

NEBRASKA STATE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mrs. Mary Mead

A Pioneer

Introduction by Bishop Beecher

Mead

Among the pioneers, who were conspicuous in early days, some have gone and been forgotten- while others - many others - have never so much as thought of ever having their names mentioned as the makers of history in this great Empire of the West.

It has long been my earnest desire to secure from its original source, the history of the frontier. What is written in books is not always the final word in this sacred matter. Much of the life and romance of the early days is yet to be found in many of the forgotten corners and quiet recesses of the modern homes, where aged widows and retired men of business and professional life are still lingering on the sunset trail, finding only an occasional opportunity to speak again of those memories, which cluster around their sacred mission as the fore-runners and foundation builders of our Christian Civilization.

In order that the readers of our little paper may have the benefit of such a story, I am introducing at this time, one of the true old time Christian, "Belles of the Plains:"- Mrs. Mary Mead, now of Chadron, Nebraska, who for 57 years has lived and labored on the border land of the so-called "Wild and Woolly West", where, as a faithful and devoted wife and mother, she has made a place for herself and her name in the quiet but forceful example of christian fortitude, perseverance, faith, and service. It is because of the value of what she says, as well as what she has seen and endured, that I have asked her permission to give to the younger generation some glimpses of what splendid women there were among the early pioneers.

The scene of the story is along the Missouri Valley from Sioux City, through Yankton, and the northwest sections of Nebraska, and South Dakota - there being, of course, in those days, no division of the two Dakotas.

Mrs. Mead has mentioned in her personal reminiscences, the names of many prominent men and women, whose paths of travel and experience crossed her own in very interesting incidents.

I am giving the story just as it has come from the hands of Mrs. Mead, herself, who, since she composed it, has practically lost her sight.

There is no doubt in my mind, however, but that as her vision fades from those things out of which she has received the inspiration of a long and active life, the brightness of that New Day beyond the sunset of those hills over which she has often traveled, will be to her, the magnet of enduring faith in the "home stretch" of her journey to the Land of Rest and Peace.

STORY OF WESTERN EXPERIENCE

Frontier life for me commenced when my husband, little son, and self stepped off the train at Sioux City, in the summer of 1870. We found the heat so intense and the mosquitoes so thick at the hotel, my husband went down to the steamer, on which we were going northward, found there were no passengers, but the captain said we could go on the steamer at once, which we did, and found the breeze from the river delightful. The name of this steamer was "Miner" and afterward named, "The Black Hills." The Captain's name was Tim Burleigh, who often came to our home at Bonhomme. One of our brothers, the year before, had gone westward to hunt a new business location. After spending a winter at Bonhomme and putting in a stock of merchandise, he concluded it was a good opening for business and wrote my husband and brother, George, that if they would do the same, and all go in together, it would be a benefit to all of them. They did so, and brother George and wife went out in the spring. After settling up the business, my husband and I trailed along about the first of August. The trip up the river was delightful. On the northside, the land was high bluffs and rolling prairies; on the south, low lying hills with a growth of cedar.

There were many sand bars, which were hard to avoid, causing delays sometimes, and we could hear the crouching and grinding of our little stern wheeler as she tried to extricate herself. My husband had some anxiety about a place for us to live. Brother George met us at the landing and told us he had persuaded a woman who owned a log house of four rooms to take the larger for herself, and let us have the other three. She had it freshly white-washed, and had sewed inside coffee sacks together, and with nails driven in, had covered the earth floor. She felt so sorry for that woman coming from the East, to whom the whole thing looked like a girl's play house. My husband being deft in the use of saw and hammer, took some dry goods boxes apart, and soon had a good kitchen table nailed against the logs in the kitchen, 8X10 light in the window turned down sideways, sliding back and forth outside of which a wild rose bush was growing.

THE HOME

In the bedroom, nice size, was a window put in the same style, but here the rosebush grew up from the inside, and covered the window. The owner told us in the early spring, she opened the window, pushing it out and giving it the sunshine and air, so she had roses inside before they were blooming outside. In the room we used for sitting room and dining room, was a half-sash, 8X10 window, over which a morning glory had grown inside and trailed over. It seemed like a romantic camp. The distance was so great, we moved only two or three pieces of furniture, and some old mahogany which we have yet. I fastened a carpet down over the sacking. My husband made cupboards and tables which were stained and varnished. Everything was soon in order, and we were very comfortable. The other two families lived in one end of the long log buildings, where the merchandise was kept until the large building was completed, consisting of two large rooms with an arch between, a tin shop back, and another large room for storage.

THE TOWN

Bonhomme was situated on a high bluff overlooking the turbid Missouri, and the Santee Indian agency on the other side of the river. We met the Episcopalian missionary, Rev. S. D. Hinman, resident at Santee, who was the same one who was with them during the Minnesota massacre. Soon after the massacre, I was at Fort Snelling, and saw two of the leaders of the massacre, Little Six and Medicine Bottle, who were afterwards executed. I wondered what would be the future of the rest of those people, and now I was coming to live among the remnant of them. Although there were only twelve houses in sight, we were never lonely, as there were three families of us, and when enough of the merchandise was moved out of the old store and our sister had room among the barrels, and boxes so we could all sit down at the table at once, we were in great glee. The buildings, as I remember, were all of logs with the exception of the new store; among them, a schoolhouse, a courthouse and a hotel. There was school in the schoolhouse, and sometimes missionaries came and held services in the schoolhouse. My husband said to me, "Mary, the hotel is so small, why don't we entertain the missionaries in our own home?" which we did after that and so our home was dubbed "The Minister's Hotel." I said, "That is all right if it is, if missionaries come out to preach to us heathen, the least we can do is to make them physically comfortable." Life was rather quiet the first fall we went there, but we were all happy. Sometimes we took long horseback rides through the waving grass, sometimes scaring up a quail, sometimes having a coyote dash out of the brush in front of us; but above all, to be where you could see from sunrise to sunset. In time, as the merchandise was moved to the new buildings, the two families had the whole log building for their home.

INDIANS.

After the Indians from the upper agencies, farther up the Missouri, heard of the new store, they began to come down. They did not dress in citizens' clothes like the Santees, but in bright colored blankets, and made a picturesque figure on the landscape. One morning at Choteau Creek Ranch, as I looked out of the window, I saw, on what had been the Custer camp ground, a party of Indian men and women breaking camp, they had formed two lines, the men and women facing each other, a missionary standing at the head, they sang a hymn, and then all knelt in prayer. They were on their way to a Convocation Meeting at Yankton Agency, then the home of Bishop Hare.

A MILD WINTER.

In the fall, my husband bought us a home of our own, which we fixed up to be comfortable. It was a very mild winter. I remember only two snow storms, and no snow on the ground after the storm was over. The second day of January, I had my plants out of doors, sprinkled them, and let them dry in the sunshine. As long as the steamboats came up, we used to enjoy going to the bank and watch them. Our firm put in a large stock of goods before the steamer stopped running in the fall, but still had to keep teams on the road going to Sioux City during the winter, which was very hard on them. Each one of us took one of the holidays for our very own:- Christmas was mine; and we kept it up as long as we were within reach of one another. The first Christmas we were there, they had a Christmas tree for the children in the courthouse. They told about why Christmas was kept, and sang a carol or two, after which they distributed the presents, and after that the superintendent came out in a soldier's cap, with a sword in his hand, and to the accompaniment of

the organ, sang--"I am Captain Jenks of the Horse Marines." My husband and I were great readers, and had all the best periodicals, and we took much comfort in our own home.

THE TRADERS.

The traders up the Missouri, finding we had such a large stock, came to buy goods, so we sold at wholesale and retail. As spring opened up, people commenced to come into the country to take homesteads. A colony of Bohemians came in, and they were good thrifty people. Governor Burbank tried to get a foothold in Bonhomme; not being successful, he determined to start a town of his own, eight miles farther on, which he named Springfield. The governor was very energetic in inducing people to move to his new town, and soon it was filled with a fine class of citizens.

THE MISSIONARIES.

Then one day, I received a note, by Indian police, from S. D. Hinman, Missionary at Santee, asking me if it would be convenient for me to entertain Bishop Clarkson of Omaha, Dean Hoyt of Yankton, and himself, for one day. I replied, it would be convenient and a pleasure. He came over early in the morning. We watched for the coming of the Bishop and the Dean. They visited during the day, and he returned at nightfall. The next morning the Bishop and Dean went seventy-five miles to hold service, for three people; H. C. Green, a civil engineer; his wife, formerly a teacher; and her brother, a young man who had taken homesteads on "The Jim". Then they returned, the Bishop said to me, "It is wonderful to see how homelike women like Mrs. Green, in her dugout, and you in your loghouse can make your houses, with your books, your birds, and your flowers."

THE GOVERNOR.

One day Governor Burbank said to me, "Mrs. Mead, there are three ladies in Yankton, I have told about you, and they want to come up." I said, "Bring them up." He said, "Any time?" I said, "Yes." One day he appeared at the door with the wife of General Edwin McCook, Mrs. Harner, and her mother, Mrs. Morrison. In a little while, I went over to our sisters after our mother. She had a charming personality, and they enjoyed visiting with her, and on their return to Yankton, insisted on her accompanying them, where they entertained her for two days before her return. The Governor stopped at the door one day, and said to me, "I have Representative Hannibal Hamlin of Maine in the store and I want you to meet him." "O-o-o-o-o-h." I said, "That sounds formidable." "Not a bit of it," he said, "I want you and John to come up this evening and we will have a dance and a little supper at the hotel. John says he will come if you will." I said, "We will be there." There was a nice company and the dining room was just large enough for two quadrilles. Some of the young men, with their pants in their boots, danced with as much vigor and seeming pleasure as though in dancing pumps. The evening passed pleasantly, the supper was nice, and when I went to bid the Representative good night and said I hoped he had enjoyed the evening, his sides shook with laughter, and he said he had enjoyed every minute of it.

CHOTEAU CREEK RANCH

CHOTEAU CREEK RANCH

Time passed pleasantly on, and finally the firm concluded to buy the Choteau Creek Ranch, consisting of two hundred acres of land, near the mouth of the creek, where it emptied into the Missouri. This move was made because the location was favorable for obtaining trade from the Yankton and Ponca Indian Indian reservations. It was also a stage relay station. The buildings were situated in the center of the valley and my husband and I were to take charge of the place. My husband went on ahead to put in shelving and arrange for the merchandise. He was gone two weeks, which seemed a long time to me. When he came down, I asked him when I was going. Not until the store is in order and the upper rooms cleaned. Another week passed, and then into the middle of another week, then myself said to me, "hy don't you go up there yourself, you are a pretty good digger?" I put the thought into action, and I baked up some bread, pies, and doughnuts; then went out into town to see if I could get a man to take me up there. I could only find one who would take me as far as Springfield but I engaged him to go, as I knew brother George would help me out when I got there. So I took my little son, and we went to Springfield. Brother George engaged a man to take me up there. My husband had hired a man and his wife to cook for us, and we went after them. We reached Choteau in the late afternoon. As we came down the valley, it seemed everyone in front of the buildings was looking at the other side of the valley and laughing. As I looked across, I saw the stage come ambling down on the other side drawn by a yoke of oxen, and the driver putting in all the flourishes possible, and the passengers had their heads out of the windows laughing. The horses in the country had the "epizootic." As the rumble of our wagon came nearer, my husband turned and said, "What in the world did you come up here for?" (Emphasis on "World.") His face had a look, our husbands sometimes wear, when they do not understand our movements, and wonder what we will do next. We unloaded, and went in and had supper. After the woman had done her work, I went to her and told her that I would take possession now and serve the breakfast, which I did. After which the black oil-cloth was taken off the table, everything on the floor was thoroughly scrubbed until the boards like ourselves must have fairly panted. Then I put on some pretty tablecloths I had brought and set the table with my silver as we had it at home. We put a carpet down from the doorway to the front end of the dining room, and a small table and couple of rockers for a pleasant place for the passengers from the stage to sit while they were waiting. I put some pretty white curtains up at the windows, then called my husband. He was surprised and delighted. I asked him if he had any idea what I came up ther for. He replied, "I thought it would be too hard for you." I said, "Here is where I am going to stay." So we moved the rest of our belongings up there, and bid good-bye to our little home in Bonhomme, for which we had cared so much.

~~Business~~

BUSINESS THRIVES

Business increased rapidly, and the officers from Fort Randall made their drives so as to stay there all night on their way to Yankton. They became very fond of my husband for the homelike air he put into his surroundings, and his invariable good humor. I was in the store one night when they came in with a "Hello, Mead, we came in early tonight, we'll

have a good visit." He said, "Boys I have only one bed left." "Oh, well," they said, "give that to Uncle John." who was the oldest of the group. "Give us some blankets and we will take to the front end of the dining room floor," and from the laughter issuing from the room soon after, they could not have considered it any hardship. My husband built on two bedrooms the only place there was on the house to build any, and still there was a call for beds, so he built three rooms, two bed rooms, and a sitting room, just the width of the porch away from the other buildings. There were some cowboys there who were waiting for a herd from Texas, to take farther up the country, and they volunteered to help him. It seemed to me it took but a short time to complete the work.

It was about this time (1873) I believe, Bishop Hare came to take up his life work among the Indians. His residence was to be fifteen miles farther up the river at Yankton Agency. After he was once given the new sitting room and bed room, he came quite often. I thought he was having his residence remodelled.

NO GAMBLING.

I was conscious one Sunday that more people than usual were in the house, and many people stopping to eat meals, and then passing on. That night after I retired and had slept for sometime, I was awakened, and became conscious of the chink, chink of money! I wondered and thought I would investigate. I dressed and went into the store. One man whom I knew, greeted me with, "Good evening, Mrs. Mead, did you come after your husband?" I said, "No, I came to ask these gentlemen, if, after they have finished this game they will please not gamble anymore." My husband and myself were brought up to have the Sabbath respected in our home, and we brought our home life with us." There was a tall man at the end of the table, who had the cards in his hand, and looking at me intently, he slammed the cards on the table, and said, "Madam, you are right, and for one, I will say, it will be a long time before I do any more gambling. I said, "Thank you," and turned and went up to my room. The game ended there, and the only sound heard in the house was the footstep of each man as he went to his own room. In a few moments, my husband came to our room, and said, "Mary, I was proud of you tonight." I asked, "But how did it happen?" He said, "Two men came with teams, and the man who usually attended to them had gone to bed, so I attended to them. When I returned they had got into the game. When they had finished that game, I was going to tell them, I could have no more of it, but you did a better job than I could--Why, Mary, there were as many as twenty men in the store. It was a party of civil engineers from Washington D. C." I said, "I do not care who they are, or where they came from, the President could not gamble in my house." With me, the incident was closed. A cowboy who was at the table went "up country" and returned three weeks after. He said to me, "Do you remember that tall man who was at the table that time you broke up that gambling game? I saw him up country and he said, "Hank, I want to borrow ten dollars to buy some grub for my family," "Yes" I said, "You want it to gamble with." He answered, "Hank, do you remember that little woman who came down and broke up that game at Choteau Creek?" I said, "I ought to remember, she made me lose twenty dollars" "Well, Hank, I have never gambled since." Then take the ten dollars, for you have done better than I have."

NO SHOOTING AFFRAY

NO SHOOTING AFFRAY.

When my husband was away, I tried to take special charge over everything. The stovepipe from the store went up near the end of the dining room table. I saw a man sitting there lean over, and listen intently, and heard his name spoken in angry tones, by the man below. He rose from the table and started for the door. As he neared the door, I saw him put his hand to his hip. I fairly flew and took as firm a hold of his collar, as I would a lad in school, whom I felt would do as I wished him to before I was through with him. I said, "My husband is away on business. I have charge of this house and while I do, there will be no shooting affray here. You have a wife and two little children. If she stood as I stand now, what would you want anyone to do for her." "You are right, Mrs. Mead," he said, and again sat down at the table. He gave his driver some money, told him to go and settle the bill and bring the team to the side door. He did so and drove away.

COW BOYS.

The cowboys had been very good about keeping the Sabbath around the ranch. But one Sunday morning, I was standing just inside the dining room door, when I heard some one say, "Oh, boys, come on let's have a race," I just leaned over, looked down and smiled. Instantly, he put the spurs to his horse, and as memory recalls it, started for camp, as fast as his horse could carry him, while the boys fairly yelled with laughter. The next day one of them said, while he shook with laughter, "Mrs. Mead, that was one of the funniest things I ever saw." I said, "I did not say anything." "No," he answered, "You did not say anything, but after what you had said a fellow would have to have a lot of nerve to try and start a race."

The Texas herd was heard from at last. The boys went to meet them where they were crossed at Running Water, held them at their camp sometime before starting northward. The night before, two of the boys came down for some supplies, and said the boys sent word, would husband and I come up and eat with them from the mess wagon. We did, and took a few luxuries for them. It was something to remember to see them riding slowly around the herd, crooning a Texas lullaby. The sun was dipping low behind the horizon when we bid them goodbye. We never saw but a few of them afterwards.

THE ARMY.

The 22nd infantry was transferred elsewhere. The ladies in bidding me goodbye said, "That regiment coming from Detroit had never been on the frontier, and won't they think they are killed." "But we have been here seven years and had a pretty good time." The transfer was made. My husband was away from home. I saw an army ambulance containing two officers, a lady and a driver stop in front and view the outside architecture of that building as though they had never seen anything like it in Detroit. The Bohemian in the store went out and said, "You wants to stop here," The Colonel replied, "If we can." "You can, you wants to." They alighted with solemn looking faces. As they came up, I sent the maid to show the lady her room, and render any assistance necessary. The boy showed the officers to their rooms. I went to the kitchen and ordered the supper. When they were called to supper, and they entered the dining

room, the lady stepped from her room and said, "Major, I want you and the Colonel to come and see what a cozy little room I have, and here we thought we could not stop here. After supper, I am going to take you to our quarters, they are really nice." By the comments I heard, they were satisfied with everything

HOME FOLKS

Our mother and sister from from Washington, D. C., came to visit first one and then another of us. It was pleasant for all of us, and we were not so far apart, but we could have our usual family gatherings.

The ladies who had visited me in Bonhomme had sent repeated invitations for me to visit them. My husband had business and I accompanied him. The governor took us ladies for a drive all over the city. I met General McCook, a man of commanding appearance and fine physique. We exchanged a few civil war reminiscences. My husband had been telling them about the fishing. The next morning as we bade them goodbye, he said, Mrs. Mead, just two weeks from today, look for wife and me up there, and we'll all go fishing." That morning my husband said to me, "Isn't this the day the McCook's come?" I said, "Yes" But when the stage came in, it brought the news that he had been shot the night before, and died that morning. He belonged to a family known during the Civil War as "The Fighting McCooks," a father and five sons, all of whom died violent deaths except one, who died in Colorado some years ago.

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AN EPISODE

There were many noted people who sometimes only dined, and some spent the night. Among them, was Colonel Fred Grant, with some other military officers, who were on a tour of inspection of the army posts up the Missouri. The cooks had ice cream for dessert that day. After they had gone, the passengers on the stage had eaten, a company of cowboys came in for dinner, I said, "Boys, you may have what ice cream is left." Two of the boys gave knowing glances across the table and soon left the room, one at a time. The cooks said they quickly grabbed the ice cream freezer and took it into the store. Not long after, I heard an awful racket in the store, and went to see what was the matter. I found the boys fairly mopping the floor with those two boys and one said, "Just think those two boys ate up all that ice cream." I said, "How could you, boys?" And one drew his finger across his throat and muttered, "Too full for utterance." My husband stood by laughing, letting them have it out.

GENERAL CUSTER

The next winter was very severe, both Indians and white people losing heavily in cattle and horses. In the following spring General Custer and his command came from the southland and landed in Dakota in one of her very worst blizzards. The people in Yankton did all in their power for them under the circumstances. As they approached Choteau, my husband said to me, "You had better have the cooks prepare an extra supply of food." I said, "I do not think they will want it." He replied, "They always have at the other places they have been." The high water had taken out the bridge at Choteau. The general had been informed, so sent one troop, some officers and teamsters ahead of the command. I had the cooks bake fifty

pies, forty loaves of bread, and three six gallon jars of doughnuts. In my simplicity, I thought I had enough for a standing army. In the meantime the governor, an editor from a nearby town, and a number of the others came, like small boys following a circus. It was later afternoon. We went out expecting to see them dismount and go into camp. Did they? Not a bit of it. They simply surrounded the kitchen porch, door and windows, and said, "Have you anything to eat?" Very complacently, I said "Oh, yes," and I never saw food disappear so rapidly. One man asked for a dozen doughnuts, when I looked wonderingly at him he said, "I can eat them all right." Soon a maid touched me on the shoulder and said, "Do you know, there are eighteen people in the house now and it is almost supper time?" I could let them have no more at present. After the supper, the girls and I commenced to cook; and cooked until twelve o'clock. At midnight, my husband came and said a man wanted a dozen fried eggs. We fried them, and then I told my husband that would be the last, as the girls and I had to have some rest. The next morning my husband sent a man and team to Springfield for additional supplies, and to Bonhomme for our sister and the one at Springfield to come and help us, which they did. Five of us cooked all the time, doughnuts, pies, and baking powder biscuits. I became so tired, I had to kneel in a chair, and roll and cut the doughnuts, then sit by the stove to fry them.

MY SON MISSING

In the midst of all this hubbub, I missed my five-year-old son, and someone told me he had gone fishing with Captain Benteen. After awhile, I went out again to look for him and found him riding on top of a load of logs and poles to replace the bridge. When I chided him for worrying me a kind, Irish face looked up at me and said, "Don't worry, Mum, we likes to have him with us. We'll take the best of care of him and return him to you." The bridge was finished by the middle of the afternoon. In the late afternoon, General Custer and his command came on crossed over and camped on a beautiful tableland with a background of low lying hills. The next day was one of their resting days. These were spoken of by Mrs. Custer, in her book, "Boots and Saddles," page 80. They all seemed to enjoy the day one way and another. His soldiers came at nightfall to fill their knapsacks with food, as they said they did not expect to strike another place like Choteau, and were gracious enough to tell me that the last pie and the last doughnuts were as good as the first ones. My husband invited ~~them~~ a few of the officers he became acquainted with to dinner. Later, one of them came and asked if husband and I would go out to their campfire for a little while. We did so, and after chatting about their trip up the Missouri, some soldiers came and sang that beautiful song - "Come Where My Love Lies Dreaming." Now, when I hear that song, I close my eyes and seem to be transported again to that scene, the grouping of the officers, my husband, little son and self. The goodnights were said, and we went back to the ranch house.

SUNRISE PAGEANT

The next morning, with an ever perfect military discipline, they were ready for an early start. First came the band, all mounted on white horses, with all their accoutrements shining in the morning sunlight. Then General and Mrs. Custer came on horseback, then Lieut. Colonel Calhoun and his wife, who, I believe, was a sister of General Custer;

then the wagons unwound, and trailed off over the hills, and the band was playing "The Girl I left Behind Me." And so they started out with light hearts and buoyant spirits, little dreaming of the awful tragedy that later awaited them at the Little Big Horn.

VISITORS

Frequently people came from the East to visit at the agency and see a little of Indian life. A couple came from Philadelphia and the house was so full, I gave them our room. I heard him say to his wife, "I believe I left my pistol in Sioux City." As they came in, I said, "Here is a gun that always stands loaded at the head of the bed," and pulling out a dresser drawer, I showed a loaded revolver. She threw her hands up over head and said, "Don't think I'm going to sleep in there with all that artillery." I said, "My husband and I do every night, but I'll take out the gun."

GRASSHOPPERS

That year the grasshoppers came in such clouds as to darken the sun. It was impossible to place a finger on the house or sheds without touching a grasshopper. After they were gone, we found that our garden was completely ruined. The onions were fairly scooped out of the ground. This grasshopper invasion was very hard on the homesteaders. Many during the next winter were obliged to send East to relatives for help. That year we left Choteau. We went to Springfield. One of our sisters had a hotel which we took charge of until through Bishop Hare, it was bought and remodelled for a school for Indian boys and girls, and is still in operation (St. Mary's School, Springfield, South Dakota.)

STORY ON BISHOP HARE

I had a cook who was fine in that capacity, but of a tempestuous nature. The Bishop wished to retain her in his service to clean the house and wished her to take her meals with me until it was cleaned. That day the Bishop was a little late for dinner, after which he stood up in his most characteristic attitude with hands crossed in front of him, and said, "Mrs. Mead, Miss Gallighan, for whom I have no provision, desired me to bring her dinner to her as she did not wish to stop and dress for dinner." I replied, "I'll send her dinner to her." He replied, "Thank you." The concealed mirth in the Bishop's face is something I can never forget. I went to the kitchen and said, "Jen, I shall have to ask you to take Miss Gallighan's dinner to her." She said, "Why?" with a rising inflection. I replied, "Because she does not wish to dress for dinner." Jen said, "Whoever saw her dress for dinner?" I said, "Jen, be good now, and take her dinner, and watch me when she comes home." On her return at night, I said, "Mary, how did you ever have the nerve to ask the Bishop to bring you your dinner? Did you think because you are not working for me, you would take your meals with Bishop Hare and the boarders? You will eat with Jenny, the same as you always have."

The incident was closed. After he did get some provision and took her to the house, he said she would follow him around and say, "Mr. Hare, Mr. Hare, what will you have for dinner?" So, he bought a cook book, went into his room and locked the door and tried to study up what to have for dinner, until the two missionary ladies arrived, who were to take charge of the school and came to his relief, and Miss Gallighan sought other fields.

PINE RIDGE

About this time, my husband secured a tradership at Pine Ridge. He could not take me with him that winter. In the spring, he came after me. Meantime, he had two nice log rooms built. The end of the road, at that time was thatcher. He got his team there, and we camped that night, near Fort Niobrara. Dr. McGillicuddy had brought his wife down to take the train East, so he accompanied us in the morning and was company for us on the trip. There did not seem to be anything in sight but those long horn cattle and cattle ranches. It seemed to me, we were nearing the end of the world. As we neared the agency, and I saw real buildings made of pine boards and real churches, I found it was not the end of the world at all. We drove up to our home. My husband had done all a man could do to make our home pleasant. He had selected some pretty print and made some curtains and put them up at the windows. He had a washstand, which I still possess, a relic from Red Cloud Agency. A pail, tindipper and wash dish ablutions could be taken at any time. What more could heart wish? Everyone I met reached out a welcoming hand, and I soon became interested, both out doors and in. There was a stockade from each end of the stor, inclosing all the out buildings, stables, haystacks, and place for drying beef hides.

I was out raking in the back yard one day when an elderly, pleasant faced Indian stepped up and taking hold of the rake handle, said "Nana wan-e-cha," meaning he, not me, was to do it. Ever after, we were firm friends, and he was always my helper, knowing he would get a few tid bits, not in his own tepee. One morning we saw him standing outside the door. I said to the maid, "What do you suppose that old fellow wants this morning?" "Oh," she replied, "Nothing but tea and coffee, sugar and baking powder." He understood our sarcasm, and while a broad smile lit his face, he said, "Tallow-matches," showing he could think of two more things.

DR. MCGILLICUDDY.

Dr. McGillicuddy was the agent in charge of the reservation at this time. On the return of his wife, they called. We found them delightful. and during our entire residence on the agency, they always tried to make life pleasant for their employees and the other residents of the agency. Often times, when officers were being transferred from Fort Robinson elsewhere, they gave receptions which were very enjoyable.

SUN-DANCE

About this time, occurred the sun-dance of the Indians. I tell this as it was told me. There were a number of virgins, who cut and dragged the pole to the grounds. No one else handled it until it was set up on the grounds, where a buffalo's head was placed on top and various trimmings. There were ropes attached to the pole, to which the men, who were to endure the torture, were fastened. I once had a stick, about eight inches long, that was given me as a relic of the sun-dance. It had blood stains on it, and they told me that it was one that had been used. The way they put it in was to take a butcher knife and cut a slit an inch long on side of the breast, and attached by thongs to the rope of the pole. I saw one who had been thus prepared go to the

pole, and put his arms around it, and looking heavenward, sobbed and prayed. Just then I made my exit. I could not stand any more. I did not see the others; but friends told me one Indian danced for a long time; then when he ran backward, an Indian put his arms around him and jerked him backwards, and then he tore away. Another one danced hard, tore away, fell on the ground, then jumped right up again.

In other parts of the grounds, the Indian women were dancing various dances, in some places they were dancing the Omaha. Some of the men had whistles made from the leg bone of an eagle, which they held in their mouths; and looking up at the sun, danced while they blew on the whistles. It was an uncommonly large sun-dance. It was said there were between eight and nine thousand Indians present, and not more than forty or forty-five white people. A friend and his wife were walking around the grounds, and came upon some who were having refreshments. With true hospitality they were offered some soup. Fearing to offend them, they made a pretense of eating the soup, but ate mostly crackers. In preparing the animals for the soup, they were evidently in a hurry, as there were many hairs around the edge of the dish.

One day I was at the sun-dance, and a little girl about three or four years old, came in, mounted on a horse which had strips of bright calico tied onto the horse which came up and around the little girl. She came in smiling, as though going to a picnic. The medicine man took her off the horse, laid her down on a blanket, and with a sharp butcher knife, cut a slit in the top and in each lobe of the ear, while the women beat drums to drown the sounds of her cries.

One day I saw three or four Indians sitting at one end of the enclosure. One of them, Blue Bird, I knew, and I smiled at him, but his face was perfectly immovable. Just then, the police touched me on the shoulder, and told me if I wanted to go to the other side of those Indians, I must go around the enclosure. Then I knew at once they considered them as sacred for they sat there facing the pole, where they were to endure so much torture.

At a particular place during the sun-dance, they held ceremonies to invoke the help of the Great Spirit for the success of their hunts when going after deer, buffalo, and other animals.

The last day of the dance was "give away" day. I saw a young woman step out of a buggy, and with a wave of her hand, turn it over to a young woman standing near, expecting it to be reciprocated.

INDIAN ALARM

After the sun-dance was over, life again went on as placidly as usual, until one day when one of the traders with his wife and one of the missionary ladies drove wildly up to the store, and told the clerk to tell my husband to take his family and leave as soon as possible for the Indians were all painted up and the Indian women had gone into the hills crying the war song. He said he was going up to Ben Tibbets, twelve miles away. Soon two other families came and were much excited. One woman was so prostrated, I felt sorry for her. I had her lie down, and tried to quiet her, but soon, they, too had gone wher the others had gone. One family never returned but went on to Sidney. My husband went to see what we had to defend ourselves with. He found we had nothing but an old revolver that would not work. He went to hitch up the team, and while he was gone,

a note came from the doctor, saying the trouble was over, and he hoped we had not been frightened. One cannot blame women at the agency, who had small children being frightened, when they saw the Indians in their war paint, right in front of their windows, and did not know what moment they might be subject to an attack. One lovely girl said, "Oh, Mama, let's pray, let's pray." Her mother answered, "I have something else to do beside pray right now." She was trying to find her younger children. But the doctor with his usual firmness and quick decision had the difficulty settled very soon. For some time after that, the women at the agency kept their trunks packed, ready to leave at any moment, but they had no occasion to leave.

MY PETS

Deer sometimes came near the agency and were shot. I had a number of pets: a deer, an antelope, two crows, and a chicken hawk. I put a red flannel strip around my deer, for the Indians would not shoot it if they knew it was my pet. We owned a ranch some miles southwest from the agency, where we built a large house prettily situated on a table land. There were three men at work building stables, sheds, and corrals. One morning, I heard strange noises, and looking out, it seemed as though the whole flat was covered with grouse. Some of them were strutting around, raking the ground with their wings, no doubt making eyes at their sweethearts. The men heard them and arose to look at them. I said, "Do you think there are seventy-five or eighty of them?" They said, "Every bit as many as that. We have probably encroached on their old mating ground." My son had a pasture of four hundred and eighty acres. The grouse soon dispersed and nested in this pasture. We never allowed any shooting there, and they soon became very tame, and came up around the house, and ate with the chickens, as did the quail, with their young broods. I took up life on the ranch with the same zest as usual, and it was, on most ranches, the interest centered around the horses and cattle. The White River ran directly through the whole length of the pasture. The migrating ducks and geese soon discovered that they would not be molested here, and they made this their resting place each spring and fall. There were many large cattle ranches in this country then. There were many people passing back and forth, and we also had our friends in Chadron, who made frequent visits to our home.

CURIOS.

When we lived at the Agency, I made a collection of Indian bead work, porcupine quill work, and other Indian handiwork, buckskin beaded women's dresses, men's buckskin and cloth shirts beaded and fringed, tobacco sacks, pipestone pipes and tomahawks, war clubs, bows and arrows, beaded gun cases, bow and arrow quivers, children's beaded and fringed jackets, which I hung on the walls and from the ridge poles of the house. They were much admired. A gentleman, who stayed over night, said, "I love a house decorated like this."

My time on the ranch was not all taken up with house work, which gave me time to make a collection of specimens of petrified bivalves, fishes the petrified teeth of pre-historic animals, which were quite plentiful in this locality.

GHOST DANCE.

As the year passed, the Indians started the Ghost dancing at all of the

agencies. We often heard them dancing on still evenings at their camps a few miles below our place on the river. The Ghost Dance was a part of the ritual in connection with the Messiah craze which spread over the entire Indian country during the latter part of 1889 and 1890. A white man appeared among the Indians and claimed to be the Messiah. He preached to them, and told them that he could touch their buckskin and cloth shirts and make them bullet proof; then they could go to war with the white people and exterminate them, and the buffalo would come back, and everything would be as it was before the white people came. The Wounded Knee battle, between one troop of the 7th Cavalry and Big Foot's band, brought on the Indian War of 1890. At the time the settlers became alarmed and moved their families to the nearest towns along the railroad. A large number moved to Chadron; many were housed in the County Court house and taken care of by the County Board.

My Indian woman-helper had gone to the Agency to get her rations which were issued by the Government each month. The remains of Big Foot's band and the soldiers were there and there was great excitement, and they would not let her leave the agency to return to our place. She saw many of the wounded Indians. They converted the Episcopal Church into a hospital, and it was filled with the wounded Indians. She saw one young Indian woman who had been wounded, who pointed to the bullet hole in her Ghost shirt and said, "They told me that a bullet would not go through this shirt."

NOT AFRAID

I stayed at the ranch, and finally one of our friends wired my husband, that he must come and make Mrs. Mead leave the ranch and come to town. He came down to the ranch bringing a man with him. They were both armed, and got there about two o'clock in the morning; and wanted me to get ready to go to Chadron. I had never been frightened by an Indian and I told him that I had set bread sponge and that I was going to bake it--Indians or no Indians--anyhow I could not leave without taking care of what valuables we had there. My husband returned to town without me.

My son had quite a lot of horses, and he concluded to gather them up and take them to a pasture near Chadron, where they would be safe. The next day, I baked and cooked up food for the men, and they rounded up the horses. A neighbor across the river had taken his family to town and had come down with a team to move his furniture that day; so my son hitched up our team and told me to drive some four miles up the river to a crossing and meet this man with his team and follow him into town. I drove to the crossing and asked a settler if that team had come yet. He said, "Yes he is about in town by this time." So I drove on into town alone and arrived there all right. I stayed in Chadron for some time.

About this time seven troops of the 9th Cavalry and four companies of infantry were brought from the railroad and posted on White River about five miles below our ranch. My son sold them beef cattle.

The Indians were always friendly to us when at our ranch. An Indian Chief, Red Shirt, came to call on me after his return from Europe, where he and his daughter, Annie, had been with Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. He told me of his impression of the country, in going East. The houses were thicker and thicker, the further East you went. In England, there

was no room left. He told about being presented to Queen Victoria, and how surprised she was that the Indians could talk English. Red Shirt's home was on the Reservation, about six miles north of our ranch. His daughter, Annie, died soon after their return from England. I have her picture.

The main body of the Indians were surrounded by the troops on White Clay Creek, about six miles north of the Agency, and being unable to break through the cordon of troops, finally surrendered. General Brooke was in command of the troops until General Miles came. General Miles arranged the peace terms, and the last Indian War was over.

PEACE

After peace was declared, I was in Chadron one day and met a woman friend, who said, "Oh, Mrs. Mead, I have not met you since you did that brave deed." I said, "I am unable to understand what you refer to." She said, "I heard that you drove a team into town from the ranch during the war." Suddenly, it dawned on my dull intellect, that I was an illustration of the saying, "They that know nothing, fear nothing." Had I ever attended a real scalp dance, and escaped with my own scalp intact, it might have made me afraid--as it was, "Ignorance was bliss."

After the war was over, my husband was at the Agency at a store of one of the traders. While he was there, a man came in and said, "Hello Mead." The trader asked him if his name was Mead, John Mead. He said it was. The trader told him there was some old officers of the 22nd infantry inquiring about him. They were the same officers who used to come to the Choteau Creek Ranch so many years ago. So you see how long that frontier friendship had lasted. We regretted very much that we did not know of their presence at the Agency at the time, being only eighteen miles away.