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Article Summary: As a teacher on the Great Sioux Reservation in the 1880s, Eastman witnessed what she describes as "a wholly needless 'war.'"

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# The Ghost Dance War and Wounded Knee Massacre of 1890-91

ELAINE GOODALE EASTMAN

It was in September of the year 1885 that I first set eyes upon the "Great Sioux Reservation"—a forlorn, straggling concentration camp in the middle of the vast empty spaces of Dakota Territory. The last great war leader of the Dakotas, Sitting Bull, was at the moment touring the country under Buffalo Bill, but was soon to assume the new and distasteful role of an "agency Indian." Two or three years earlier the last "buffalo surround" had marked with equal sharpness the end of their independence as a nation. There remained a confused, depressed and humiliated dark folk, clad in a bizarre mixture of coarse jeans, gay calico and shoddy blankets, subsisting literally from hand to mouth upon a monthly or fortnightly dole of beef, pork, flour and coffee. These rations, for which the women were compelled to appear in person, in all weathers, were of poor quality and little relished by the Sioux palate. However, after they had learned to roast, grind and brew the "black medicine," its stimulant quickly became indispensable. Hangers-on at the agencies, the inevitable tin cup in hand, were popularly known as "coffee-coolers."

With a background of two years' service on the faculty of General Armstrong's pioneer Indian school at Hampton, Virginia, I made the rounds of the eight Sioux agencies, sun-steeped and wind-burned, by rail, stage, Missouri river steamboat and springless covered wagon. Country and people offered an unmistakable challenge. One year later, I was back with a commission from the Office of Indian Affairs to organize a community day school on the banks of the dust-veiled Missouri. With me came another Hampton teacher,

Miss Laura Tileston, duly accredited by Bishop Hare as "lady missionary."

It was an all but untouched field. Except by two returned Hampton students, no English was spoken in our log cabin and tepee village of perhaps three hundred persons. The equipment covered only bare necessities. The Indian service had been newly staffed with Southern Democrats, some of whom hardly troubled to differentiate between "Injuns" and "niggers." By far the brightest spot in the picture, sixty years ago, was the work of the several Christian denominations. Already a small group of able Dakotas had been raised to posts of dignity and influence, while thousands of converts groped dimly toward better things. Some had white fathers; some white frontiersmen had identified themselves, by marriage and chosen way of life, with the less exacting world of the native.

The period of the eighteen-eighties was marked by severe pressure for opening the thirty thousand square miles of Sioux land to settlement—a drive engineered by the railroads and promoted by speculators in town sites, with the assistance of the frontier press. Very little of it was adapted to general farming. A three-man commission, whose chairman, Capt. R. H. Pratt of Carlisle School, was a notable champion of the red man, was sent to negotiate the purchase of a considerable portion of these lands. This was during my third year at White River camp. Notwithstanding endorsement by the Indian Rights Association and influential church groups and the support of most mixed bloods and "returned students," the main body of the tribe, led by its elder chiefs, opposed the "Sioux bill" with bitter determination. Payment was offered at the rate of fifty cents an acre, available only after fees had actually been collected from white homesteaders. Finally, certain concessions were agreed to in Washington, and a similar bill, presented by a third commission in 1889, was reluctantly accepted by the necessary two-thirds majority.

The tardy victory left much soreness behind. It was

suddenly discovered, or alleged, that the westernmost bands, those at Pine Ridge and Rosebud, had been receiving more than the treaty called for. The ration was accordingly reduced by some two to three million pounds—and this in a year of widespread drouth and general crop failure. Instead of the promised gains, a sullen and disaffected folk found themselves hungrier than before.

In quest of a fuller understanding of the unreconstructed Indian mind, I planned to accompany a party of my wilder neighbors upon an old-time antelope hunt. We set out on a wet midsummer afternoon for the Nebraska sand-hills, a few of us on pony-back, others packed with their goods into white-topped wagons. Our second night's camp in the wilderness found five families sleeping soundly after a hard day's travel. In my diary this item appears: "*July 23, 1889.* So tired I fall asleep before supper. Later in the night a cry is raised: 'A traveler comes!' Chasing Crane, on his way home from Rosebud, is welcomed with supper and a smoke. He tells a strange story of the second appearing of Christ! God, he says, has appeared to the Crows! In the midst of a council he came from nowhere and announced himself as the Savior who came upon earth once and was killed by white men. He had been grieved by the crying of parents for their dead children, and would let the sky down upon the earth and destroy the disobedient. He was beautiful to look upon, and bore paint as a sign of power. Men and women listen to this curious tale with apparent credence. A vapor bath is arranged, and I fall asleep again to the monotonous rise and fall of the accompanying songs." No intuition warned me of the bitter grief this self-proclaimed Messiah was soon to bring upon the Sioux!

That fall I went East, and got in touch with leaders of the several groups interested in Indian welfare. There had been a change in the national administration, and President Harrison had just selected General Thomas J. Morgan, an experienced educator, as his commissioner of Indian Affairs. I was happy to learn that the new official had definite plans

looking toward the radical improvement of a hitherto disorderly and ineffective school system. By the first of April I was back in my chosen field as the first supervisor of education for the Sioux. The two Dakotas were now states and included within their borders some sixty widely scattered Indian schools, so far without ruling purpose or clear direction from Washington. Several were "contract schools" under church control.

The five ambassadors sent across the Rocky Mountains by Red Cloud to investigate strange rumors of a Messiah for the Red Man had returned and reported shortly before I reached Pine Ridge in June, 1890. The story they brought was the same as that we had heard from a lone traveler at our one-night camp eleven months before. Suddenly everyone seemed unable to talk of anything but the "new religion"! Some were merely curious; others vaguely apprehensive of they knew not what. Only the more unsophisticated were ready to accept the notion of a miraculous intervention in their favor, at a moment when all hope failed and heaven itself seemed to have turned against them.

For the Sioux country in that year was a veritable dust bowl, from the Missouri westward to the foot-hills and from the White river north to the Cannonball. I traversed every mile in my comfortable mountain wagon, with a Sioux couple of my choice as driver and chaperon. The pitiful little gardens curled up and died in the persistent hot winds. Even young men displayed gaunt limbs and lack-luster faces. Old folks lost their hold on life, and heart-broken mothers mourned the last of a series of dead babes.

"The Indian crops," wrote Bishop Hare, "were a total failure. The rations lasted, even when carefully used, for only two-thirds the time for which they were issued. The sick died from want. A marked discontent, amounting almost to despair, prevailed in many quarters." General Nelson A. Miles urged that the Congress fulfill its part of the agreement with the Sioux and promptly appropriate the necessary funds.

However, the Messiah legend had been from time to time current among many tribes, and did not in this instance originate with the suffering Dakotas. It was soon traced to one Wovoka, also known as Jack Wilson—a Paiute in Nevada, who had been long subject to fainting spells and religious delusions. There seems to have been nothing in the teachings of this harmless and kindly individual to incite to active resistance. Many groups were unaffected and only a small minority of the 25,000 Sioux gave full credence to the "new religion." Even these ignorant and unhappy souls preached no violence. "The fact is," wrote the Reverend Thomas L. Riggs, a missionary of the second generation whose whole life was spent among these people, "that not one in a hundred of our western Sioux had any thought of making war against the whites. It was in very truth a newspaper war."

Stanley Vestal, biographer of Sitting Bull, points out that he was among the last of the old leaders to take up the craze, and that with no little doubt and hesitation. His attitude might be summed up in the saying attributed to Little Wound: "If this is something good, we ought to have it; if not, it will fall to the ground of itself." His offer to accompany Agent McLaughlin of Standing Rock to Mason Valley, in Nevada, and abide by what they should find there certainly indicates an open mind. I sent my driver, Industrious by name, to invite his "uncle" to dinner in my tent on the golden October day of my visit to the Grand River day school, but the canny old man would say little beyond the conventional protestations of friendship for the "rich" (the white people), and a leaning toward the "White Robes" who were about to hold annual convocation a day's journey from his village. While representatives of Bishop Hare's seventeen hundred communicants were meeting on Oak creek, however, a very different scene was being enacted forty miles distant, where Sitting Bull's people were learning strange rites from Kicking Bear, a high priest of the new Messiah.

Journeying overland from Standing Rock to Pine Ridge, we made overnight camp at Big Foot's place, near the forks

of the Cheyenne, and were invited to breakfast at the home of the unfortunate chief, long known as a man of peace. A troop of the Eighth Cavalry had been stationed just above them, as a precautionary measure, and I stopped for a word with Col. Sumner and his subalterns, finding them disposed to scout the notion of danger from the Indians.

At our last meal on the prairie before reaching Pine Ridge agency, I had a long talk with Good Thunder, one of Red Cloud's messengers, who had been in the guardhouse a few days for preaching the "new religion." He was a fine looking elderly Dakota, with a soft voice and ingratiating presence. I still have the pencilled notes of his naive story hurriedly done into English on the spot. He said in part: "We travelled three years (months) to find the Christ. On a broad prairie covered with Indians I saw him at last—a man of surpassing beauty, with long yellow hair, clad in a blue robe. He did not look at us nor speak, but read our thoughts and answered them without words. I saw the prints of the nails in his hands and feet. He said that the crying of the Indians had sounded loud in his ears. He would come to them tomorrow—(meaning next summer). Then they would be with him in Elysium, living in skin tents and hunting the buffalo. Three birds, an Eagle, a Hawk and a Dove, attended him."

Here we have the combination of Christian and primitive symbols characteristic of the Ghost Dance. The original ceremonies prescribed by Wovoka now began to be elaborated and zealously taught by Short Bull, Kicking Bear, and other Sioux prophets. Their followers insisted that this was their "church," which ought to be as safe from molestation as the scattered chapels of the Christian Dakotas. Meanwhile, among near-by settlers and even government employees, there developed a nervousness amounting to panic—real or assumed. When they began to appeal for military protection, and Governor Millett of South Dakota asked the Congress for arms to meet a possible "Indian uprising," Senator Voorhees of Indiana, the "Tall Pine of the Wabash," moved instead the issue of a

hundred thousand rations to the "starving Sioux." Congress voted the guns.

D. F. Royer, the newly appointed Republican agent at Pine Ridge, was inexperienced and timid. His futile attempts to forbid the dancing merely fanned the flame. Within a month, he was bombarding Washington with pressing demands for troops.

Ignoring the scare-mongers, I set out with my camp outfit on a second tour of inspection among the dozen or so camp day schools. There was no secrecy about the famous dance, and upon a bright moonlight night in November I joined a little group of spectators near the Porcupine Tail butte—the only one of them who was not a Dakota. Perhaps a hundred men, women and children, dressed in white, swung in a great circle from right to left, moving with hand clasped in hand, the fingers interlaced. I was told that they had previously fasted and passed through the sweat-lodge. The monotonous Ghost Dance songs alternated with short invocations by the priest and intervals of wailing by the women.

"Here we shall hunt the buffalo—

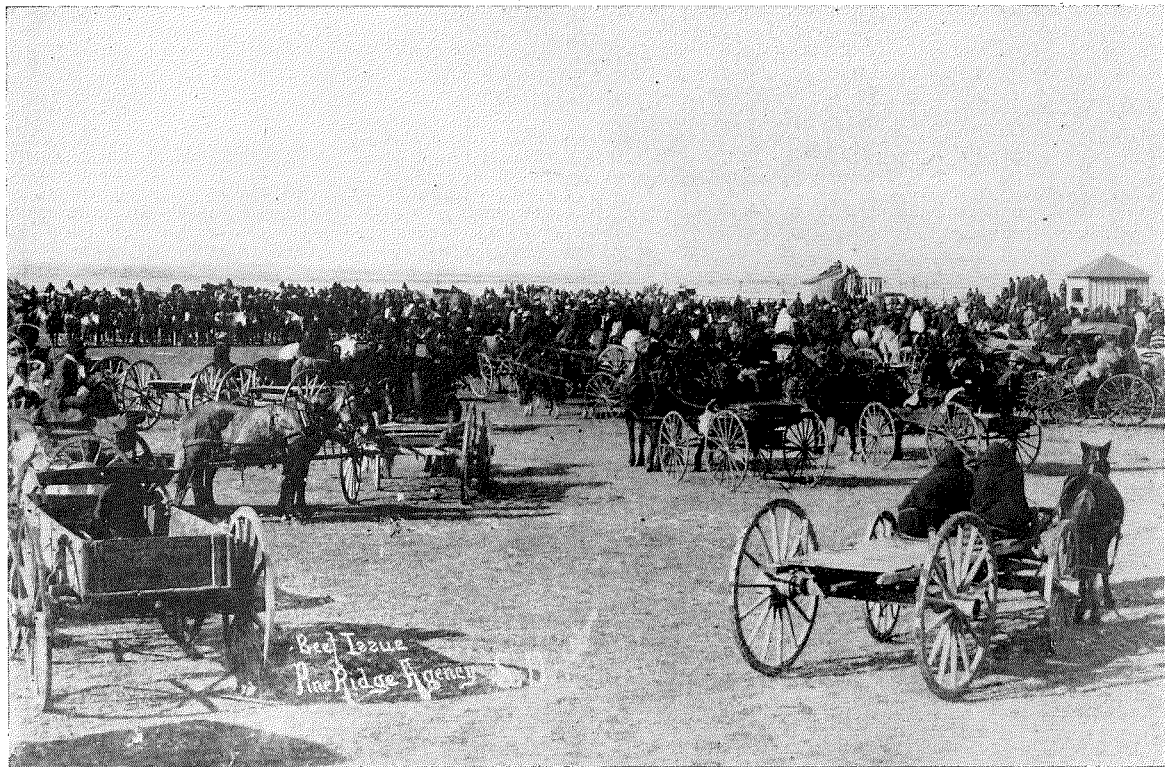
So says the Father!"

From time to time one broke from the ring, spun wildly about and fell like a log, apparently senseless. One old woman fell so near me that I could have touched her. The circle closed up and left her alone. After some time she roused, got to her feet, and harangued the congregation in a strong voice, telling of what she had seen in the land of spirits.

"They are living in a most beautiful country," she exclaimed. "It is black with bison, as in the old days. I saw them feasting and playing. How can I bear this life!"

The worshippers responded with cries and groans. In my diary I noted that sometimes "food of the spirits, made of jerked buffalo meat, is passed about in evidence. Shirts painted in a peculiar manner are worn in the dance." These were fashioned of unbleached cotton, fringed and decorated in imi-





BEEF ISSUE AT PINE RIDGE

tation of the vanished skin clothing. Later, after the troops appeared, it was asserted that the sacred garments were bullet-proof. No weapon of any kind was carried in the dance—indeed all metal was banned. Converts were urged to discard everything belonging to the white man—but this had long since become impossible.

Next day, we moved on to the Medicine Root, some fifty miles from the agency. Although we civilians knew nothing of it, troops had finally been ordered to the front and had reached Rushville, Nebraska, the railroad town nearest Pine Ridge, on that very evening—November 17, 1890. Neither the teacher of Day School No. 8 nor I had anything to say when a towering six-foot-two chieftain burst abruptly into the busy schoolroom and in the presence of the awed children indignantly demanded: "Why are the soldiers here? We have done nothing wrong. If the Messiah does not come in the spring, as promised, we shall stop dancing."

The teacher was ordered to report at the agency at once, and I slept peacefully one more night within earshot of the dance, but was, for the first and only time, denied permission to use my camera. In the early morning, the whole population was ordered in by way of a native policeman who had ridden all night. The village was instantly in commotion. Ponies were hurriedly caught and watered, tents razed, goods packed, and soon two long files of wagons moved in opposite directions. While the "church party" and most non-dancers sadly obeyed orders, the dancers, fearing summary punishment, fled in panic to the natural fortress of the Bad Lands. From that day on, the thousands encamped about the agency were known as "friendlies" while their kinsmen in hiding, subsisting as best they could upon such part of the government herd as they had been able to carry with them, were quite unfairly dubbed "hostiles."

We were now practically under martial law, with General John R. Brooke in personal command. The infantry set up tents on the common, by degrees protecting them with trenches

and crude breastworks. The streets were patrolled, and a buffalo-coated sentinel stood guard night and day around the Ogallala boarding-school, whose doors were kept locked upon hundreds of children from all parts of the reservation; partly, no doubt, as hostages for the good behavior of their parents. Families of the Indian trader and of some of the white employees were hastily sent away. Old, sick and little ones were suffering from exposure in thin cotton tents; the grazing was soon gone and the ponies were starving. Worse still, police, mixed-bloods and even church members were threatened with reprisals from the excited ghost-dancers. The Episcopal minister, Rev. Charles Smith Cook, and the newly appointed government physician, Dr. Charles A. Eastman, were college-trained Sioux, suffering from inner conflict between sympathy with their unhappy people and loyalty to government and civilization. This was a clash of cultures and not of races, for the great majority of Dakotas remained throughout loyal and sane.

However, the presence of troops was a scarcely veiled threat. Swarms of "war correspondents" from Omaha, Chicago and New York felt obliged to invent highly colored stories in default of authentic news. Some officers admitted that "the army doesn't know what it is here for," while at the same time we heard that the men were bored with long inaction and "spoiling for a fight."

My driver had close kin among the refugees in the Bad Lands whom he visited secretly by night, bringing me private bulletins. He reported growing bitterness. Father Jutz, the good German priest in charge of the Catholic mission, declined military protection, and not only cared for about a hundred children throughout the disturbance but fed and sheltered many fugitives. He also went freely among the ghost dancers in an effort to mediate and bring about a voluntary surrender.

Through the long Indian summer days of outward quiet, the inward tension grew and grew. Suddenly, into the midst of our wonted Christmas preparations—the weaving of cedar

garlands, the singing of carols—crashed the breath-taking news of the seizure and death of Sitting Bull.

Agent James McLaughlin, later an inspector and special agent, had repeatedly urged that the chief and a few other "trouble makers" be shut up where they could do no more harm. He insisted that he could handle the situation without help, if given the necessary authority. His plan to await the monthly "Big Issue," when the camps were all but deserted, was abandoned when word came that Sitting Bull was about to leave for Pine Ridge. The final move was made on the night of December 14th, by a large force of native police.

Awakened before dawn, the ageing leader at first professed himself ready to go with them. He dressed and sent for his favorite horse. But in the meantime a crowd had collected about the cabin, and some one—said to have been his young son, Crow Foot, who died with him—called upon him to stand fast. He cried out: "I will not go!" A follower then fired, hitting Lieutenant Bullhead who instantly sent a bullet into the body of the chief. There followed a short, bitter hand-to-hand struggle, in which six police fell, with seven of the Grand River men, and several more were wounded. In some instances near kin were said to have exchanged shots.

Regular troops sent from Fort Yates to support the police not only arrived too late to be of any use but mistook the surviving members of the force for followers of Sitting Bull and threw shells among them—fortunately doing no harm. The Grand River people left their own dead on the field (to be buried later by the courageous missionary, Thomas Riggs), and in desperate panic stampeded southward. Some went back later; others took refuge with their friends under Big Foot, whom they quickly infected with their terror.

Taking the refugees with them, Big Foot's people set out in the direction of their own Cheyenne River Agency. Obviously uncertain, they halted next day to talk matters over and were surprised by Colonel Sumner's command, arrested on suspicion and made to turn back. Presumably destined for confinement

at Fort Meade, they were nevertheless left without guard at their village for the night. Escape became their only thought, and before the officer learned of their flight they were well over the divide on the way to the Bad Lands.

We heard next of Major Whitside's capture of the approaching party on the evening of the 28th of December, when he sent to headquarters for reinforcements. Col. James W. Forsyth immediately joined Whitside at Wounded Knee creek with four additional troops of the Seventh Cavalry and four Hotchkiss guns. He then had a total of 470 well-armed professional soldiers, with whom to subdue a wandering village of between three and four hundred ragged, hungry and frightened men, women and children. Three press correspondents, a missionary priest, Father Craft, who was accidentally wounded in the fray, and several other civilians accompanied the soldiers.

Ironically enough, there were at this moment no "hostiles" entrenched in the Bad Lands. The stampeding ghost dancers had gradually yielded to persuasion and moved their camp to within some five miles of the agency.

A large cedar had been set up in the chapel for day to day services and distribution of gifts to the several congregations now encamped at Pine Ridge. We were filling candy-bags on the morning of the 29th of December, when swift couriers on horse-back brought sensational news of the slaughter at Wounded Knee, eighteen miles away. First reports had it that the cavalry had been cut off, leaving us at the mercy of a maddened horde of Indians. When the loyal Sioux learned that unarmed men, women and children had been shot down in flight, their white camps melted away like snow-banks in April. The brown hills were instantly alive with galloping horsemen and a long line of loaded wagons disappeared in the distance. Soon the chapel and mission house were swamped by a crowd of sobbing, terrified women and children—church members, for the most part of mixed descent. The two Presbyterian missionary women left their more exposed cottage on the brow of the hill and joined us in the rectory, one of them carrying her pet canary in his cage. The solid outside shutters were slammed to, the oil lamps lit, and an effort made to calm the

excitement with the help of hot coffee and sandwiches.

Long after dark the Seventh Cavalry appeared, bringing its own numerous casualties and thirty-three severely wounded prisoners, all but six of them women and children. Mr. Cook cleared his church, ordered the pews torn out and the floor spread with hay. Quilts were brought from the house and the moaning victims lifted from the wagons and tended throughout the night by Doctor Eastman, the physician of their own blood, with such volunteer help as was available. Later one of the army surgeons came to assist, but no one wondered to see the Sioux women shrink in horror from the dreaded uniform. We made gallons of coffee, and distributed bread to as many as were able to eat. By the next day fresh beef had been requisitioned and a temporary soup kitchen and bakery set up in the rectory.

Appeals printed in the Boston papers soon brought generous supplies of linen, blankets and clean clothing. Neat cots replaced the matted heaps of hay, and in the course of a few days a trained nurse was installed. Meantime, however, most of the injuries had proved mortal. A few more wounded wandered in on foot or were picked up alive, on the third day, under a fall of fresh snow. But even if not crippled, nearly all of the survivors were heart-broken and apathetic. Several orphaned children found good homes. A baby girl, taken by Dr. Eastman from her dead mother's breast, was adopted by Col. L. W. Colby and his wife who brought up and educated her.

The "battle" of Wounded Knee remained for some time in heated controversy. It was represented by Colonel Forsyth in his official report as a "gallant" action by his command, in which about ninety "bucks" were killed while "crazed by religious fanaticism," and "comparatively few squaws injured." Within a few days, other facts came to light and were widely publicized, putting the army on the defensive. Commissioner Morgan asked for my version and at once gave it to the press where it appeared in full, under the headlines: "Fight on Wounded Knee Creek. Intentional Slaughter of Women and Children."

My information was chiefly obtained from the Sioux prisoners, with whom I talked freely in their own tongue. I wrote "The testimony of the survivors of Big Foot's band is unanimous on one important point—namely, that the Indians did not deliberately plan resistance. The party was not a war party, according to their statements, (which I believe to be true,) but a party intending to visit the agency at the invitation of Red Cloud. The Indians say that many of the men were unarmed. When they met the troops, they anticipated no trouble. There was constant friendly intercourse between the soldiers and the Indians, even women shaking hands with the officers and men.

"The demand for their arms was a surprise to the Indians, but the great majority chose to submit quietly. The tipis had already been searched and a large number of guns, knives and hatchets confiscated when the searching of the persons of the men was begun. The women say that they too were searched and the knives which they always carry for domestic purposes taken from them. A number of the men had surrendered their rifles and cartridge belts when one young man, (described by the Indians as a good-for-nothing,) fired a single shot. This called forth a volley from the troops and the firing and confusion became general.

"I do not credit the statement made by some that the women carried arms and participated actively in the fight. . . . There is no doubt that the great majority of women and children, as well as many unarmed men and youth, had no thought of anything but flight. They were pursued up the ravines and shot down indiscriminately by the soldiers. The killing of the women and children was in part unavoidable, owing to the confusion, but I think there is no doubt that it was in many cases deliberate and intentional. The Seventh Cavalry, Custer's old command, had an old grudge to repay.

"The party of scouts who buried the dead report 84 bodies of men and boys, 44 of women and 16 of young children. Some were carried off by the hostiles. A number of prisoners, chiefly women, have since died of their wounds and more will soon follow. The party who visited the field on January 1 to rescue

any wounded who might have been abandoned, and brought in seven, report that nearly all the men were lying close about Big Foot's Sibley tent, while the women and children were scattered along a distance of two miles from the scene of the encounter."

The Sioux have always maintained that most of the casualties suffered by the troops were inflicted by their comrades in arms. This supposition is borne out by maps and diagrams of the field, as well as by testimony of officers present at the first investigation, made January 10, 1891. Said Assistant Surgeon Charles B. Ewing: "Located as the troops were and firing as they did, it was impossible not to wound and kill each other." Taken together with the accepted fact that most of the Sioux were unarmed, the evidence appears conclusive. General Miles stated publicly that 40 guns had been taken from the tipis and that a personal search of twenty or more warriors had revealed no weapons. Rev. Mr. Riggs, who knew Big Foot's men intimately, believed that "not more than every other man had a gun." He doubted if more than sixty, at most, were taken to Wounded Knee by the Sioux. Most of these were in fact shot-guns and old muzzle loaders, kept for hunting small game, and in a measure as the traditional badge of masculinity.

Forsyth stood court-martial and was acquitted, but the evidence was not made public. On March 13, 1917, General Miles wrote the then commissioner of Indian Affairs as follows: "The action of the commanding officer in my judgment at the time—and I so reported—was most reprehensible. The disposition of the troops was such that in firing upon the warriors they fired directly toward their own lines, and also into the camp of the women and children, and I have regarded the whole affair as most unjustifiable and worthy of the severest condemnation."

Lieutenant (afterward Brig. Gen.) E. S. Godfrey submitted his personal story to the War College on May 29, 1931. He states "some time after all firing had ceased" he was ordered to pursue a small group who had escaped over the ridge. He chased them down a partly wooded valley, calling out "Squaw—pappoose—cola!" apparently as an invitation to appear and



make a second formal surrender! When they remained in hiding, he directed his men to fire a volley into the bushes, killing a woman and three children. A boy of about fourteen, found to be not quite dead, was finished off on the spot by a young soldier. Godfrey says he reprimanded him, but not too severely! This incident is cited by Fairfax Downey in his *Indian-Fighting Army* (1942), as if it had been a solitary instance of killing a wounded prisoner—an assumption which is flatly contradicted by abundant Indian testimony.

On February 11, 1891, less than two months after the event, Turning Hawk and American Horse told their story in Washington before the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Senator Dawes and other notables. Said American Horse: "When the firing began, of course the people immediately around the young man who fired the first shot were killed right together. They then turned their guns, Hotchkiss guns, upon the women who were in the lodges, standing there under a flag of truce, and as soon as they were fired upon they fled, the men fleeing in one direction and the women running in two different directions. A woman with an infant in her arms was killed as she almost touched the white flag. Another was shot down with her infant, and the child not knowing that his mother was dead was still nursing."

Seventy-five survivors and members of their families were interviewed by Inspector McLaughlin in 1920, principally with regard to their property losses. The horses, tents, camp furniture and clothing destroyed or taken comprised nearly everything they owned in the world.

In 1934, the sworn testimony of 24 survivors was taken and subsequently published by their superintendent, James H. McGregor. Dewey Beard, then a man 77 years of age, still active and influential, was a prominent witness, both at that time and four years later, in Washington. He had been first wounded in the leg, then shot through the body while lying helpless, and lost his father, mother, two brothers, a sister, wife and child at Wounded Knee.

While there is no dispute as to the first shot coming from the side of the Indians, this solitary shot has never been clearly



INDIAN CAMP NEAR PINE RIDGE, NOVEMBER, 1890

shown to have been other than an accident. It was obviously unauthorized by the chief, a very sick man, or by the party as a whole. Dewey Beard states that a certain young man, by some writers identified as Black Fox of Cheyenne River, started toward the spot where weapons were delivered. "It was his intention to put that gun down. Two soldiers came on and grabbed the gun. Right after they spun him around there was a report. I couldn't say that any one was shot. They fired on us anyhow."

"The soldiers," writes Maj. Charles W. Allen, one of three newspaper correspondents present at Wounded Knee, "seem to have taken instantaneous action, without orders, after the first shot was fired into a pile of old and outmoded guns that had been surrendered and over which stood an armed guard—who, by the way, was not injured."

Here is General Miles' summing up in his letter of March 13, 1917, to the Indian Commissioner: "A scuffle occurred between one warrior who had a rifle in his hand and two soldiers. The rifle was discharged, and a massacre occurred; not only the warriors but a large number of women and children who tried to escape by running and scattering over the prairie were hunted down and killed. The official reports make the number killed ninety warriors and approximately two hundred women and children."

In 1938 there were still 44 living survivors. They had formed an association and held an annual meeting at the scene of the massacre, where a monument had been erected by relatives and friends above the mass grave of 146 of the victims. James Pipe-on-Head, their president, in that year headed a delegation from Pine Ridge to testify in favor of a bill introduced by Congressman Francis H. Case of South Dakota, providing some financial compensation to survivors and the heirs of deceased Indians. This bill has been before the committee two or three times, with the support of the Indian Commissioner.

It has been widely represented that a certain medicine man undertook at the critical moment to harangue the Sioux, telling them that their "sacred shirts" would protect them, and tossing a handful of dust into the air—interpreted by some as

a signal for resistance. No Sioux witness mentions such an incident, and an excited interpreter might easily have misunderstood the speech. There is nothing to indicate that Big Foot's people ever considered putting up a hopeless eleventh-hour fight, after they had given up nearly all their guns. They could not fail to note the four machine guns trained directly upon the lodges filled with helpless women and children. These people were in sore straits and their priest—if he ever performed as stated—was no doubt invoking supernatural aid.

Matters remained in a critical state for several days. Fresh troops were rushed to the scene, and there were one or two minor clashes, but the threatened attack in force never materialized. General Miles assumed personal command at Pine Ridge and did all in his power to conciliate and soothe the terrified refugees, who included only a few hundred men of fighting age. Rations were increased about one-third, and nearly everything done or promised that the Sioux had originally asked. By the middle of January they had all surrendered and the campaign of 1890-1891 was at an end. It cost nearly three hundred lives on their side, two-thirds of which were the lives of women and children, and on the side of the Government 49 soldiers and native police fell in a wholly needless "war." Mooney estimates the money cost at a mere one million, two hundred thousand dollars.