crazy Horse rushed up from their camps at the north end. Nothing could have saved Custer from such enemies, especially after he stopped.¹⁶

The Custer battle was over. No captives were taken, and there was no torture. The Indians "set the prairie afire" as a smoke signal to inform everyone in that region that Sitting Bull was victor.

Sitting Bull had an adopted son in the battle, and according to Indian custom was supposed to stay out and

¹⁴Edgar I. Stewart, Custer's Luck (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1955), p. 428.

¹⁵Vestal, op. cit., pp. 240-45.

¹⁶Vestal, Sitting Bull, p. 178.

let his son win combat honors. He was not in the battle that day.¹⁷ Sitting Bull was in the hills "making medicine" and his accurate foretelling of the battle enabled him to come out victorious.¹⁸ Crazy Horse, the "Stonewall of the Sioux," Gall, Crow King, Iron Star, and Low Dog all led groups of warriors. White Bull, nephew of Sitting Bull, claimed to have killed "Long Hair". White Bull had no idea what regiment or soldier chief he was fighting against. He had never seen Custer in his life. He described the struggle as follows:

I charged in. A tall, well built soldier with yellow hair and mustache saw me coming and tried to bluff me, aiming his rifle at me. When I rushed him, he threw his rifle at me without shooting. This soldier was very strong and brave. He tried to wrench my rifle from me, and nearly did it. The tall soldier fought hard. He was desperate. He drew his pistol. I wrenched it out of his hand and struck him with it three or four times on the head, knocked him over, shot him in the head and fired at his heart. I took his pistol and cartridge belt.¹⁹

Baldwin said Custer was spared because he was a blood brother of Sitting Bull, and it is thought that he shot himself to prevent torture.²⁰ Sitting Bull and Curley, the Crow scout, both told stories that would indicate that Custer was among the very last soldiers to die. Rain-in-the-Face told many contradictory stories of having the

¹⁷Hamilton, op. cit., p. 204.

¹⁸Cf Hodge, Handbook of American Indians, II, p. 584.

¹⁹Vestal, Warpath and Council Fires, pp. 169-70.

²⁰Baldwin, op. cit., p. 57.

distinction of killing the "Long Hair." A Cheyenne warrior, Hawk, and a Hunkpapa Sioux named Flat Hip both claimed credit for shooting the General. Flat Iron, a Cheyenne, said the plan was to capture Custer, not to kill him; he blamed Two Moon for shooting Custer.²¹

The Little Big Horn was a battle very badly planned and in some ways badly fought. From Terry on down, the command was obsessed with the idea that the Indians would flee when they caught sight of the soldiers. They withdrew leisurely after they did to Custer what they had planned to do.²²

In all these bloody battles hundreds of army men were killed. In the Custer fight alone, the Army lost Custer, thirteen commissioned officers, and two hundred and fifty-six enlisted men, in addition to two officers and fifty-one men wounded. A total of three hundred and twenty-three were killed, or wounded in one battle. This included those under the command of Major Reno and Captain Benteen.²³

In the Army and Navy Journal, President Grant wrote:

I regard Custer's Massacre as a sacrifice of troops brought on by himself, that was wholly unnecessary. He was not to have made the attack, but effect the

²¹Cf Stewart, op. cit., pp. 485-86.

²²Ibid., pp. 494-95.

²³Emerson Hough, The Passing of the Frontier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1921), p. 135.

junction with Terry and Gibbon. He was notified to meet them on the 26th, but instead of marching slowly as his orders required in order to effect the junction on the 26th, he entered on a forced march of eighty-three miles in twenty-four hours, and thus had to meet the Indians alone on the 25th.²⁴

²⁴Vestal, op. cit., p. 250.

CHAPTER VII

THE GREAT RESERVATION

Shortly after the Civil War, all but a few of the Indians had been settled on reservations. Some few were self-supporting, but most of them had to depend upon the army for food and clothing.

After the end of the war in 1876 and 1877, the Sioux were forced to live on their great reservation in Dakota, and for the first time really united in fighting a peaceful war against the government from 1878-1890.¹

By treaty, the Teton Sioux held the right to a reservation extending from the Missouri River west to the 103rd meridian, just east of the Black Hills and from the Nebraska line north to the Cannonball River, near Bismarck. The reservation included some thirty-five thousand square miles, and the Sioux numbered about twenty thousand. White settlers were prohibited in the reservation. Soon after the end of the Third Sioux War some congressmen and officials at the Indian Office tried to pass a bill to remove all the western Sioux to the Indian Territory

¹George E. Hyde, A Sioux Chronicle (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1956), p. 3.

and open the reservation to white settlement.²

Congress voted on a middle course. The Sioux were to be placed in agencies along the west bank of the Missouri River where they could easily be supplied with rations. Many of the Sioux were already at agencies on the Missouri, but Red Cloud's Oglalas and Spotted Tail's Brules were at two agencies near the southwest corner of the reservation and refused to go to the new agencies because they considered the low river land an unhealthy place.³

Red Cloud and Spotted Tail were invited to Washington to confer with the new President, Rutherford B. Hayes, and the Secretary of the Interior, Carl Schurz. President Hayes was sympathetic toward their cause and promised them that if they would persuade their people to move to the Missouri where rations and clothing awaited them, he would send a Commission to the Sioux reservation the next spring and they could select any points inside the reservation that suited them, and that the new agencies would be built at these selected points. Red Cloud hated the Missouri so much that he had formed a camp seventy-five miles west of his agency and had to carry his rations and supplies to the distant camp on ponies.⁴

²Ibid.

³Ibid., pp. 4-5.

⁴Ibid., pp. 5-7.

The Commission finally arrived at Red Cloud's camp. The Oglalas had united in selecting a site on the Big White Creek in the edge of the Pine Ridge, but the commission tried to persuade them that it was unsuited to farming; however, the Indians were persistent and won. Spotted Tail's agency at the Rosebud was about one hundred miles west of the steamboat landing on the Missouri. The Indians were given big freight wagons with ox teams to haul their own supplies from the steamboat landing.⁵

Red Cloud lived to a ripe old age in his agency, but Crazy Horse was not so fortunate. General Crook sent Spotted Tail, the uncle of Crazy Horse, to persuade him to come in and surrender at the Red Cloud Agency.⁶ General Miles gives the credit to Little Hawk, the uncle of Crazy Horse, who guaranteed to take him and the entire camp to the agencies to surrender there or to take them to General Miles cantonment. The result was that more than three hundred followers of Two Moons, White Bull, Hump, Horse Road, and others surrendered on April 22nd. Crazy Horse led two thousand to surrender at the Red Cloud, Spotted Tail, and other agencies.⁷

⁵Ibid., pp. 17-18.

⁶Vestal, Warpath and Council Fire, p. 267.

⁷Miles, Personal Recollections and Observations, pp. 243-44.

Many were resentful and suspicious of the Great Chief. He married a girl of mixed blood at the agency who fell ill with tuberculosis. Crazy Horse asked for permission to take her to the doctors at the Brule Agency of his uncle, Spotted Tail. He was refused permission to take her to the doctor or to leave the agency, but he went without permission. The army officers became alarmed and reported it to Washington. Orders came from Washington to put Crazy Horse under arrest and send him to Florida for life.⁸ There are two different opinions concerning his leaving the agency. One is that he was a fighting man and felt uneasy at the reservation, and was planning to break away with his camp of followers and return to the Bighorn Country.⁹ Others believe that he had intended to murder General Crook, skip the reservation and start another war. He came back with the officers very peacefully and did not realize what had happened until he was placed in the cell of the prison at the Red Cloud Agency. He resisted arrest with all his might and the guard killed him with a bayonet. Only death was able to break Crazy Horse's power over his people.¹⁰

⁸Vestal, op. cit., pp. 269-70.

⁹Hyde, op. cit., p. 5.

¹⁰Vestal, loc. cit. See Sandoz, Crazy Horse, pp. 396-413 for details of Crazy Horse's arrest.

Today Ziolkowski, the sculptor, is carving the portrait likeness of Crazy Horse on Thunderhead Mountain, not far from Mt. Rushmore, South Dakota. It will require about \$5,000,000 worth of dynamiting and chiseling. It will take thirty years to complete this biggest piece of statuary in the world. From base to top it will measure five hundred feet and four hundred feet from the nose of the horse of Crazy Horse to its tail. The chiefs thought the memorial would be more effective if it were to honor one outstanding leader of the Sioux instead of many. They were unanimous in their choice of Crazy Horse who has come to be known as, "the great strategist of the Indians successful campaigns between 1868 and 1877."¹¹

Sitting Bull, Warrior and tribal chief of the Hunkpapa, evaded General Miles and his command who were sent to round up the Sioux, after the Custer battle. He and his 200 lodges moved into Canada in 1877. There he found no effort made by the Royal Northwest Mounted Police to force the Indians to become like white men and give up their religion, their customs and their chiefs. Only two things were required of them, to obey the law and to feed themselves. As long as the buffalo lasted they lived in contentment, but when the buffalo

¹¹Casey, The Black Hills, pp. 308-13.

started dwindling, his people did also. The old chief was compelled to go south and surrender.¹²

On July 19, 1881, at Fort Buford, he and his little band handed over their guns. Ten days later they were put on a steamboat and taken down the Missouri to Fort Randall, where for two years Sitting Bull was held as a prisoner of war, but was finally allowed to join his people at Standing Rock, May 10, 1883.¹³ After his release he joined Buffalo Bill's Wildwest Show and was a great success.¹⁴ During Sitting Bull's imprisonment at Fort Randall, the Standing Rock Sioux were forced to sign an agreement to sell their lands for less than their real worth. Millions of acres were transferred from Indians to white ownership. In 1889 the great Sioux Reservation was broken up.¹⁵

General Miles described Sitting Bull as "a strong, hardy, sturdy looking man of about five feet eleven inches in height, with strongly-marked features, high cheek bones, straight, thin lips, and strong under jaw; he was a man of few words."¹⁶ He had a massive head

¹²Vestal, op. cit., pp. 283-86.

¹³Ibid., p. 287.

¹⁴Hamilton, Cry of the Thunderbird, p. 204.

¹⁵Vestal, op. cit., p. 287.

¹⁶Miles, op. cit., p. 226.

and brown hair, an unusual color for an Indian. His totem was a buffalo bull sitting on his haunches. He was born in 1837, on Willow Creek, near old Fort George, South Dakota, and he was the son of Chief Jumping Bull. The order forcing him to go on a reservation was in violation of his treaty rights, and the attempt to enforce it, "a national disgrace."¹⁷

There was a feeling among the pioneers that the savages had no rights worth respecting, and that their western reservations were much larger than they required. President Arthur had violated a solemn treaty with the Indians only five days before Cleveland's inauguration. Within a few days over two thousand people had gone into the Crow Creek Reservations on the east bank of the Missouri in Dakota Territory and had staked off their homesteads. On April 17, the new President issued a proclamation declaring it "inoperative and of no effect" and warned the settlers who had entered reservations that they would be ejected. Many white cattlemen had been grazing their stock on the reservations. Cleveland was determined that the government should not recognize these illegal leases, and the situation grew serious. General Sheridan was sent westward to learn the facts and to invite the tribes to lay their complaints before him.

¹⁷Drake, Indian History for Young Folks, p. 389.
Cf Hodge, Handbook of American Indians, II, pp. 583-84.

The President's sympathies were with the Indians, and he supported Sheridan's drastic proposal of the expulsion of the cattlemen, with only forty days to drive their stock out of the territory.¹⁸

Senator Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts pushed through a bill early in 1887, which Cleveland signed. The General Allotment Act, also known as the Dawes Act, authorized the President to subdivide any Indian reservation into individual parcels, none over one hundred and sixty acres, without the consent of the Indian group affected. Such allotments could not be sold for twenty-five years. Tribal "surplus lands" were to be purchased by the government and opened to white settlement.¹⁹ Many Indians disposed of their property for a small sum which was soon spent, leaving them without the land or money, and those who did not sell found their allotments so small and broken up that they were practically worthless. The better land went quickly out of Indian ownership. Between 1887-1934, their holdings were reduced from 138 million acres to 38 million.²⁰ Land allotment did little to "civilize" any Indian group. It did much to impoverish

¹⁸Allen Nevins, Grover Cleveland: A Study in Courage (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1934), pp. 228-30.

¹⁹Walter Daniels, American Indians (New York: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1957), p. 78.

²⁰Ibid., p. 62.

many Indians. Their richest farming, grazing, mining and timber land went into non-Indian hands.²¹

"Amendments to the Dawes Act in 1891, 1902, and 1907 provided more and more ways in which individual ownership in land by the Indian could be leased, alienated or sold. Farmers and ranchers often put pressure on Congress to declare large areas of reservations 'surplus land.'²²

²¹Ibid., p. 44.

²²Sandoz, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

CHAPTER VIII

FOURTH SIOUX WAR, 1890-1891

The Fourth Sioux War is also known as the Ghost Dance War. The last Indian War occurred in the winter of 1890-1891, and involved about one hundred thousand Indians who represented the sixteen great tribes of the Northwest; chief among which were the Brules, Oglalas and Hunkpapas. The leaders were Big Foot and Sitting Bull. This uprising threatened to be the most stupendous in the history of the Indian Warfare. The killing of Sitting Bull and the concentration of troops under General Nelson A. Miles demoralized the conspirators. They were subdued by the terrible slaughter inflicted on the Indians by the Seventh Cavalry at Wounded Knee, on December 29, 1890.¹

There was a drought in 1889, which resulted in crop failures, and Congress had cut down on the appropriations for rations. Many were starving at the Pine Ridge Agency. The children were dying from epidemics of measles and whooping cough, diseases introduced by the white man. The Pine Ridge Sioux were desperate because they had lost

¹Drake, Indian History for Young Folks, p. 428.

all hope for the future.² In 1890 the Government had failed to meet promptly many of its treaty obligations, and had been lax in payment of annuities. There was a feeling of dissatisfaction among different tribes and everything was favorable for Sitting Bull and his followers to form a conspiracy for a general uprising.³

In 1888 a young Paiute medicine man in Nevada, named Wovoka, announced that he had received a direct revelation from the Great Spirit. He said that their dead ancestors would soon come back to earth, the buffalo would be plentiful again, and the white invaders would be destroyed. The Indians were to prepare themselves for the new era by practicing the ceremonial dances and songs of the new religion.⁴ Wovoka's doctrine was simple.

The Messiah had come back as an Indian because the whites had denied and crucified him. With him he would bring from the West whole nations of dead Indians, vast herds of buffalo, and fast horses to replenish the starving plains. Then all the Indians would live forever on the regenerated earth.⁵

The Sioux seized on the rumor of the new doctrine

²Hyde, A Sioux Chronicle, pp. 235-39.

³Drake, op. cit., p. 429.

⁴Major General O. O. Howard, Famous Chiefs I Have Known, (New York: The Century Co., 1908), p. 205.

⁵Vestal, Warpath and Council Fire, p. 293.

to save themselves from the whites.⁶ The chiefs held a council and sent delegates across the Rockies in the winter and into the Nevada desert to see the Messiah. They were joined by some Northern Cheyennes and other Indians who were seeking the savior. They met him in the heart of the desert. He called himself Wovoka, but the whites knew him as Jack Wilson. His father had been a medicine man and a prophet, and Jack added some strange customs of the Christians, probably learned from the Shakers and the Mormons, to his father's magic. He claimed to be the Messiah, preaching new hope and peace for his race. Wovoka held a great council for the delegates and taught them the beliefs and rituals of his new faith and sent them home to spread his teachings.⁷

The delegates were gone all winter and returned in the spring of 1890, to report that the Messiah would come a year later to save his Indian people. The prophet told both men and women to observe the Ghost Dance regularly four nights in a row once every six weeks until he came.⁸

Red Cloud forgot he was a Catholic and encouraged

⁶Ibid.

⁷Hyde, op. cit., pp. 240-41.

⁸Vestal, op. cit., p. 294.

the people to begin the Ghost Dance.⁹ Kicking Bear brought the good news to Sitting Bull's camp. While he did not believe such an impossible story, he knew that the starving Sioux were ready to try anything. They were told that some of the people fainted in the new dance and saw their dead relatives. He felt that as chief it was his duty to get for his people what they wanted. Sitting Bull danced, but he was too old to throw away the conventions of a lifetime.¹⁰

Drake wrote that Sitting Bull set to work to spread the new religion among the Indians of the entire Northwest and became the "self-appointed high priest of the cult" in the hope that he could regain his former power over the Indians and again become their leader in order to invite them to an uprising against the whites.¹¹

Dances were held on all the reservations; they were attended by hundreds of Indians. The white man thought of all Indian dances as War Dances. The music was entirely vocal; no drums were used; the dancers circled a pole, singing and praying.¹²

When the Indians of the Plains gathered for the

⁹Vestal, Sitting Bull, pp. 271-72.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Drake, op. cit., p. 430.

¹²Vestal, Warpath and Council Fire, p. 295.

Ghost Dance, the whites feared that an outbreak was coming. Dr. D. T. McGillycuddy had managed the Pine Ridge Agency for years without once calling in the troops. As soon as the new political appointee, Dr. R. F. Rogers, came, he found himself at the mercy of thousands of Sioux and called for troops because he was afraid of the Indians. General John R. Brook, who led the troops, knew nothing of the Indians. When the troops arrived at Pine Ridge on October 19, 1890, the Ghost Dancers became frightened and about eighteen-hundred of them left their homes and fled westward into the Badlands of South Dakota.¹³ Big Foot's band of Minneconjou Sioux had already left their agency on the Missouri River and were heading toward the camp of the hostiles in the Badlands.¹⁴

Major James McLaughlin, the agent at Standing Rock, had an interview with Sitting Bull and decided not to interfere unless he was forced.¹⁵ But in his report in June, 1890, McLaughlin had suggested it wise to remove non-progressive leaders from the reservation. He included Sitting Bull, Circle Bear, Spotted Elk, and several other hostiles.¹⁶ McLaughlin was determined to break the spirit

¹³Ibid., p. 279.

¹⁴Drake, op. cit., p. 431.

¹⁵Vestal, Sitting Bull, p. 277.

¹⁶Hyde, op. cit., p. 244.

of Sitting Bull and recommended his arrest to the Bureau, which ignored his suggestion.¹⁷

The Indians soon began to show dangerous signs of disorder, and the authorities decided the best way to stop it was to arrest Sitting Bull. It was known that he had sent the Indian runners to the Sioux of the Cheyenne River Reservation and that he was making preparations to depart from his own camp. It was necessary to keep Sitting Bull from joining the hostiles in the Badlands and from placing himself at their head, for his presence in the camp would result in a disastrous war.¹⁸

Buffalo Bill saw a chance to gain publicity for his wild west show and presented himself to McLaughlin and asked to be allowed to arrest Sitting Bull. Both the Military at Fort Yates and McLaughlin resented Cody's interference and delayed him until a wire could be sent to Washington to have the order rescinded.¹⁹

General Miles, on December 15, 1890, ordered Colonel Dunn, the post commander at Fort Yates, North Dakota, to detail a troop of cavalry and a few trusted Indian police to arrest Sitting Bull at his camp on the

¹⁷Vestal, op. cit., p. 297.

¹⁸Drake, op. cit., pp. 431-32.

¹⁹Vestal, op. cit., pp. 280-82.

Grand River.²⁰ McLaughlin persuaded Colonel Dunn to let a force of forty Indian policemen go first and make the actual arrest, then the troops would follow.²¹

Lieutenant Bullhead went to make the arrest. Sitting Bull's warriors heard of it and stayed with him all night. McLaughlin thought that Sitting Bull and the Hunkpapa would run away, but they did not. The second night Sitting Bull told his tired friends to go to bed because he was not afraid. He lay down on his pallet and slept soundly.²²

The Indian police found Sitting Bull at his camp at dawn surrounded by his family. He protested, but offered no resistance to the unexpected arrest. He prepared to accompany the Indian police outside the lodge. He requested to be allowed to wear his Sunday clothes and to saddle his best horse. A large body of Ghost Dancers gathered outside the log cabin, and Crow Foot, Sitting Bull's son, reviled his father as a coward for yielding so peacefully. Sitting Bull changed his mind and raised the war cry; his followers then rushed out to rescue him.²³ Catch-the-Bear, leader of Sitting

²⁰ Drake, loc. cit.

²¹ Vestal, Warpath and Council Fires, p. 298.

²² Vestal, Sitting Bull, p. 286.

²³ Drake, op. cit., pp. 432-33.

Bull's bodyguard, shot Bullhead down as soon as he could find him in the dim light. As Bullhead fell, he fired into Sitting Bull's body, then Red Tomahawk shot the chief in the head from behind. Four of the Indian police were killed in the desperate hand-to-hand fight before the arrival of the troops under Major Fechet, who had kept his distance.²⁴ Within a few minutes twelve Sioux lay dead; three more were severely wounded. Crow Foot, the seventeen year old son of Sitting Bull, was found hiding in his father's cabin and asked that his life be spared, but he was shot too. The policemen showed no mercy.²⁵

An interesting incident happened during the shooting. Sitting Bull's old gray circus horse imagined that he was back in the Wild West Show with his master and Buffalo Bill. He began to do his tricks again. He was ridden back to Fort Yates with the news that day, and was badly in need of rest for weeks afterwards. Buffalo Bill later bought the horse and used it in the show again.²⁶

The killing of Sitting Bull terrified all the Indians and more than three hundred and thirty-six Sioux fled

²⁴Vestal, Warpath and Council Fires, p. 299.

²⁵Vestal, Sitting Bull, p. 301.

²⁶Ibid.

from Standing Rock as the result of this affair. Many of them fled to the camp of Chief Big Foot which was more than a hundred miles away. Half of those that fled had taken no part in the fight, but were afraid of the soldiers.²⁷

Big Foot was overtaken on December 28th with one hundred and six warriors and two hundred and fifty women and children. They surrendered without any resistance and moved on with the troops to Wounded Knee Creek, twenty miles northeast of Pine Ridge Agency. There were four hundred and seventy soldiers in eight troops of the Seventh Cavalry to guard Big Foot's frightened people. Big Foot was in no condition to make trouble as he had to go to bed with pneumonia. The next morning the Warriors were ordered out of their tents and told to give up their guns.²⁸

After most of the Indians had surrendered their guns, someone shot off a musket. The soldiers opened fire with Hotchkiss guns on the Cheyenne Warriors, and on the tents where women and children stood watching. Some of them fled in panic down the ravine, but were pursued by hundreds of soldiers, and bodies were found scattered over a distance of two miles. A few soldiers

²⁷Ibid., p. 305.

²⁸Vestal, Warpath and Council Fires, pp. 303-06.

were caught in the cross fire and killed by their comrades. Sioux leaders who served as scouts with the Cavalry testified at a government inquiry on February 11, 1891. Turning Hawk said that "a crazy man, a young man of very bad influence, a nobody, among that bunch of Indians fired his gun and indiscriminate killing followed". The Massacre at Wounded Knee marked the end of Indian resistance to civilization.²⁹

The Ghost Dance Campaign cost the lives of forty-nine government men and three hundred Indians. The total expense for the thirty days of bloodshed was more than a million dollars. In addition, one church, two schoolhouses, a bridge, and fifty-three Indian cabins were burned. Many haystacks, farm machinery, and government cattle were destroyed.³⁰

²⁹Hamilton, Cry of the Thunderbird, pp. 206-07.

³⁰Vestal, op. cit., p. 307.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The Indian Policy of the government varied from one administration to another. The agents were often political appointees who had had no experience in dealing with Indians. There was a lack of patience and understanding on the part of the government officials on the reservations and in Washington. The government broke promises and treaties that it had made with the Sioux.

The Indians were fighting for their homes, their hunting ground, and their way of life. The white men have criticized the Indians for their fighting and massacres, but they often were guilty of such actions themselves. The white man felt compelled to civilize the Indian, break up his tribal life, and herd him into government controlled reservations. The Indian was satisfied with his mode of living and objected to changes brought by the white man. At the same time, the white man was interested in the welfare of the Indian, but was also interested in his own selfish gain. Each fought desperately for his own interest. Even though the government was ambitious for the Indian, the Red Man could

not appreciate this ambition. There is a growing opinion that the large amount of money spent on the Indian by the government has weakened him in several important respects. With the coming of the white man, the Indian lost much of what is typical of Indian life.

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