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# SITTING BULL & CUSTER

by A. McG. Beede

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The background drawings on this page are taken from the inside covers  
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SITTING BULL  
&  
CUSTER

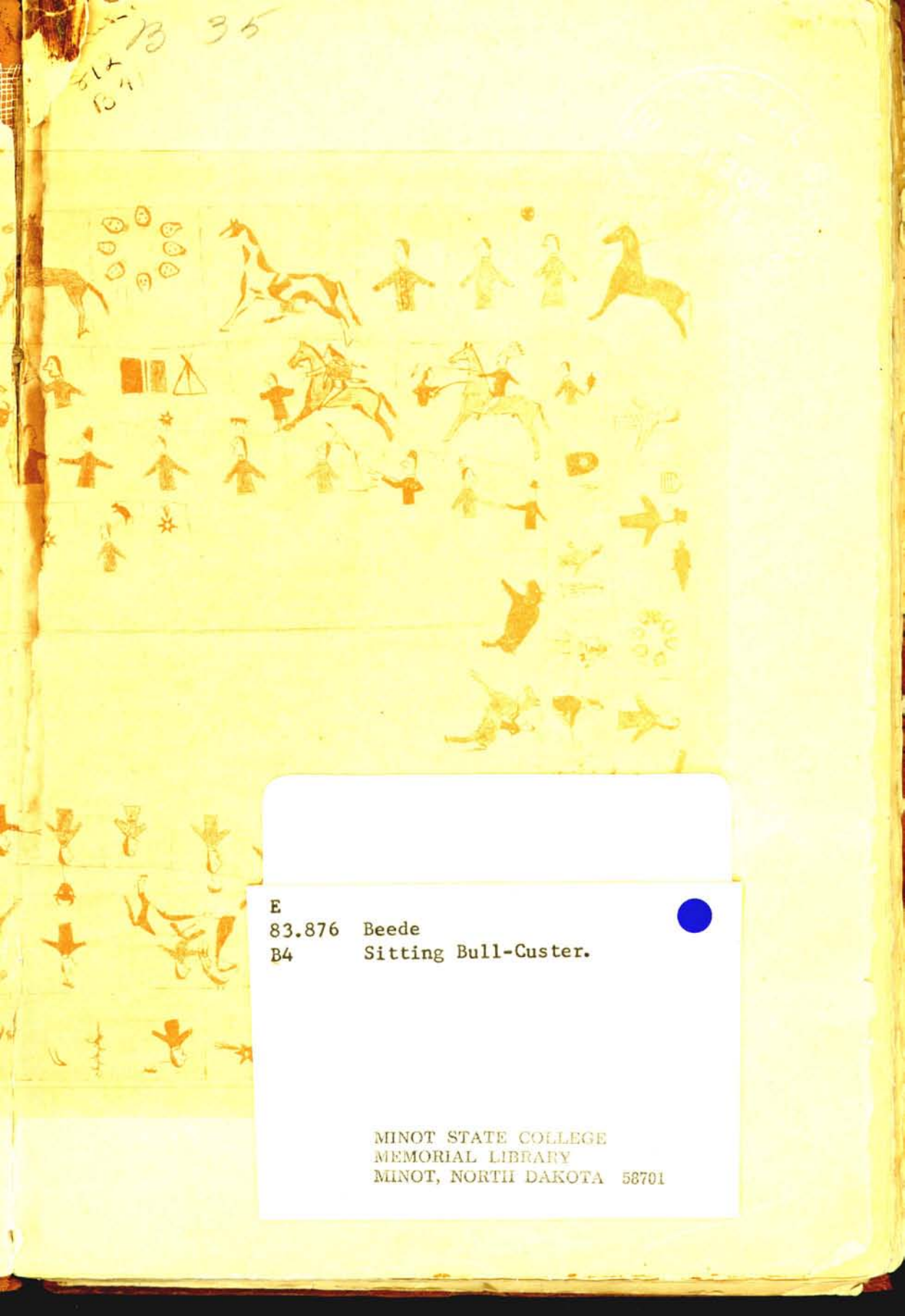
BEEDE











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SITTING BULL  
CUSTER





WINONA



North Dakota  
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# Sitting Bull-Custer

By

A. McG. BEEDE



ILLUSTRATED

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BISMARCK TRIBUNE CO.  
Bismarck, North Dakota

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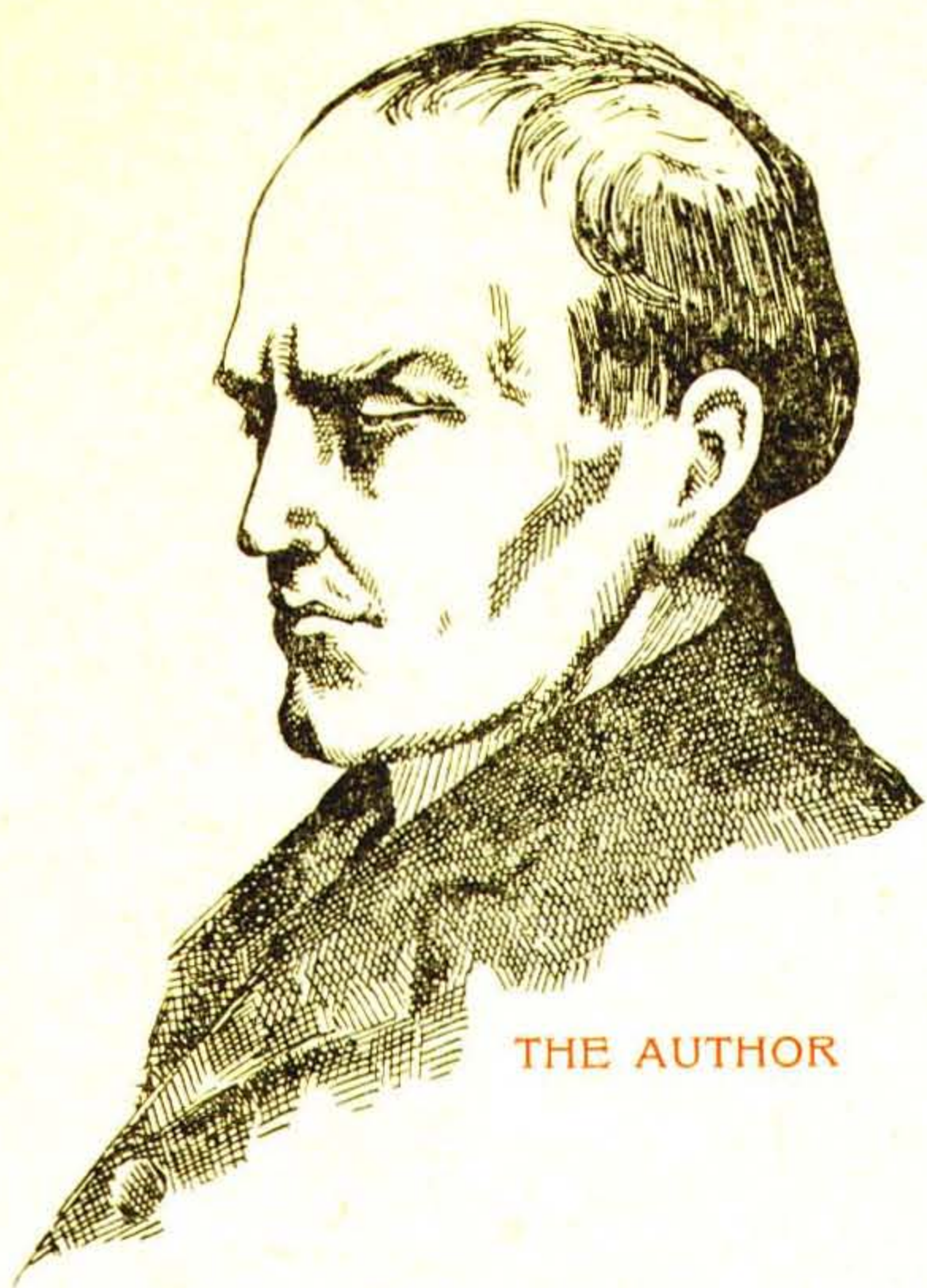


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THE AUTHOR

#### DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the soul of Simagua, a noble Chippewa woman. Joyful in youth, separated by Fate from Sakan'ku, her lover, for fifty years, marrying him when she was 70 years old, affectionately laboring with him till strength failed them both, she finally died, aged 103 years, of slow starvation, because of the awkward system of "Indian Affairs" by which the U. S. government exhausts Indian resources in "administration," while leaving the old and infirm generally to suffer. I believe she was a saint. She did not complain of her lot, or blame anyone.

A. MCG. BEEDE.



## PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

It is nothing more than fair that the author of this work, who is an excellent gentleman, a student, a scholar, a man of wide experience and an earnest and faithful worker in his Master's vineyard, be given an introduction and recommendation to the reader, in order that it may be thoroughly understood who he is, and that confidence may be established in him before the reader begins. It is believed that the reader, thus familiarized with the author, will find a keener interest in the work, for he may rest assured it is as authentic as any work of a similar nature can be. It is worked out from the actual scenes, actual occurrences, actual statements of the characters depicted; the language and construction merely being the polished gem as it appears when worked out from the crude, original state. First let the reader understand this one thing: There is no more beautiful romance in the world than that of the Indian; his life is filled with it; his legends are most beautiful and his logic and reasonings wonderful; his tendency is kind and loving; he is the most misunderstood creature on earth, and the author is appreciative of these facts.

Aaron McGaffey Beede, Ph. D., a priest of the Episcopal church, laboring among Indians, has had good opportunity for knowing the things about which he writes. He knows many times more than he writes. First knowing Indians when a boy, he has always studied them. His position has been such as afforded him opportunity for careful, first-hand study of human nature in all its forms and phases. In Germany he tramped 1,500 miles with vagrants for the purpose of learning how they lived and regarded life. He has tented with Gypsies as a learner. He is perfectly at ease with all sorts of men, from the campfires of the Indians to the city clubs. He is not a cynic or a pessimist. He avers that human nature is



unimpeachable and while liking a tent or a log shack, with a bear for his company, yet he meets a refined lady with ease and with dignity. He thinks individuals should always follow their own tastes and instincts where imperative principle is not involved. The life-long students of Indians, living at Bismarck and vicinity, realize that he knows Indians. For many years he has been constantly with Indians. Some may have been with them more years, but none have studied them more conscientiously, and the true worth of his observations and opinions as recognized by historical societies, attests to his reliability.

In this drama it is his intention to give the Indian view of a great tragedy. He intends also to show that the old Sioux Indian religion was something more than a "huge joke." He says "As long as a people's religion is despised, the people themselves must be despised, though unjustly." His efforts are to be commended, and it is believed his drama will be heartily appreciated and that it will be given a wide circulation. The style of his literature is simple, yet beautiful. His monogram regarding Sitting Bull may be challenged at some points, but the challenger will meet an able and honest defender of his thesis, for Sitting Bull was probably the most misunderstood of all Indian leaders.

In closing, let the reader be impressed with the authenticity of this narrative, and remember that it portrays many facts and phases of the conditions, scenes and occurrences which led up to and took place during the greatest tragedy of the American continent's savagery and which our historians have not thoroughly understood.

The undersigned takes pleasure in recommending Rev. A. McG. Beede and his drama which follows herewith.

Respectfully,  
THE BISMARCK TRIBUNE COMPANY.





SITTING BULL



CUSTER



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This book is something new. It gives a picture of the "Custer Massacre," so called, as Indians themselves saw the battle. The whole picture would be too large. The glimpse I give of the entire picture will be more vivid and real than the whole picture would be.

The Sitting Bull speeches in the drama are based on his own sentences as he used them on various occasions. And I have truthfully depicted his personal ambition, among his other habits. Not unwilling to face Sitting Bull with my honest intent, I give this drama and book to the public without apology.

If stage artists wish for more of the harrowing details I wish they would obtain *true Indian material* from me, or from some reliable source. I do not care to write more of the harrowing scenes myself. It gives a sense of pain which is too real. The agony of that half-hour in the desert must be left with that sea of human agony which human beings cannot fathom.

If eyes of creatures weeping  
Were tumbling 'neath the deep,  
The surface wider creeping,  
Would lull the shore to sleep.

Unable to give all the Dakota (Sioux) chiefs a place in the drama, I let Chief Gall represent all of them. I am sure this would meet with their approval. He was, by common consent, the genius who won the day for the struggling Dakotas (Sioux). All of these chiefs, excepting Peji (now called John Grass), have gone to that land where all races meet together.

For an account of my sources of information, and a sketch of the persons depicted in the drama, one should read the back pages of this book before he reads the drama.

W. A. Stickley, A. B. Welch and C. H. Fish have my hearty thanks for advice and assistance in the production of this book.

A. MCGAFFEY BEEDE.









### THE SCENE

An Indian village on the Little Big Horn river, Montana. At dawn, June 25, 1876. S. Bull will go to a "medicine booth" by a thicket on the river to learn from "holy ones" what will soon happen. There is a suspicion that he does not "tell out" what "holy ones" tell him, and so six persons, Echonka, Gall, Rain-in-the-Face, Old-man, Old-woman, and Old-woman-diviner, are concealed near the booth to spy.

Fool-mink, a "happy-hooligan" Indian "Story-teller-and-Singer," is everywhere present. His "crazy ways" please the "holy ones," and so S. Bull is glad to have him present.

Before S. Bull arrives Fool-mink dances along to the spies singing a seventh cavalry song, as he once heard it on a piano at Fort Yates post. The words are his own. The air of the song reminds Rain-in-the-Face of the time when Tom Custer handcuffed him at the Post, and so enrages him.

There is music (not singing) by the "holy ones" continuously. To an Indian, music is the unvoiced melody of "holy ones," and is the via sacra into the great regions of the occult. The words in brackets will, I hope, give some idea of the kind of music which an Indian ear would require. Other ears will suit themselves.





CHIEF GALL



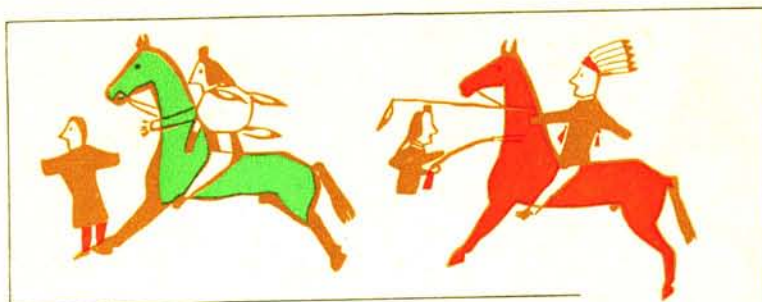
Old Mother Yellow Eye (Copyright by F. B. Fiske)

THE OLD WOMAN



RAIN-IN-THE-FACE





## SITTING BULL-CUSTER



### SCENE I THE SPIES WATCH SITTING BULL

FOOL-MINK

*(Comes to the spies singing.)*

*(Far-away mellow, percussion peals.)*

Mi-la, la-la-la-la. Do-do, do-do-do-do.

Mi-la-la-la-piano-do-do-do-do-tone.

Don't tell the "mellow story"  
in the morning blown,

With zephyrs from the dawning  
over hills and streams,

While meadow-larks awaking  
tell their happy dreams.

The campfire in the evening  
tells its prophesy,

The tom-tom music leaping,  
tells its rhapsody;

The spiders tiptoe coming,  
tip-toe, glide along,

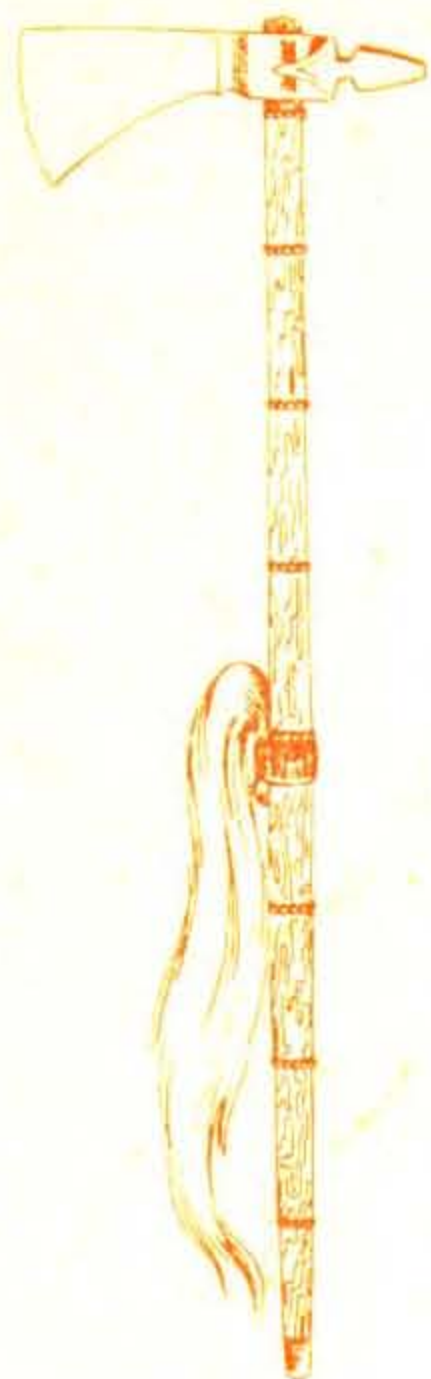
The "ghost-bells" in the evening  
tell their happy song.

*(Ecstatic, trilling tones.)*





SITTING BULL-CUSTER



RAIN-IN-THE-FACE

*(Clutching Fool-mink.)*

I'll gag you with a moccasin,  
If you don't gag that Fort Yates ghost!  
It makes you sing that Custer-song  
The soldiers sang at Fort Yates Post  
The day Tom Custer handcuffed me.  
He meant to hang me! I was smart  
Enough to get away. I swore  
Revenge, and I will have his heart!

FOOL-MINK

*(Singing and laughing.)*

Your little eyes are like a mole,  
You better dig a little hole,  
And hide yourself a little while,  
Till you can smile a little smile.

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE

*(Shaking him.)*

I'll face Tom Custer!

FOOL-MINK

*(Singing and laughing.)*

Bye and bye,  
When he's a ghost—and so will I.

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE

*(Jerking him.)*

I'll eat his heart!

FOOL-MINK

*(Singing and laughing.)*

The worms won't eat  
Your heart, if they have sweeter meat.

GALL

*(Clutching each with either hand.)*

You stop this noisy brawl, or I  
Will gag you both! We're here to spy.  
Keep still, and watch for Sitting Bull.



RAIN-IN-THE-FACE

*(Sneering.)*

His tricks are something wonderful!

FOOL-MINK

*(Singing loud.)*

"The holy man, great Sitting Bull!  
His medicine is wonderful!"

GALL

*(Throwing them apart.)*

Now you stay there! And you stay there,  
Fool-mink, and "braid that crazy hair!"

*(Fool-mink goes to braiding his hair.)*

OLD-MAN

*(To Rain-in-the-Face.)*

Your envious mind cannot applaud  
Another Indian.

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE

*(Sharply.)*

He's a fraud!

GALL

*(In a low voice.)*

He comes! Keep still, and watch his acts  
And words. We want to know the facts!

OLD-WOMAN-DIVINER

It's mean to spy!

GALL

But this will prove  
Him true, if he is true—If not,  
We'll see his tricks, and he is caught!

OLD-WOMAN-DIVINER

*(As he comes.)*

Ah, what a noble man he is!  
And yet he has his enemies.





SITTING BULL-CUSTER



(*S. Bull comes to the booth dressed simply—moccasins with high leggings, a neat blanket reaching low, and a buckskin shirt under it, open in front and showing his neck and massive upper-chest. His hair is carefully braided. He looks at the dawn wistfully, then looks into the booth. Then by rubbing pieces of wood taken from beneath his blanket, he starts a "sacred fire." Putting fagots on the fire, he sits down on the ground before the booth, south of the fire.*)

SITTING BULL

(*Speaking rapidly.*)

(*Jolly-quick monor music.*)

The Whiteman calls us savages.  
How cleverly he manages  
His tricks! He'll check our enemies,  
He tells us,—then our land is his!  
He'll teach us how to worship God,—  
That means, *obey his every nod!*  
To make us *safe*, he'll build a *fort*,  
He says. Ha, ha, and then for sport  
He'll kill our game! With hunting gone,  
There'll come a "civilizing" dawn,—  
For him! Despair for us! They know  
That when our "sacred cattle" go,  
We die. We cannot climb the sky  
And be with ghosts till bye and bye!  
The Whitemen have their bedbugs frisky,  
And rats and mice and lice,—and whiskey;  
They take their partner by the "mid-way,"  
And dance their merry twirling "jig-way,"  
And we are savages, because  
We have our wholesome, simple laws!

(*He puts fagots on the fire, looks at the dawn and listens earnestly. Then he gazes at the fire, then sits down and speaks.*)

(*Tremolo minor music.*)

There'll be a battle soon, I feel  
Afraid. No "holy ones" reveal  
To me how this event will turn.  
I know their haughty armies spurn



Our weapons—well, Great Spirit's eye  
Is over all, and if we die,  
There'll be a larger spirit-world.  
Will haughty banners there unfurled  
Out-shine our own? Ah, that would give  
Our hearts repining! While I live  
I'll kiss the gun and still defy  
The Whiteman's arrogance!—Then die.

FOOL-MINK

*(Singing and dancing by S. B.)*

I'll never yield, I never will,  
While trout can find a merry rill,  
Where they can hide their gleeful noses,  
And crickets sing among the roses.

SITTING BULL

*(Standing by the fire.)**(High-keyed minor music.)*

Ha ha, the "sacred fire" is singing,  
And "ghost bells" in the flame are ringing.  
The voices have a wailing cry;  
This means a battle. Who will die?

FOOL-MINK

*(Out by a tree, singing.)*

I'm shaking like a crazy leaf,  
I'm twitching like a captured thief.  
A crazy snake right here by me,  
Is climbing up a hollow tree.

*(Sitting Bull takes ashes from the fire in his  
hand, and sows them in the breeze, meanwhile  
speaking.)*

SITTING BULL

*(Discordant low minor music.)*

Like ashes taken from the fire,  
And scattered, so are treaties till  
We win a battle! They desire  
Our land, and that is why they kill  
The people! We would gladly flee  
And leave their thieving treachery.  
But where? The earth is full of fear.





There is no place where we can flee.  
The avaricious Whitemen rear  
Their Christian forts from sea to sea!  
There's Custer, Crook and Terry—that's  
Not all. They come like thieving rats.

*(Pausing a moment, he continues sorrowfully.)*

*(Soft minor, quavering monotone.)*

Could not compassion spare the land  
To us, between the "Rockies" and  
The old Missouri river? No!  
Their treaty reads, "While rivers flow  
And hills abide, this land is yours."  
The greedy heart of man ignores  
What fingers write in treaties. We  
Are friendly. We would sooner flee  
Than fight. At bay before the foe,  
We hear the wicked bugle blow.  
Unless God helps us win a battle,  
The Sioux must give their homes to cattle.  
The "stock-men" hunger for our land.  
Their hunger has a cruel hand.  
Ah, this is it—to rob and steal  
Is all there is to Christian weal.  
With Christian water on his head  
An Indian's manliness has fled.  
Our fathers' spirits lingering here,  
Behold Injustice's cruel tear,  
And gliding mid the trees and flowers,  
Vouchsafe the Sioux propitious hours!  
*I'll ask the oracle once more  
To tell the good, or ill, in store!*







## SCENE II

### SITTING BULL FORETELLS THE BATTLE

*(Abruptly he rises and goes into the booth to prepare the "holy medicine" for the oracle. The curtain falls. "Red Wing," or similar music, is given. When the curtain rises he is pouring the "holy medicine" from a rawhide pouch into a wooden bowl two feet east of the fire. Returning the pouch to the booth, he sits down.)*

FOOL-MINK

*(Dancing and singing.)*

*(Far-away percussion minor peals of music.)*

Let's try to hide like minks, and breathe  
 What bonny air we can beneath  
 The water. I was born a mink.  
 Beneath a muskrat house I'll sink.  
 And they will tear the house away,  
 And look for me in vain. They'll say,  
 Fool-mink has dodged the gun today.  
 And while they look and peep, you see  
 My water-colored nose will be  
 Just even with the water, Ho-o!!  
 The Whitemen's eyes are dull, you know.  
 One finger-tap would drive me down,  
 And then Fool-mink, Oh, I should drown.  
 But Whitemen's eyes can't see a nose,  
 Unless a coughing creature blows  
 Its nose. I'll breathe the bonny air  
 Close by the soldiers unaware.







Ti-li-li-li, I'll breathe the air.  
Ta-lu-lu-lu, they'll look and stare.  
Wa-hoo-hoo-hoo, they'll curse and swear.

SITTING BULL

*(Perplexed.)*

*(Tenor minor monotonous, broken notes.)*

The mirk-souls born in him advise  
Concealment. I think otherwise.  
One battle bravely fought removes  
The taunt of cowardice. It proves  
That we have pluck. The truth apart  
From weapons has a teasing heart,  
Arousing their sarcastic grin.  
The truth must firmly fight to win  
Its way with savage Whitemen. They  
Are cowards with artillery.  
If Indians argue righteousness,  
They promise, then withhold redress.  
But will my Indian warriors fight,  
Or will they fire, then flee? The flight  
Of Crook gives courage—also fear.  
My warriors know the end is near  
And fear of dangling in the air  
When caught, deters them. I'm aware  
Of that. I'd sooner have my feet  
Down on the "holy earth" than meet  
The ghosts while hanging. There's a twang  
Of dread in hanging. I'll not hang!  
Whoever else may strangle, I  
Will kiss the gun and bravely die.

*(Shrill minor, ending in a trill calling to the dead.)*

"A massacre!" they called it. Forty  
Choked like dogs in Minnesota!  
For what? With hope of justice gone,  
Grim desperation hurled them on.  
If Whitemen die, it's "massacre!"  
If Indians die, it's "hip-burrah!"

*(While Sitting Bull looks at the "medicine-bowl" despairingly, because it does not move, Fool-mink dances and sings.)*



## FOOL-MINK

*(Dancing and singing.)**(Merry minor monotone.)*

I'd sooner swim, I'd sooner fly,  
 I'd sooner have a wife than die  
 By hanging. Sitting Bull and I  
 Are twins. We laugh, we sing, we cry.  
 And if you ask me why I cry,  
 I'll tell you. Portents in the sky,  
 When I was born, made me a mink;  
 And minks have tearful eyes, I think.  
 I'm jolly as a mink can be,  
 I dance, I sing with merry glee.  
 And when today I feel some sorrow,  
 I take a fishing trip tomorrow.

## SITTING BULL

*(Looking at the bowl.)**(Far-off quavering minor.)*

He-he, he-he, my heart is sad,  
 The days are gone that made me glad.  
 I've seen that bowl go round the fire,  
 With nothing save its own desire  
 And God to help. It moves no more  
 To tell us good, or ill in store.  
 My hopes grow fainter every hour.  
 If Indian warriors get a taste  
 Of reservation beef and flour,  
 Such pleasing luxuries will waste  
 Their loyalty to me, their chief.  
 I fear the Whiteman's *promised* beef.  
 Men boast of freedom—precious gem!  
 Then appetite makes slaves of them.  
 And while they're fed, relentless bands  
 Are twisted round their willing hands.  
 Starvation doesn't bother much,  
 Till starving men consent to touch  
 A cunning villain's luxuries.  
 They take his meat, then they are *his*!  
 The Mandans had experience.  
 They took the ration stores, "immense!"  
 Now Mandans boil a rawhide door





For food! They're men no more!  
I know the Whiteman's treachery  
Beneath his *promised* "charity."  
A reservation Indian, Ha!  
An eagle caught! A weeping star!  
A wailing ghost in endless grief!  
They vow to give, then *steal* the beef!

FOOL-MINK

*(Dancing and singing.)*

*(One-heavy-three-light tom-tom strokes.)*

Any wild bugle suits my ear,  
Only don't bring a cannon here;  
Any piano suits my wits,  
Only don't blow my brains to bits.  
Any new thing will do for a fool,  
Only don't send a fool to school;  
Turnips and buffalo meat are good,  
Beef, I dare say, is decent food.

SITTING BULL

*(In despair.)*

*(Dying tenor minor discords.)*

And must I cease to be a chief,  
And be applauded? There's the grief!  
No more a chief! I'd sooner die  
Than have the people cease to cry,  
"The holy man, great Sitting Bull!  
His medicine is wonderful!"  
Does not each Whiteman seek renown?  
Because I seek it, wherefore frown?  
My cause is just. The Whiteman wishes  
To make us dogs to lick his dishes!  
I am not trying to expand  
Our twice-restricted treaty land.  
I have had hopes. My hopes are dead.  
They're sleeping where my people bled  
And died in vain. I simply try  
To save our homes. And Whitemen cry,  
"The trouble-maker, Sitting Bull!  
His warfare is detestable!"  
My hopes are dead, yet I defy  
Such arrogance, and here I'll die!



*(The bowl suddenly moves and circles, several times round the fire, and rests in front of him—a good omen.)*

*(Mystic weird melody.)*

SITTING BULL

*(Chanting.)*

Ha ha, the bowl!  
The Great One's soul  
Is in the bowl!

It throbs with life, it sings, it moves.  
It circles round the fire. This proves  
That "holy ones" from heaven are sent.  
This day will be no accident!  
I prayed to know, and now I fear  
To know what destiny is here!  
Mysterious voices coming near me  
Speak hopefully to me and cheer me.  
Perhaps this coming war will turn  
As I have hoped. O let me learn,  
Thou Great Mysterious One, if this  
Grim battle-day will bring us bliss!  
If my three thousand men are true,  
Like Custer's soldiers dressed in blue,  
We're safe today. But timid lack  
Of confidence may hurl us back.  
An omen, "something holy," given,  
Would make faint valor leap to heaven  
There's nothing quite impossible  
In heaven. Show us a miracle!

*(Muffled, laughing music.)*

Whitemen with occult vision dead  
From whiskey lead *them* on, instead  
Of captains. This is my chief hope.  
Whiskey makes good spirits mope  
Away disgustedly, destroys  
The occult powers of men, makes toys  
Of giants, courts disaster, fills  
The soul with arrogance, and kills  
Compassion. Half men's woes are due  
To this ill drink which devils brew.  
From this good bowl, O let me learn  
How this terrific day will turn!



SITTING BULL-CUSTER



*(Feeling the trance coming over him, he covers his face with his hand-palms and bends forward like a section of a circle. The profile view of the figure covered with the yellowish white blanket is weird and awe-inspiring. His soul has ceased to be conscious of things present, and is traveling away in search of the armies. The spies converse among themselves.)*

*(Undulating minor monotone.)*

OLD-WOMAN DIVINER.

You saw the bowl go round the fire.  
Do you believe?

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE

But he's a liar!  
His dream will tell what's coming true!  
But this one man alone will view  
The thing. On him it all depends.  
He'll twist the thing to suit his ends.

OLD-WOMAN DIVINER.

But we are listening here. Don't miss  
The spirit voices.

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE.

Artifice!  
He's cute! Perhaps he knows we're here.

OLD-MAN

An envious man is full of fear.

OLD-WOMAN-DIVINER.

I'm glad he speaks out loud while dreaming,  
So you can hear the vision's meaning.

OLD-WOMAN.

A disappointed man will always scold.  
What makes you always try to mar  
The fame of one who never told  
A lie? He's true as dewdrops are!

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE.

*(Full of wrath.)*

We fought the Crows. When all was o'er  
Twice twenty men were dead, and more



Than these were wounded. Now they sing  
*His* praises. All the eagles wing  
*His* fame on high. But no one heeds  
 The unpretentious man who bleeds  
 His life away. *His holy lie*  
 Makes vision-loving people cry,  
 "The holy man, great Sitting Bull!  
 His medicine is wonderful!"  
 He never fights. He *prophesies!*  
 Then women laud him to the skies.  
 Our weapons kill the foe as well  
 Without the things his dreams foretell  
 Each morning. I'm disgusted. Let  
 The humbugged women have their pet!

FOOL-MINK

*(Dancing and singing.)*

It's pity how you groan and cry,  
 And bleed and die! You'll never die  
 From wounds received in battle. I  
 Have seen you skulk when foes were nigh.

*(Rain-in-the-Face leaps for Fool-mink, but  
 Gall seizes him.)*

GALL

*(To Rain-in-the-Face.)*

Just hear his words while spirits move  
 His speaking in this rhapsody.  
 And what we six shall hear, will prove  
 Him true, or show his infamy.

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE.

*(Yielding to Gall.)*

O yes, he'll fool us till we die,  
 While all the humbugged people cry,  
 "The holy man, great Sitting Bull!  
 His medicine is wonderful!"

*(Sitting Bull has become rigid as a statue, and  
 motionless as a sphinx. Amid pauses he speaks  
 in a far-away weird, ghostly voice, well known  
 to Indians. On seeing such things among In-  
 dians I have sometimes asked myself, What is the  
 use of the fire, the "holy medicine" and the "sac-*





red bowl?" Then I remember that all religion has its "media sacra," while the last analysis of all is psychic and spiritual.)

SITTING BULL

*(Light tom-tom tenor touches.)*

Great Yellowhair himself will come  
Before the west receives the sun.

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE.

*(Quickly.)*

And you'll believe so strange a word  
As that? Why, every child has heard  
How Custer kissed a bow and swore  
He'd fight with Indians nevermore!

SITTING BULL

He's coming on a mighty steed.  
The steed, like Custer, does not heed  
How many Indians. O how brave  
He is! ha, ha, what makes him shave  
His moustache! I would hardly know  
The man! And yet his two eyes glow  
With splendid valor! O how brave!  
He'd plunge into an open grave  
To meet a foe! His bravery  
Has pleasing, doubtful destiny.

FOOL-MINK

White-women make their husbands shave,  
I've heard, or wear a beastly beard. It's just  
As any morning's notion may behave—  
Today's delight, tomorrow's quick disgust.

SITTING BULL

His men are heroes! They'll not care  
For death! They're men to do and dare!  
Each soldier with his glittering gun  
A star! Great Custer is the sun!

FOOL-MINK

*(Dancing and singing by Sitting Bull.)*

We'll fly away from here like geese.  
With every word my fears increase.  
Must I stay here and sing and sneeze?  
No, I'll be going, if you please.



SITTING BULL

His curious thoughts that make him bold  
Are many colored, many souled.

OLD-MAN.

Divisions in his camp, we'll win!  
Defeat is sure when discords grin.

SITTING BULL.

*(Silvery triumphant major.)*

Great Custer speaks. I hear him say,  
"Brave action crushes calumny.  
No lies can crush a glittering fact,  
If man, ignoring self, will act.  
I'm not a man without a flaw,  
What man has not his foibles? Pshaw!  
Court martial me! For what? To blight  
My name! I swear, by yonder light  
Of morning, I've no serious wrong!  
The truth will flame abroad ere long.  
Their teeth shall bite the dust today,  
A soldier's grave can sing a lay  
Of praise, while foibles dare not peep,  
And those who twisted foibles sleep  
Forgotten. They suppose I shrink  
From death as they do. As they think  
They judge me. Open your sweet jaws,  
Brave Death, and swallowing petty flaws,  
Make Custer's rightful honor bright  
And clean as youthful morning light!

*(Silvery weird tremulo music.)*

To die! To die gives them the shame,  
And me, I ask no word of fame,  
Save this,—that ere I slept in dust  
My scanty life was true and just."  
He pauses, waves his lifted hand.  
He's beckoning toward the spirit land.

ECHONKA

*(Music halts.)*

Great soul! He'll be victorious.  
His men will trample over us!







FOOL-MINK

*(Dancing and singing by Sitting Bull.)*

*(Light tripping music.)*

If I could only dive and hide,  
Like jolly minks and Mandans, I'd  
Go fishing for a little while,  
Till this grim day would frown or smile.  
Come, Rainy Face, come on, let's go;  
We'll hide and live a day or so,  
While braver men leap to and fro,  
And "ghost-bells" ring and bugles blow.  
What "holy ones" are saying peeves  
Your heart. We'll hide among the leaves;  
We'll say we didn't, we'll say we *did*,  
And that was why we ran and *hid*.

*(Rain-in-the-Face leaps for Fool-mink, and he skips away.)*

SITTING BULL.

*(Far-away martial percussion.)*

In every move his men are brave  
As old-time heroes were, How brave!  
If I had men like them to fight  
For me, I'd win what's mine by right!

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE.

*(Snappishly.)*

*(One clang, then music stops.)*

How trickingly his thought advances!  
His artifice creates his trances.  
There's something more in all these speeches,  
Than simple occult vision reaches.

OLD-WOMAN-DIVINER.

*(Soothingly.)*

It's not his voice. The truthful voice  
Of spirits makes true men rejoice.

SITTING BULL.

*(Wild ebbing music.)*

Great Yellowhair and all are dead,  
Ere half one battle-hour is sped.



OLD-WOMAN-DIVINER.

A miracle!

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE.

(*Angrily.*)

(*Occasional musical discords.*)

For Sitting Bull!

And I am grieved. My heart is full  
Of bitterness. God helps this man,  
While others live as best they can.  
Is he more noble than the rest  
Of us? Why is he always blessed?  
He mopes along and finds big game,  
While better hunters, full of shame,  
Come home with nothing; cry all night  
To "something holy"; morning light  
Gives hope, noon brings a hare in sight.  
It's hares for us, big game for him.  
There's "something holy" in this grim  
Sad world, which gives him constant light.  
Can such partiality be right?

FOOL-MINK

(*Singing.*)

(*"Give-away dance music."*)

His nature makes him always free  
To help a begging fool like me.

OLD-MAN.

(*A trembling voice.*)

He gives away the game he hunts  
To those who thank him with cold grunts  
Of envy. Any man wins fame  
Who gives away his biggest game.

OLD-WOMAN.

He gives away his venison.  
And that is why his medicine  
Is good. The best his hand can pluck  
He gives away for future luck  
In hunting. Human charity  
Gives him the power of prophesy.





SITTING BULL.

*(Seraphic lilting music.)*

A creature bright and beautiful  
Is telling me, "And Sitting Bull  
Through this event shall have renown  
Forever." I will no more frown  
At grim disaster. Let it come  
Today. Tomorrow has the sum  
Of life. Truth lives. Base falsehood dies.

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE

*(Sharply.)*

*(Painful, jarring music.)*

His prophesy has truth—and lies.  
There's lurking human pride within it.  
He thirsts for fame—and so must win it.  
A fire in his own nature gleaming,  
Awakens half his holy dreaming.

OLD-WOMAN DIVINER.

Events will show it otherwise.

ECHONKA

*(Leaping to his feet.)*

A herald, hark! A herald cries!

*(A herald coming from up-river shouts sonorously. This awakens Sitting Bull from his trance, and as he meets the herald the spies come also, as if by accident.)*

HERALD

*(Sonorously. He enters R.)*

*(Bass monotone music.)*

They're coming, coming. Yes a mass  
Of soldiers coming to harass  
Our town. They're like the leave. A boat!  
Like hungry wolves they come! They'll gloat  
In eating up the people. I  
Have seen them all. I've played the spy  
As you commanded me, and quick  
Return to camp with news. The pick  
Of that great army come in haste.  
There's not a day of time to waste.



SITTING BULL

How far away?

HERALD

Not many sleeps.

GALL

Does Custer lead them on?

HERALD

He leaps  
Along like rushing fire before  
A wind. Five hundred men and more  
Besides a *cannon*.

GALL

*(Startled.)*

*(Reverberating music.)*

Ah, that gun  
Means slaughter! With the noontide sun  
We'll flee! Such firearms gloat  
In carnage. I have taken note  
Of them.

HERALD

*(Sonorously.)*

*(Agitated music.)*

I hurried back as soon  
As possible. There was no moon  
By night. I made a circle through  
The hills and forests. Custer threw  
His line of scouts so wide away  
I had to use great care by day,  
And nights were dark. A bullet put  
My horse to sleep. I came on foot  
With all my might. I left the troops  
Behind five days ago. Their whoops  
Mean slaughter. We must flee, or die.

SITTING BULL

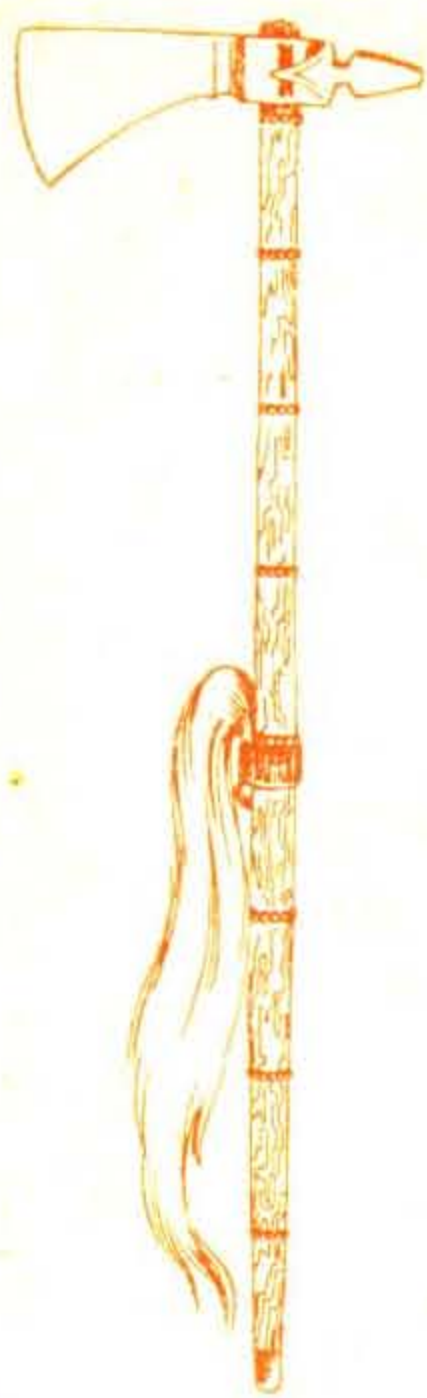
*(Taking his hand.)*

*(Soft trilling music.)*

I'm pleased with what you've done to spy.  
You're weary. Go to my own tent.



SITTING BULL-CUSTER



And rest. If soldiers come here spent  
And tired like you, their limbs will not  
Allow retreat. We have them caught.  
Give no alarm. Let warriors rest.  
A few of us will plan what's best.

*(The curtain falls, then rises showing a hastily called council at a little before noon. A few men are seated in a circle on the ground, while a few half-seen faces of men and women are looking on. The lighted "sacred pipe" is presented to the Heavens, the Earth, the North, the East, the South and the West, and then it is passed around the circle. Music before the curtain rises.)*







SCENE III  
THE SUDDEN BATTLE ENDS THE COUNCIL

AN OLD MAN.

*(Rising, leaning on a cane.)*

*(Plaintive music.)*

We'll rouse the sleeping warriors. They  
Should know that war may come today.

GALL.

*(Rising.)*

No danger. They will prow! about  
And spy. They simply come to scout.

SITTING BULL.

*(Rising.)*

Great Yellowhair is bold as fire,  
And burning with intense desire  
For vict'ry. Though his men are few,  
No man can tell what he may do.

AN OLD MAN.

*(Stooping and crippled.)*

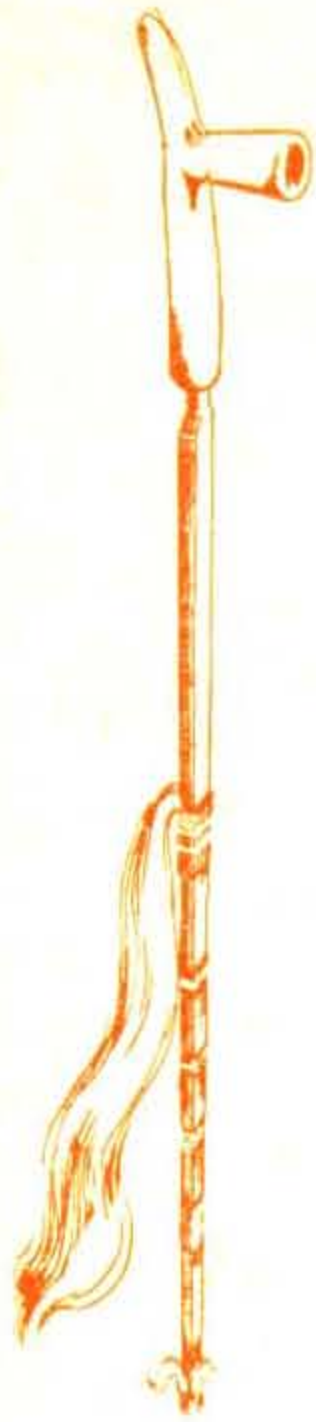
*(Pathetic weird music.)*

The faithful warriors danced all night  
For vict'ry o'er the Crows. With light  
Of dawn they sang and went to rest.  
Another battle soon will test  
Their strongest valor. Let them sleep,  
While maidens dance and widows weep.





SITTING BULL-CUSTER



With vict'ry won, some hearts must grieve  
For old familiar friends, who leave  
This realm of earthly life, and go  
Where spirit zephyrs softly blow.  
The living—they are few. The ghosts  
Of creatures dying are the hosts.  
The battle with the Crows was fierce  
And long, but untold grief will pierce  
Our hearts, if Custer comes today.  
Let warriors sleep, while sleep they may.  
It's merry dancing, silent sleeping,  
Wipes out the cruel pain of weeping.

RAIN-IN-THE-FACE

*(Full of self satisfaction.)*

*(Occasional mock-heroic musical strains.)*

I've told now I escaped when I  
Was jailed. I watched, I leaped. I lie?  
Not I! I'm true, I'm brave! I'll die  
If I have cause! I'm ready! I  
Will face Tom Custer! I—I will!  
I'll meet him, I've no fear! I'll spill  
His blood! I'll have his heart! I'll be  
Revenged on him—he handcuffed me.

*(Unexpectedly, and contrary to custom, a woman leaps to the center of the circle and speaks in a high-keyed soft hysterical tone. Even when she shrieks her voice has the Indian-woman soft tone.)*

WOMAN

*(Whose words ring truth.)*

*(High-keyed minor music.)*

There's sagebrush yonder, go and hide  
Yourselves like hares. The soldiers stride  
Like imps, and you're afraid to fight!  
The Great Mysterious One gives might  
To *brave men*, you are cowards! Give  
Your guns to women! Hide and live!  
Brave men will gladly die to save  
Their wives and babes. You are not brave!  
You talk and boast and brag—you speak  
Like old-time heroes, then you'll sneak



Away, and let your babies die!  
 You call yourselves brave men. You lie!  
 That fearful cannon—is it God?  
 That thing which scares you—is it shod  
 With wings as cyclones are? God rules  
 The cyclones. You're afraid of mules!  
 Brave men you are! If mules but blare  
 Your hearts are wretched with despair!  
 Your wives have vowed to kill these men,  
 Then they will never come again.  
 We've had a council, we've no fear;  
 For God, Wakantanka, is here!  
 "The holy man great Sitting Bull"  
 Has promised us a miracle.  
 Leave us the guns! You go! We'll fight!  
 The "holy ones" will give us might!

*(Note—This paragraph records the actual words of the women on this occasion—and they said much more. My information in this matter, as on all set down in this play, is first-hand. It was the valor of the women, no less than the prophesy of Sitting Bull, which nerved the men to fight, before they knew there was no cannon coming.)*

GALL

*(He alone could truly command.)*

Be-gone and hold your tongue, or I  
 Will beat you, woman! Men will die  
 And win this battle for you. Go!  
 You bother us. We'll meet the foe!

*(She and the other women depart, shrieking hysterically.)*

GALL

*(Continuing his speech.)*

We'll make a treaty if we can.  
 If not, we'll fight till every man  
 Of us is dead. We, in our need,  
 Are trusting God. They do not heed  
 The "holy ones" in earth or sky.  
 We cannot trust their oath. They lie.

*(All rise to greet a herald coming.)*



SITTING BULL-CUSTER



COUNCIL

*(Speaking in unison.)*

Ho!

HERALD.

*(Sonorously.)*

*(Weird, agonizing music.)*

Custer had a cannon when  
He left the Powder river. Then  
Desiring haste, he left it. Soon  
He'll be here. *Look for him by noon!*

GALL

*(All are standing.)*

They will not fight. They're simply spies!

AN OLD MAN

*(Leaning on a cane.)*

The vision told us otherwise.

*(A bugle is heard in the distance, a herald comes.)*

HERALD

*(Excitedly.)*

They come! They fight! They cross the stream!  
Their cruel, bellowing weapons gleam  
Like demons in the noontide sun!

GALL

*(Listening.)*

They fire! The battle's now begun!  
Hunkake! Call the warriors! Fight!  
The "holy ones" will give us might!  
Echonka, guard this place. I'll go  
O'er yonder where the bugles blow.

*(The curtain falls, and while the sound of battle is heard in the distance and the "holy ones" give diapason quick music—not singing, but music—in a minor key, and the Whiteman's bugle is heard, Fool-mink comes before the curtain, dancing and singing hysterically.)*



FOOL-MINK

*(Dancing and singing.)*

Alas for babes. Alas for wives  
Today! They're shrieking for their lives.  
The tepees flutter, flap-flap-flap.  
They shriek, "The soldiers, tap-tap-tap!"  
If Indians conquer I will say.  
My dreams and visions won the day.  
If soldiers come, they'll laugh to see  
A "happy hooligan" like me.  
I'm glad I'm not a warrior, yes,  
I'm glad I'm still a bachelor.  
For Oh! 'twould give Fool-mink distress  
To kiss his darling wife and leave her!

*(Hearing a bugle near, he runs from the stage, left. A woman with a baby in her hands, having lost her blanket, runs across the stage from right to left, pauses to look at her baby's face and sings.)*

WOMAN

*(Singing.)*

Sweet baby darling, I will kiss you;  
When soldiers kill you, I shall miss you.  
A bullet passing through the cradle,  
Just grazed my baby darling's temple.

*(With singing and rhythmic handswaying she lulls the baby into deep sleep.)*

*The Lullaby (Sioux Indian).*

Sleep, baby, sleep and dream,  
Sleep, sleep, dream, dream.  
Sleep till the prairie rose  
Is pink, and morning glows.  
Dream till the creatures of the night  
Are gone, and morn is bright.  
Sleep, sleep, dream, dream,  
Baby darling, sleep and dream.

*(With a distressed face she gazes right. A bugle blows.)*





WOMAN

*(Sonorously.)*

They're coming, Oh! They're coming, coming!  
I hear the wicked bugle blowing!  
Where shall I hide you, baby darling?

*(She puts the baby under her skirt, and crouches facing right, with the look of a wild animal ready to die defending its offspring. Echonka coming from the left planks himself before her on his right knee, and cocks his gun, looking right. A couple of soldiers appear on the right. All fire. Echonka's gun fails to discharge, and a bullet lays him low. The soldiers disappear. The woman grabs her baby and rushes left. Winona, Echonka's lover, running from the left, looks at him with a distressed face, lifts her hands toward Heaven and shrieks, then she drags him a little way to the shade of a tree by the river, on the stage left front. She kneels by his side. The battle, and the music of the "holy ones" continues.)*

WINONA

*(With eyes intent on him.)*

Echonka! Oh, he's dead! Awake!  
Look up and speak! My heart will break!  
He bleeds! The bullet pierced his head!  
His fingers drop his gun. He's dead!

*(While she fondles the limp hand that still held the gun, when she was dragging him to the shade of the tree, someone from behind touches her. Looking, she beholds Rain-in-the-Face. Leaping to her feet she shrieks at him.)*

WINONA

*(To Rain-in-the-Face.)*

Coward! Go and fight and die!  
You told us you were brave. You lie!

*(Before her detesting eyes he slinks away, still looking back with a sickening grin. By a sudden impulse she grabs Echonka's gun and shoots at him as he flees for his life. Then turning to her lover, she beholds his spirit standing over his body, but not yet free from his body.)*



## WINONA

*(To Echonka's spirit.)*

It's you, Echonka,—every feature  
 Your own. Stay with me, blessed creature!  
 Don't let the ghosts take you away.  
 Stay here! Winona loves you; stay!  
 You have to go, you say? And I—  
 Stay with me! Oh, you shall not die!  
 No balms can heal you?

*(She grasps him with her arms.)*

These two arms  
 Of mine shall be the healing balms!  
 I'll hold you here! Let go your clutch!  
 I'll hold him! Back, you shall not touch  
 Echonka! Ghosts of dead men, go!  
 I'm fainting, Help me, help me! Oh!

*(Swooning, she falls by her lover. Soft weird music is heard. After a moment Old-woman-diviner comes along, hobbling with a limb of a tree for a cane. As she comes she is singing in a weird tone of voice, Hay-hay-hay-hay-hay-hay-hay-hay, the ghosts will help them fight today. Suddenly she observes Echonka and Winona, and she sings),*

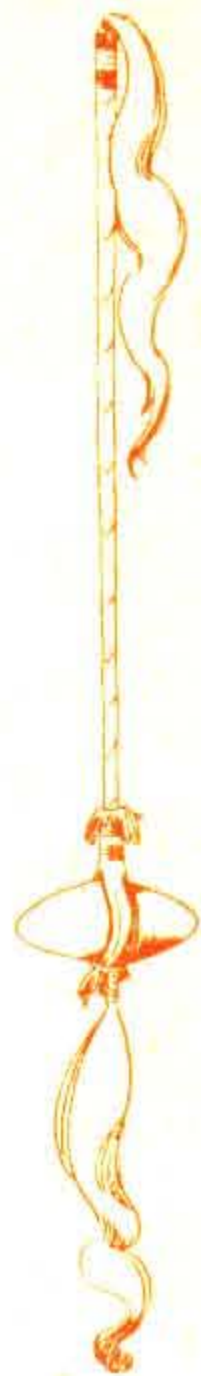
Ha ha, the ghosts will have their pay,  
 For helping mortals fight today.  
 Two lovers sleeping side by side.  
 The ghosts will have the pretty bride.

*(She goes near and looks at them for a moment. Then stooping with difficulty she touches Winona's forehead, and she rises to her knees as from a dream, and cries. Old-woman-diviner pats her affectionately, then rubs a salve on Echonka's wound, speaking.)*

## OLD-WOMAN-DIVINER

*(In a weird tone.)*

He'll live. His life was almost gone  
 Away from you, to that bright dawn  
 Of spirit light, where warriors rest,  
 And sing by campfires in the west.





SITTING BULL-CUSTER



Your love has held him in this dim  
Half-lighted world—you'll marry him.

*(Winona cries.)*

His almost ghosted soul will drink  
The dawn and live, when the rose grows pink  
Tomorrow morning. Let him sleep.  
If you wake your lover, he will weep.

*(Old-woman-diviner arises and goes a few  
steps, then turns back and pats Winona's cheek.  
Then as she departs, Winona bends over Echon-  
ka, crying bitterly, and is unconscious of what  
happens. Two "old veterans" cross the stage  
from left to right.)*

FIRST VETERAN

Which way, Old Com?

SECOND VETERAN

We two

Are left!

FIRST VETERAN

And we're true blue!

SECOND VETERAN

D'you hear that bugle call?

FIRST VETERAN

The flag! It shall not fall!

*(They rush to the right toward the faint bugle  
call, and in a moment two mere youths enter  
from the right. These are the two boys who  
were slain up in a ravine when the battle was  
really over.)*

FIRST YOUTH

All dead! We two alive!

SECOND YOUTH

We two will charge again!

FIRST YOUTH

We two cannot revive  
The dead. Why kill more men?



SECOND YOUTH

My mother! Pray for me!

SECOND YOUTH

*(Crossing himself.)*

St. Mary, pray for me!

*(Old-woman-diviner comes onto the stage from the left, and after looking at Winona and Echonka, she observes the youths. Too gallant to fight her they let her club them from the stage, and as they leave Indians cross the stage pursuing them.)*

TWO INDIAN YOUTHS

*(Shouting together.)*

"The holy man great Sitting Bull!  
His medicine is wonderful!"  
His word is true, they are all dead,  
'Ere half one battle-hour has sped.

FOOL-MINK

*(Dancing and singing.)*

The soldiers dressed in blue are going  
Where campfires in the west are glowing.  
You'll find them tenting full of glee,  
All "happy hooligans" like me.  
You'll hear their spirit bugles blowing  
By western rivers softly flowing.  
You'll find them tenting full of glee,  
All "happy hooligans" like me.

WINONA

*(Beckoning with childlike simplicity.)*

Don't sing any more today, Fool-mink.  
Don't sing till the prairie rose grows pink  
Tomorrow. Let my lover sleep.  
If you wake my lover, he will weep.

*(Note.—This description of Winona with the spirit of Echonka is true to old Indian experience. I have witnessed similar scenes. No Whiteman can realize the moods into which Indians were plunged by this battle. It was the one*



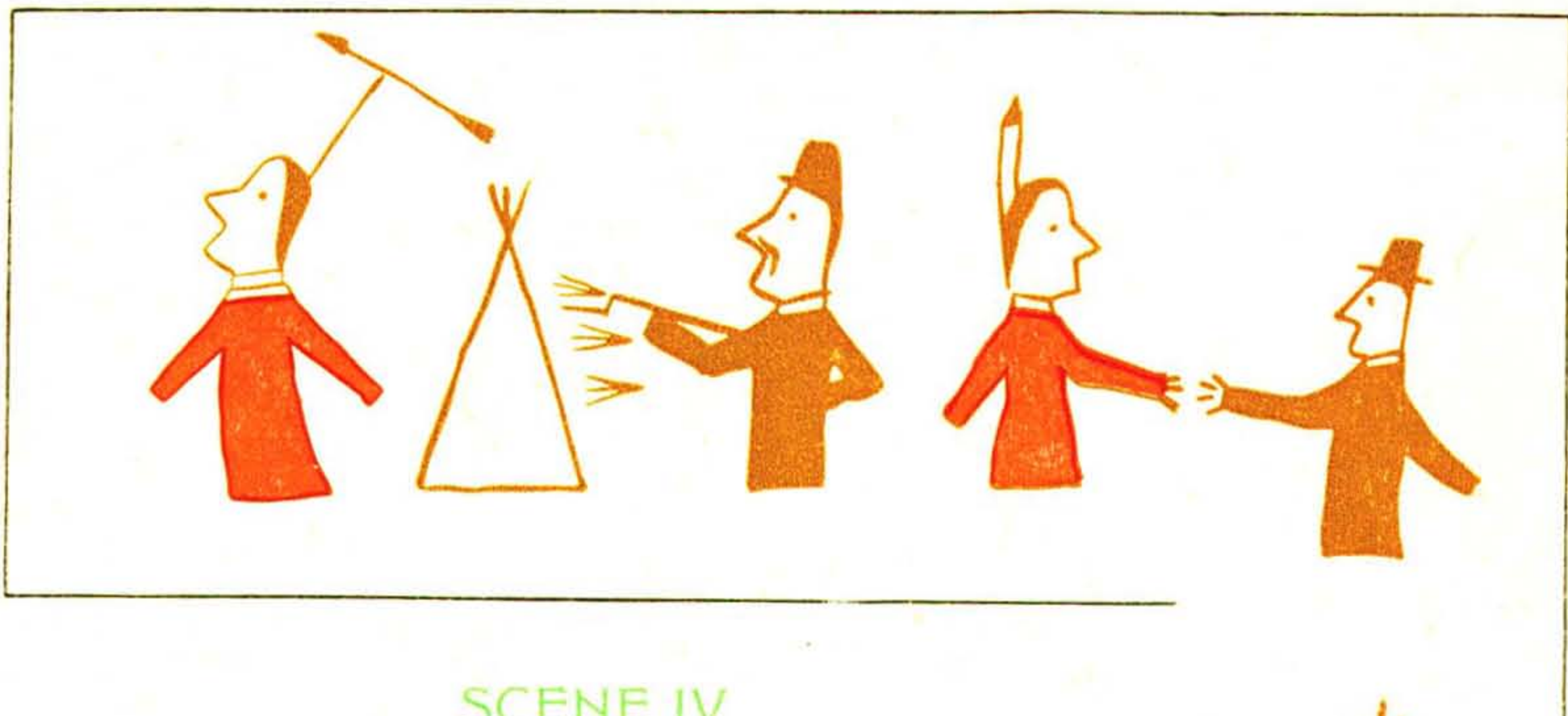
SITTING BULL-CUSTER



*real tragedy in their national life. While the stage is made ready for showing Sitting Bull in his soliloquy over the body of Custer, appropriate music should be given, "Faded Coat of Blue," "Tenting on the Old Camp Ground," "Custer's Last Charge," "Garryowen," or any appropriate music.)*







SCENE IV  
SITTING BULL AND CUSTER FACE TO FACE

*(The curtain rises just before Sitting Bull, searching among the dead, has found Custer's body. It is after sunset. The sound of battle over by Reno's camp, and of wailing for the dead in the Indian village can just be heard.)*

SITTING BULL

*(By Custer's body.)*

*(Triumphant music.)*

Great Yellowhair, the man I feared!  
When old-men asked for peace, he jeered  
Our claim to valor, would not touch  
The peace-pipe. Dead fingers clutch  
His weapon now! Awake, proud man,  
Arise and conquer, if you can!  
Blow your bugle, call your men,  
And fight this battle o'er again!  
I have no fear, my men are brave  
Enough to hurl you back, and save  
This small domain of Indian land  
From all the heroes you command!

*(Custer's spirit becomes visible, and Sitting Bull startles.)*

SITTING BULL

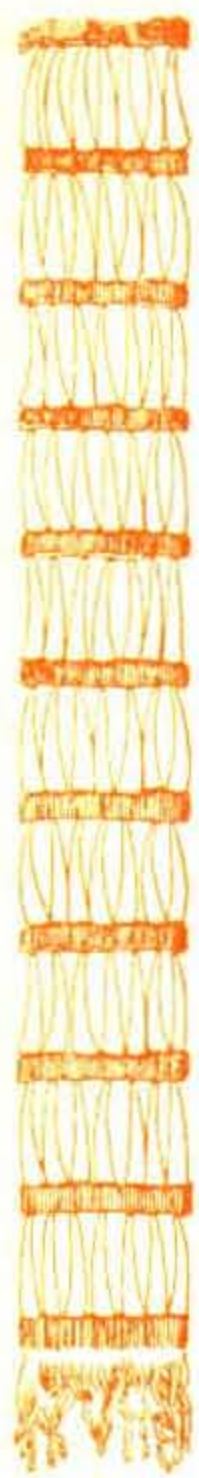
*(With a trembling voice.)*

*(Mellow minor-keyed music.)*

Mysterious creature, who are you?  
A valiant soldier dressed in blue







Is guarding where great Custer fell.  
 His ghost! What message will he tell?  
 I see his mingled frown and smile,  
 The same he had in life. No vile,  
 Deceiving countenance is his.  
 A wicked frown for enemies,  
 A smile for what his heart approves,  
 While gallantry his nature moves.  
 And when his countenance is grim  
 Or pleasing, nature honors him.  
 He speaks! A kiss is on your brow?  
 The bliss your nature will allow?  
 You linger here a little while,  
 With interchanging frown and smile?  
 My speech unjust? I fail? Yes!  
 Defeat secures your happiness?  
 I see! And tell me—Yes! Belie  
 Us both? By tricking I shall die,  
 When fifteen years have passed? And be  
 Despised awhile, then men will see?  
 Kind spirits snatched you from the jaws  
 Of cruel enemies? Your cause  
 Was just, but enemies too strong?  
 They made the right appear the wrong?

*(Custer's ghost disappears.)*

*(Simple, gleeful music.)*

Great soldier, I adore your name!  
 I see that yours was not the blame  
 For robbing Indians. You were not  
 Hurl'd on by selfishness. You fought  
 Because you was a soldier, died  
 A soldier. Baser creatures lied.  
 Your spirit leaped beyond the mark  
 In valor, plunged into the dark  
 Gray mists of death before the time.  
 And yet your noble soul will shine  
 Forever, clear as morning-dawn,  
 To beckon youthful heroes on.  
 My warriors now o'er-leap the mark  
 Of destined human valor—Hark!  
 The echoes tell their deeds. They fight  
 With Reno. This ill-deed will blight



The vict'ry won, and dim their fame.  
The vision told them to refrain.  
This morn they prayed to "holy ones."  
This eve they trust unhallowed guns.  
Heroic deeds alone will fail  
At noontide. Evening tells the tale.  
Great valor is a cunning spark,  
Enticing men beyond the mark.  
The daring deeds by which men win  
Renown, are harbingers of sin.  
Poor man! His destiny has been  
The mark o'er-leaped, the black chagrin.  
In all the labyrinth of fate,  
Humility alone is great.  
Your chagrin has turned to praise.  
I must meet *malicious* days;  
*For enemies, are cruel creatures.*

*(With a silk handkerchief given him by Custer, as Indians say, he covers the dead soldiers face. The music of the "holy ones" becomes sublime pathos.)*

This handkerchief will guard your features  
Against the desert's black'ning heat.  
Farewell, great Custer, till we meet!

*(Sitting Bull lifts his face and his hands in prayer. He is silent. The curtain falls.)*





### SOURCES

1. All writings of Whitemen are dismissed. The Indian view is given.

2. My own knowledge of the Dakotas (Sioux) and their language.

3. Mnemographic Indian histories. I have one dating from 1798. I have seen several others, some of them older than the one I have.

4. First-hand testimony of the Dakotas (Sioux).

5. First-hand testimony of the Indians, enemies of the Dakotas.

6. First-hand testimony of Canadian Indians who knew Sitting Bull and his self-exiled followers in their "black chagrin."

7. First-hand testimony of various Indians who knew Custer, and saw his "interchanging frown and smile," as they call his appearance. Custer knew Indian sign language, was fond of Indians, as they were also of him. Indians throughout the Northwest revere the name of Custer; and dismissing the wrangling writings of Whitemen completely I give their view of Custer. Indians keenly saw his flaws, and cared nothing for them in the face of what they considered his true manliness. In the Sitting Bull soliloquy I refer to Custer twice as a "soldier," because the English idiom and feeling demands that word. Sitting Bull did not refer to him as a "soldier." He referred to him as a "man," which is the loftiest term of approbation, while "not-man" is the meanest term to apply to a human being. And what shall I say of that "mystic woods" where Indians see the ghosts of Sitting Bull and Custer tenting by one campfire at evening, and merrily chatting about the "old-times?" The tragedy of the Dakotas has its merriment.

8. The tragedy as acted by the Dakotas (Sioux) themselves, on the prairie desert with nature's luminaries for lights and the "mellow story" of "holy ones" for music. Be it known that by old Indian feeling the tom-tom is nothing else than the incarnate "mellow story" of "holy ones." The tragedy as acted had slightly varying forms, with one backbone, which is the backbone of this written drama. This acting of the tragedy was soon prohibited, lest it might lead



to renewed hostilities. And so Whitemen lost the best evidence of what was really done on that memorable day,—and much more. Indians are good actors, superb in pantomime.

9. In a few cases I have been influenced by the frank statements of sturdy "old-timers." So far as such men have seen and heard, or even received information from Indians when talking freely, I would put them against any of the writers.

10. I have thought it worth while to carefully note Dakota (Sioux) children talking about this national tragedy of theirs, and acting certain parts of it. I have laughed and cried to see little girls with faces full of holy mother-instinct, in terror, rushing to hide their babies (dolls) "so the soldiers won't find them and kill them," while others crouched to fight, and still others called wildly, "O where shall I hide my baby darling!"

11. I have paid attention to the conversations of old people freely talking among themselves about this terrific day.

12. Now laugh, if you have the Dakota sense of merriment! I have thought it worth while to listen to the statements of ghosts explaining puzzling points in the tragedy. To such Indian experiences one need not attribute more than a mental clarification, and one may attribute more *privately* while remaining fully Catholic.

An odd story told by Indians relates to Mrs. Custer.

A black dog, Custer's pet, they say, went home from the tragedy to Fort Lincoln across country the nearest way. Though weary and hungry the dog would not stop for the food offered him by Indians tenting near the fort. And when Mrs. Custer saw the dog coming through the front gate she knew that her husband was dead, and she fainted. Custer's spirit, they say, told the dog to leave his body and go home to his wife with the news. "Can a dog see a dead man's spirit?" I asked. The answer was "Yes." I incline to credit this improbable legend, though it may have received additions. And if this legend is true, then three animals connected with this tragedy have a romance.



## SITTING BULL-CUSTER



1. Comanche, the horse found trying to cool his fevered wounds in a waterstream. He has been called "The only living creature who escaped on the white-man's side to tell the story." His wounds were healed, and from that day on he was seen on parade without a rider.

2. The pet dog who went back to the Custer home at Fort Lincoln.

3. "The spotted horse who came home without a rider." This horse was ridden by Little Brave, one of Custer's faithful Arikara Indian soldiers. When the horse arrived at the home tent far away, Little Brave's widow knew that her husband had fallen. Throwing her arms around the horse's neck she cried, "Tell me, tell me where he fell, and I will go and die beside him."

Arikara Indians have a song composed in honor of this horse and his fallen rider, entitled, "The Spotted Horse Came Home Without a Rider." I have heard the thrilling minor strains of this pain-compelling Indian song.





## PERSONS

## 1. CUSTER.

Regardless of all else in his career, and caring nothing about the reasons for the courtmartial proceedings hanging over his head when he went to the tragedy of his earthly existence I give merely the Indian view of him. Indians know that the President (Tunkanshila) was angry at him for something. That does not influence their own measure of him. For generous true justice I would sooner be weighed in Indian scales than in the scales of a U. S. courtmartial.

## 2. TOM CUSTER.

Custer's young brother who died with him in the tragedy.

3. GALL (*Pizi*).

The Indian military genius who won the battle for the Dakotas. Once imprisoned by Miles, as Indians say, for no crime save that of being a "hostile," he used his solid sense to learn what he could of U. S. army warfare, expecting to use his knowledge in behalf of his own people, in case he was ever set free. Gall was not a prisoner with Miles. This is an "adventure" of Lame Deer, which is attributed to Gall. But Gall did spy around forts, propose a plan for trying to steal cannons to be used by Indians in their own defence and he once went to Fort ——— with a vow to kill, either the commanding officer or three soldiers as "his share of revenge for the Whitemen's cruelty to Indians." Unable to accomplish his vow at the time, he more than accomplished it on the day of the tragedy, as Indians say. Indians so feared the cannon that if Custer had taken along this one gun which he left near the mouth of the Rosebud River, this day's tragedy would not have occurred. "Wakan-tanka made them leave the cannon, because he wished to give the Dakotas the victory," Indians say.

For an account of him see "My Friend the Indian," by McLaughlin.

## 4. ECHONKA.

A youthful warrior (not a chief), as Indians say, badly wounded when a portion of Custer's cavalry







charged the lower ford, while some women were helping the defense, and others were hiding their babies, and still others were wildly doing the strange things about which Indians still laugh. Living to marry Winona, who snatched him from the battle-line when fallen, he died soon after their marriage from the effects of his wounds, and Winona died of grief in a few days.

##### 5. RAIN-IN-THE-FACE.

His mother placed him, tied to the cradle-board outside of the tepee for air, and while she forgot him it rained in his face. Hence his "baby-name." As he never did anything "worthy of renown," as Indians thought, he was not given a "noble name," and so he died with his "baby-name" merely.

He was a typical, wily, unscrupulous ugly Dakota (Sioux) Indian. Yet withall he was cunning, and not lacking in ability. Old Indians were not babies, or "Children grown up," as some will have it. They knew a few things, and they could reason as well as a Whiteman. The typical American's superb arrogance, together with his assumed eutopian "civilization," leads him to disparage other racial types. By posing as the slayer of Custer at the World's Fair, Rain-in-the-Face gained notoriety and money, and Bryant noticed him with a poem. The Indian who slew Custer lived for some years a semi-hermit in Montana, and died regretting that he killed "so worthy a man." Hand-cuffed by Tom Custer at Fort Yates Post because he boasted that he was the man who killed two certain men (Did he kill them?), he swore "I will cut out Tom Custer's heart and eat it!" To call on the name of something holy, or touch something holy, or kiss something holy, and then speak is to swear by the custom of the Dakotas. How it is that some people say there is no way of swearing in the Indian languages? As regards careless swearing the language of the Dakotas is limited. In the northwest I have noted and recorded one hundred and sixty-nine forms for careless "swearing" in English. By a cunning ability, truly admirable, Rain-in-the-Face managed to escape from prison, and being given asylum with Sitting Bull, he became a jealous ingrate. Though claiming to be a warrior, and often boasting of his unusual



bravery, he skulked while his people were fighting the tragedy of their existence. Did he cut out Tom Custer's heart after the battle was over? Many Indians say that he did. A Polish dramatist tells me it would add to my drama to so represent him. Stage artists can add this feature if they wish to. There is good authority for it. My own belief is that he did not do his unhallowed threat. No Indian I have met or heard of actually saw him with the heart. He boasted in the camp that he had cut out the heart and so arose the story, I incline to think. More than other Indians he feared the spirits of dead men, and I incline to think he did not go onto the battlefield—much less search there among the dead for Tom Custer. It is said that he died reverent. Requiescat in pace.

#### 6. SITTING BULL.

Something will be expected here. And this monogram must be the child of a human heart wedded with simple passion for Truth. Who will write a worthy book about Sitting Bull? It would be welcomed, and it would pay the author reasonably.

Defeated, though never fully crushed, what was left of Sitting Bull became harrowing and disagreeable to the conquerors of the Dakotas. He could smile if he wished, but he would not "take refuge in subordination," as oysters did when a dominant specie gained the right of way. Something hidden in him precluded him from exercising this self-evident worldly wisdom. He was a rebel to the last.

Assassinated in the night because he was trying to revive the old heathen faith of his fathers which the Whitemen always treated as a huge joke, the large degree of fame which he still retained suddenly dropped. Yet the world does not forget him, and Indians speak his name with a weird tone of voice, save when the Whitemen whom they distrust are present—and then they do not speak it at all. Will an Indian cut a tree in the "mystic woods" where his spirit sometimes comes? Not on your life! He will sooner go many miles for fire-wood. And there is a feeling among Whitemen that "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" has not been told. And I promise only to tell the truth to the best of my





ability so far forth as I tell anything. Good judges in Europe pronounce him a great man. President Grant esteemed him a great man.

There have been various stories regarding the disposition of his body. His body froze on the ground where it fell, because the devotees of the heathen religion he was reviving were driven far away by a cannon shrieking on the hill nearby. Then the men who were glad for his death put him in an immense drygoods box, and filling the box with combustible material and quicklime, they gave him unhallowed burial secretly, while the souls of the Christians who fell in the conflict were receiving the benefits of a mass. I doubt not that the Reverend Father Bernard, who celebrated this mass, prayed also privately, with tears for the soul of Sitting Bull. I know him. The public outburst of indignation would have precluded any public rites whatever for Sitting Bull, and there was a reason for wishing that what was left of him might fully disappear immediately. Quickly the housing tepee of his soul returned to nature's elements. The wooden slab marking his grave is often replaced because it is cut away for souvenirs.

Some men have called him a "coward," and worse names. I think his temperament was normally timid. I think he lacked physical courage—at times. Yet there are instances when his heroism leaped to the acme. On a certain battlefield he sprang to the side of a fallen "religious brother" (a member of his own intertribal secret fraternity), and defended him against the warriors to the complete hazard of his own life. This history is not from his friends. It is from his enemies who saw and admired his self-abandonment. I could cite other instances. It required a strong religious incentive to arouse Sitting Bull to action.

In his mysticism there was a certain careless philosophy which inclined him to lie down lazily, while nature's eternal rivers glide past him. He was almost, but not quite, a fatalist.

More than other Indians even, his life was consciously entwined with all the life which looks out around us through countless pleasing facial forms. And he did not distinguish between life itself and life in its facial forms. To an Indian the finite contains the



infinite, and all the creation is compulsory immortality. To sense nature's every mood and breath so feelingly, is not all joy. It has its cup of crucial sorrow. For nature has her moods, seasons, months and days, as well as her crying tempests and her mellow morns. To realize how the Indian temperament is linked with each frown and smile in nature is to me a constant passion of surprise. The Indian is not an angel—far from it! Nor is he a child. He has matured amid conditions and environment which hug his heart close to nature's nursing breast. He has his anti-nature traits, I think, but they are not so large and terrific as the same traits in the Whiteman.

Sitting Bull loved life. The flowers, the birds, the rivers, the zephyrs and the cyclones pleased him. Even nature's terror gave him a thrill of joy. But nature has certain muffled moods difficult of description to a Whiteman, which give the Dakota heart a pathos of sorrow, and makes discouragement compulsory and painful. The Holy Scripture warns us not to be righteous overmuch, lest it may lead to destruction, and I have felt, while with Indians, that one had better not nurse at holy nature's breast too constantly, lest the pain engendered may become unendurable. I have felt that there is a certain individual self-hood which is intended by the Creator, if we can in any way find out what that self-hood is.

Unlike some Indians, Sitting Bull spoke with dread of the last plunge into those "dark grey mists where spirits sometimes wail in constant grief for many years," as Indians characterize that place called in their own language "Wanagiyakonpi." Some Indians face death with admirable bravery, some even with temerity, but Sitting Bull faced it with painful timidity. My authority for this statement is good. The grieving premonition that he was destined to die "by the tricking of enemies" antedates the Custer battle by many years. And such a death, by Indian thought, entails ill-results in the future world. As the time approached when he feared his end drew near he chose a locality with an eye to repelling an attack. He would not leave home if a dream or an omen seemed unpropitious. Other Indians are inclined to act in a similar way. Are any Whitemen so inclined? He was one of



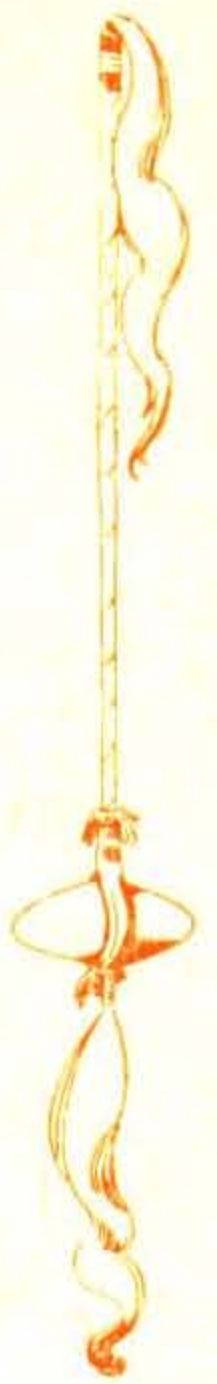


the most suspicious men in existence. Canadian Indians have told me humorous anecdotes of his intense suspicions while they were befriending him in his exile. He returned to the United States with misgivings, but he could not do otherwise than return.

He was looking for further trouble with the Whiteman. His hopes of the Dakota nationality did not perish when everything human showed that their realization was impossible. Secretly he was watching for an opportunity to renew the hostilities. And he was aware that the frontier Whiteman, almost as keensighted as an Indian, knew his secret purposes. His belief that he was divinely commissioned to maintain the old Dakota nationality intact overshadowed everything else to the last. And personal ambition, not lacking in him, yielded only to his conception of the welfare of the Dakotas and his overwhelming sense of Deity. Do not think he was a fool or a child—he knew the inconceivable odds against him.

Sitting Bull was not a "warrior." He was a "medicine-man," an Indian prophet. The term "medicine-man" for an Indian prophet is unfortunate, and this term is partly responsible for the Indian religion being so completely treated as a joke. But this term is fixed, and it cannot be changed. Whitemen have dubbed that beautiful lake Miniwakan (Mysterious-water) with their unhallowed term "Devils Lake." By analogy they would have called Wakantanka (the Great Mysterious One) *big devil*. Thanks that irreverence halts somewhere! A "medicine-man" is not supposed to engage in the battles. He prays to "holy ones" while others fight. And to this day the Dakotas dislike seeing a priest or a minister with a moustache, because "it makes him look like a soldier" as they say. So no Indian will charge Sitting Bull with cowardice for not engaging in the Custer battle. This charge comes from Whitemen, who, failing to realize the old reverence for oracles, regard Sitting Bull's performances as tricks. Something of this irreverence had crept into Sitting Bull's camp even. Some Whitemen treat all priestly functions lightly and regard the mass, even, as clever legerdemain. And they forget that some people still have reverence for oracles. Irreverence cannot appreciate reverence.



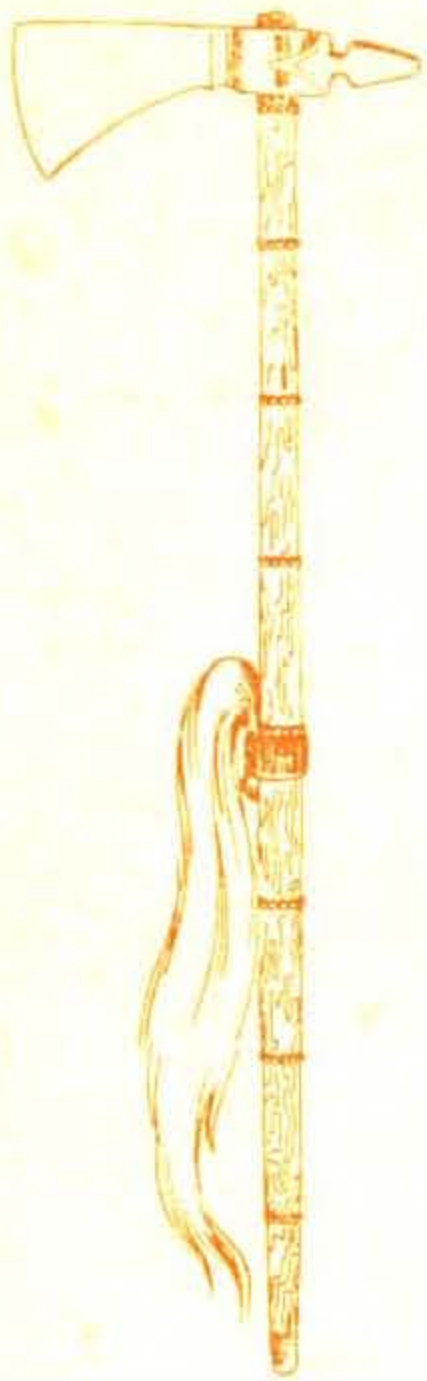


If a man is familiar with the primitive ethnic religions, or if he has read St. Paul, he will realize that the heathen sometimes do by nature those things which are commanded in the Biblical law. A Catholic realizes that religion antedates all written law, and that even miracles of power and of glory are possible among the heathen, while the miracle of grace only is exclusive to Calvary, which is not restricted to the geographical Calvary or even to this pleasing world of facial life, in its extended influence. Personally and privately, I would not say that grace, is entirely restricted to the Christian dispensation. This is my pious opinion—not a theological dogma. Space forbids more.

Sitting Bull, I think, did possess unusual powers in the heathen oracular devination. My sense of truth requires this statement. I study his well attested words and acts in the light of what I myself have seen among Indians. At times his soul seemed to leave his body in part, while his body became somewhat rigid, and travel far away to regions where he beheld the movements of men and heard their thoughts as if they were speaking them in words. Difference of language seems to have been no impediment. Besides such an experience as this, there are many other things, including the foretelling of future events, which I can account for only on the ground that miracles of power and miracles of glory are allowed to occur among the heathen as well as among Christians. And I am inclined to think that such miracles occur more frequently among the heathen. In their lack of the one ever perpetuated miracle of grace, they have more painful need for other miracles. The power of Deity is not restricted.

It is remarkable that when Sitting Bull was describing Custer's movements and appearance at dawn June 25, 1876, Custer was actually approaching the battlefield, having marched all night. I am assured of this fact by Indian scouts who were with Custer, and of many things more. On this particular morning Sitting Bull's oracle was reluctant to respond, and he fell into discouragement, while his enemies were not displeased. He had personal enemies in the camp. He was by no means the absolute ruler which some careless students have thought him to have been. The oracle finally





responded, and besides describing the movements of Custer and certain of his supposed utterances, it closed with the statement "Yellowhair will come today. He will fight. He and all fighting with him will be slain." In describing these things the drama uses literary liberty.

Having said thus much regarding Sitting Bull's oracle, I will add more. I have to believe that Sitting Bull, being in a dilemma, persisted in the oracle of his fathers to the exclusion of Christianity, when his own soul told him better. He failed to touch that point of complete self-renunciation where a human-being's soul can become fully sincere. Forgive me, spirit of Sitting Bull, if I misunderstand you. And if any taint of human arrogance repelled you from the Christian altar while you were living, you are welcome now to share the Sacrifice offered in behalf of the living and the dead to our God and your God, through the Holy One of Calvary.

I have it on good authority that Sitting Bull not infrequently prayed to Jesus, and that he spoke of St. Mary as a human incarnation of that mystical "Mother" whom all the old-time Dakotas were taught to adore. The old faith of the Dakotas is fundamentally Catholic. And note *carefully* that among all American Indians it was esteemed blasphemy to oppose any form of religion. Indians travelled much, and so knew geography and history well (see Matthews' book on the Hidatsa), and they heartily shared whatever religious rites they met. This comity did not spring from any such idea as the Aryan-older-Semitic notion of localized Deity. It was the natural sequence of the Indian thought of universal Deity. To the Indian everything from the summer or autumn leaf to the rock in the desert, is living, sentient and personal, while Deity is universal. That they do not state these things systematically or logically counts for nothing. The Indian knows as little of metaphysics as the Whiteman does of the Indian mysticism. With a certain personal-mysticism the Indian travels a territory quite similar to that which the Whiteman tries to travel with his metaphysics. Each of these languages seems foreign to the other. Young Indians educated in college lose the Indian



mysticism and do not grasp the Whiteman's metaphysics.

With this ancestral teaching plus his own real reverence for Jesus and for St. Mary, how could Sitting Bull positively oppose Christianity? He did certainly speak bitterly of it at times. I have several of his reported sayings, and a few of them are inserted in this drama (regretfully), because Truth in her immortal splendor, must be adored. \*

Sitting Bull felt that the Church was in some way leagued with the U. S. government in crushing the Dakota nationality. He felt that the preservation of his nation required the positive opposition of a form of religion which he really believed. He also felt that the requirement of the Church that he should utterly abandon the religion of his fathers in order to share the rites of the Church was arbitrary. And there was also in his nature a superb self-hood which made it difficult for him to yield his soul to the influence or touch of any law which he had not personally approved. Such a unique self-hood in a Whiteman has to become aggressive and even dictatorial, but in an Indian it simply says, "Please let me alone." Was there ever a democrat among Whitemen? I mean a man who is perfectly willing his neighbor may do exactly as he pleases, and will heartily esteem his neighbor's way just as good as his own, requiring only that he shall not touch him with a heavy hand? Sitting Bull came nearer to being a true democrat than any other man I know in history. While he had a certain amount of respect for the Protestant religion, he feared an occult power in the Catholic church, and his opposition to it gave him uneasy qualms. He had once received Catholic baptism, and the thought of that baptism never forsook him. A certain reverend Father thinks I am wrong in this statement, but I am not. I know my authority. A deathbed proved me right regarding another old Indian and if Sitting Bull had lived to die natural death, this statement of mine would have been justified by his own lips.

He was anxious to meet other Indian prophets, and he did not quarrel with them. He was their receptive pupil. He was as alert for special divine manifesta-





tions in all human nature as in "inanimate nature." Why not? To an Indian "inanimate nature" and animal nature and human nature are all of the same large genus. He liked children. Women were fond of him. He was moral by the Dakota standards. Indians make much of the idea of humility, but often fail in its exercise. Sitting Bull was a humble man, by the Dakota standards. His apparent lack of humility among Whitemen was due to his lasting determination never to become subordinate to them, and to his irritation at their assumed superiority over him and his people. He did a few things through ill-advice from White persons. If a priest could have approached him on terms of perfect personal and religious equality he would have been an apt pupil. But how could the Catholic religion in her historicity put herself on precisely the same level with any heathen religion? The Apostles would have turned in their graves! If a Protestant minister approached him with any such apparent equality, he knew the insincerity. Whatever of insincerity in his own nature, he easily saw it if in others. Like other human beings, he respected what he partly feared.

Whatever his Messianic idea borrowed from the Church, it was founded in the old Indian idea that the human-being-lord may become incarnate as a man.

His last effort, though completely religious in nature, must have led to an insurrection, even if his assassination had not precipitated this event. Who can rise to the point of always putting Truth first, and letting self and beloved nations perish? There is only one Christ. Expediency entombs us all. The Indian conception of universal Deity plus his conception of immanent sentient-personal life allows more than one incarnation of the human-being-lord. One Christ, located geographically and confined to one era is disharmonious with the old Indian thought. Sitting Bull's Messiah was to be a reappearance of the same Holy One who had already appeared as Jesus. His words, as reported by those who heard, show this clearly. No matter how somebody else west or south taught this Messiah idea, I am stating how Sitting Bull taught it.

This Messiah would rebuke the Whiteman for his assumed right to rule over other nations, and especially



for his lack of "Wa-chan-tki-yapi" (human-being-love), which is one of the highest soul-virtues, while bravery is the highest action-virtue. He did not teach that this Messiah would "crush the Whiteman and all his works," as was so constantly stated. This Holy One would crush (ka ju ju), wipe out (pa ju ju), destroy (hankeya), and wipe away (pahinta) the Whiteman's rule over other nations, and, among other deeds, would restore the Dakota nationality. Besides the evidence of his words as Indians heard them, we must remember that the destruction of any human being, or animal or plant, is impossible by Indian thought. The geographic cataclasm was to extend eastward merely to the "Old Missouri River." The misrepresentation regarding his teaching arose from carelessness, sensationalism, misinterpretation, desire of interpreters to please, willful wrong interpretation, the humor of the Whiteman, the nervousness of the times the constant desire of the Whiteman to make the Indian absurd in everything, the Whiteman's desire for an excuse for crushing a movement which must result in rebellion, and, to some extent, I think, from the exaggerated statements of his own followers.

Sitting Bull never originated any national policy. He maintained the traditional policy of the Dakotas, that is of the "western Sioux." This policy was and had been for several generations, the policy of complete isolation. They had an organized system for obtaining and disseminating news from abroad.

They took no interest in the British-American war, 1812. They took no interest in the Prairie du Chien council, 1813. They took no interest in "Pontiac's conspiracy," so called. Traditions and mnemographic records show that they knew of these things, but their fixed policy was that of complete isolation. They would let other people alone, and fight them out of their own territory at any cost. As they formerly claimed an immense territory they had a plenty to do in guarding their own borders. They did not consider the Yanktons as any part proper of the real "Sioux nation." They associated the Yanktons with the Hidatsa and the Crows, their enemies. They did finally tolerate the Yanktons, but never trusted them. So strange that writers assume that these Yanktons





were the principal part in some way of the Sioux! Who will write a fairly decent history of the Sioux?

As early as 1850 the Western Sioux (Sitting Bull's people), came to distrust the Eastern Sioux, because they did not adhere to the traditional policy of isolation, but "mingled with Whitemen and encouraged them westward," as they phrased it.

The Western Sioux as a people took no interest in the Civil War, not because they were so barbarous that they knew nothing, as some seem to think, but because they were following a fixed policy. They had nothing to do with the "Minnesota Massacre," as it is called. If any individuals participated, and I doubt if they did, still my statement is true as to the national policy. I have seen a mnemographic record showing how certain individuals were punished for advocating a departure from this old policy of the Dakotas.

A whole volume must be passed over at this point.

Sitting Bull arose as the sturdy advocate and defender of this old national policy when it seemed imperilled. And this sturdy old heathen clung to this policy of his forefathers till the bullet put him to sleep. If success instead of failure could have crowned his efforts, what a figure he would have been in history!

Another whole volume must be omitted here.

He, as well as his people, believed that the "stockmen" were using the U. S. government with its armies, together with the influence of the Church, indirectly, as a tool for robbing them of their treaty lands along the "old Missouri River," and crowding them back into the Badlands where they must perish. How far were they correct in their belief? Sitting Bull believed that a battle bravely fought and won would save the people from the impending catastrophe.

Don't think they were assembled on the Little Big Horn by chance! Reduced to subordination, and fearing hanging, what could they do but claim this? The battle-ground was well chosen, and the position was changed as the armies approached. They knew the moves of the U. S. armies. Custer was scouted long before he reached the scene of his tragic death. The battle was truly a surprise in the sense that Gall and the other chiefs did not expect it till a much larger



force had arrived. It required Sitting Bull's utmost effort to hold them to the approaching battle. I do not believe that Sitting Bull ever talked with any Whiteman regarding the battle. All honor to him for his silence! He did converse with some Indians regarding the battle both in America and in Canada, and the statements of those with whom he talked is the best possible evidence of what he thought. *He most sincerely believed that the victory was won by a miracle from God.* The Dakotas old and young, believe that generally to this day. If God had given such a victory once in a few minutes by a miracle, why might He not give another victory against any odds? This was what made Sitting Bull a dangerous man, dangerous to the Whiteman's interests, I mean.

After the battle Sitting Bull forbade any mutilation of the dead. Not a man with Custer was mutilated. He forbade the attack on Reno. For victors to have refrained—what a more than human spectacle! After Sunset he went to the body of Custer, while the braves were over by Reno's camp, and "talked with his ghost and prayed for a small half-hour." I have it on the statement of women who saw him there. White people will discredit the Indian belief that Sitting Bull went to Custer's body and was told by Custer's ghost that he would die by the tricking of his enemies in fifteen years. But it is not easy to say, a priori, what Sitting Bull would or would not do, and we must not make the common mistake of measuring an Indian's knowledge by his lack of the Whiteman's means of obtaining knowledge. It was said of humanity's most sacred One, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" Be this as it may, the utterances in the soliloquy over Custer's body are based on Sitting Bull's own words regarding the affair, as they were heard by Dakotas (Sioux) and by Canadian Indians.

I could cite valid reasons showing Custer's desire not to be recognized by the hostile Indians while on this expedition. Indian folklore says, "Custer gave Sitting Bull a gun and took from him a bow," and "Custer did not wish to go on this expedition against the Indians, but ———— made him do it." And folklore further asserts that Custer being mortally wounded by a shot from ———— "he killed him-





self with a gold handled pistol." He knew Indians. He did not fear torture as some suppose. Indians would have tried to heal his wounds, and would have made a sort of demigod of him. They did know him, and would gladly have taken him alive. They believed Custer was destined to become president of the United States, and that as president he would deal justly with them. They were sorry for his death. The Sitting Bull prophecy that he would die, and this immediate battle, with his death, filled Indians with terror. For a man of Custer's nature to allow himself to be taken alive while the other soldiers had fallen fighting, is inconceivable.

A great hunter, he gave away his game freely to the poor. I have talked with some of those who had his game. During the battle he was just behind the village in the hills praying to "holy ones." He was twelve miles away? Have it so, if you will! This old heathen's lips are sealed. He can't answer. Sitting Bull was a "teetotaler." The lines in re whiskey are his own words abridged. Indians believe generally that whiskey destroys occult vision.















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