Benkelman Nebr
Nov 19th 1940

Mr A E Sheldon
Lincoln Nebr
Dear Mr. Sheldon.

I was very much disappointed when I found I would be unable to meet with the Historical Society at their annual meeting. The railroad company was not able to locate a man to relieve me on that particular date.

I appreciate your letter of Sept 27th and your suggestion of publishing my address of Sept 21st which covered in a meager way, the Indians side of the Beecher Island battle.

You suggested that I furnish a bibliography..
The compiling of such is something I am not sure of being able to arrange as you would wish. Therefore, I have made an effort to rewrite my address and include references from sheet to sheet. You will note I have copied entire reference in many instances. I have followed this method as I believe they are a valuable contribution to the story.
Forthermore, considerable of my talk was based on first hand knowledge gathered from many interviews, letters, and local research, consequently I have included the entire article, altho in other instances I have merely refered to such items.

The fact is, I am sick of a great deal of references I run across. They are merely taken from earlier written stories and these stories were written for reader appeal and not to cover facts and should never have been accepted as historical. I refer to Wellman in particular, as well as Freeman, John Y. Nelson, and even Brady's "Fighters and Indian Fights". There is much of value in all of those articles, but they are full of holes..
I have made reference to these writers, not because I always used their material, but because I either contridicted it, or in some instances, found it coincided with that which I had gathered..

There has been at least two publications by the Beecher Island Association. Vol 5 in 1917 in which Brininstool assisted and a later booklet, under date of 1930. Both are very good, altho they made no effort to sift but merely gathered articles written by as many of the Scouts as possible.

Brininstool has since published two stories after interviews with Schlesinger and Hurst. Both are good and both are in the manuals as well as in different Vols of Kansas history 12 and 17--Freemand wild story is in Vol 6.

The Beecher Island people have held a reunion each year. The 1935 flood destroyed the island and monument. Parts of the monument were recovered and they were placed on the south bank, near the auditorium, stucco and wood were used to complete the new monument, which was dedicated this year. They expect to continue as large crowds came ~~during~~ year.

W. S. Dutton

You will find I have typing so use it for a summary. Please consult also arrange References & notes as you wish - using as little or as much as you desire. W.S.D.

Please return my original Draft

" As The Indian Knows Beecher Island"

By E.S.Sutton
Annual Reunion Sept 22-1940
Beecher Island, Colorado.

Along in July I received a letter from Ray in which he indicated I was to appear on this program. He closed by saying, "Now Everette this subject is right up your alley---it's Duck Soup for you." Well, the words 'duck-soup' struck a responsive cord in my memory. Perhaps Ray has forgotten the incident, but I have not.
As lads we spent a day communing with Nature. Like Sherman we intended to live off the country. However, when evening came we had bagged a Blue-wing teal, a skinny mudhen, and two small frogs. There were four hungry boys, so we decided to make duck-soup. It was a pitiful sight to watch those things as they stewed in a gallon tin---but that was nothing compared to the taste !

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As we go along I hope each of us will visualize ourselves as an actor in this drama of the Plains---WE MUST LIVE THE PART -- otherwise history is of little value.
I did not come to entertain but to cite facts.
Yes, it will take thought ! Well, perhaps that will be hard on we mortals.
As Bill Hanley says : "Brains are an awful responsibility. Man has been wobbling around with them ever since it happened." (a)
Perhaps that explains why there is so much sorrow in this world---
--it seems life's problems must solve themselves, using 'tragedy' as a conveyance, rather than experience.

In presenting the Indian version of the Beecher Island battle, I find it necessary to review history in order that we may appreciate that which the Indian HAD and also that which he LOST.
But I shall not bore you with repetition of the accumulated details of the past one hundred years. Instead, I hope to summarize the review in story form, hinging the incidents upon the experiences of the elder Mr. Hersey.
The '60's saw the end of both the Indian Empire and the buffalo, altho the closing chapter was written in the early '70's. (b)

I believe the " Parade Of The Wooden Soldiers " the most intriguing motion picture I have seen. It was a dream of a picture.
At heart we are all children and we love to dream.
Well, dreaming is a wonderful thing, if we dream properly.
Dreamers, there are two kinds. The kind that rides along and lets thoughts flutter across their minds and then there are the kind who see a vision and rides off to make it come true. (c)

Well--you recall how the toys, all so prettily painted sat upon the shelf in the toy shop. How appealing they were, and how dear to the children--But yet so lifeless !
Then all at once, in the stillness of the midnight hour there was heard that dreamy, enchanting song "The Parade Of The Wooden Soldier." It awakened the toys on the shelf, it put life into their little bodies.! It did something wonderful to them ! They danced down from the shelves and they had a glorious time playing together.
There were the painted dolls--the tin soldiers--and the circus animals.

(a) Feelin' Fine. (b) The Border and the Buffalo. Buffalo Days.
(c) Feelin' Fine.

Even the coo-coo clock enjoyed the sport, altho it could not romp about the floor, but it certainly counted time for the rollicking, frolicking little toy people !

I TOO HAD A SIMILAR VISION !

But First, I would take you to the Denver home of Luman J. Hersey who was a scientist of renown, he was a lover of nature, he was cultured, and above all else, he was a gentleman.
To know him was a PRIVILEGE, but to be entertained in his home was an EVENT. At times his house was crowded with friends, when this happened I was a happy and an excited lad. It meant I would get to sleep in the attic with Mr. Hersey.
That attic ! What a treasure room ! What a Delight, and what a place to dream !
There were mounted birds--a deer hide--and a wolf pelt on the floor. And there were guns, fishing tackle, oars, boots, traps, shells by the case, trophies of the hunt and pictures. But the picture which impressed me the most was that of Chief Ouray, a personal friend o f Mr. Hersey's.
Then there was an old print of a Kansas Pacific train---and hanging on the wall was a pair of buffalo horns.

In the still, thought provoking hours of the night Mr. Hersey would paint a word picture of his impressions as he crossed the plains of Kansas in the middle '70's. He related those expereinces so vividly that they pulsed into life, just as did the toys in the toy shop !
Things began to take shape--the objects in the room became animated !
Suddenly I was in the Land Of Yesterday, in the Land of Enchantment !
As the flickering light from the street lamp fell upon the buffalo horns, shadows formed. A shaggy head appeared and the small reddish eyes took light--then the oddly awkard body lumbered away in that peculiar gait of the bison.
It seemed the wolf rug took a new form, it arose from the floor, it stretched and a gaunt grayish lobo lazily followed the humpbacks.
Cheif Ouray then stepped from the picture to take his place at the head of his tribe.
The Uncle Sam engine began to rustle from the leaves--It belched forth black smoke---and we were now travelers.

All day long the little high wheeled engine traversed the plains of Kansas.
Long ago the last homestead was passed...And now the buffalo appeared.
First a salty old bull which had been exiled from the herd by the younger animals--then scattering bunches--and now seen across the western horizon were great clouds of dust !
Yes, it was a Kansas Duster, but a duster caused by thousands and thousands of buffalo as they continued that strangest of all pilgrimages; the annual migration to their winters feeding grounds. (a)
The frantic toots of the engines whistle went unheeded, and the train, unable to penetrate that living mass came to a screeching halt. (b)
Rifles spat hot lead from the car windows, buffalo stumbled and fell, others crippled away, but the herd never turned aside. (c)

(a) Hornaday... (b) Hersey... 'Time Exposure' Jackson ...
(c) Buffalo Days, Wheeler... Buffalo Land--Webb
Col Dodge

In evident enjoyment the passengers killed the magnificient animals for the mere pleasure of killing. Ashamed that his fellowmen should be guilty of this wanton murder, Mr. Hersey vowed to dedicate his life to the conservation of wildlife.

Following the herds there came the Indians. IT was their Autumn hunt. At this time they would procure their winters supply of meat--- and prepare the hides from which they would make clothing, tenting, and bedding.. The buffs provided nearly every need of the Indian. (a)

And then into this picture there came the buffalo hide hunters. I yet hear Mr. Hersey, his voice vibrant with indignation as he pictured the ruthless slaughter of the buffalo...I could hear the booming report of the Sharps .50---and see the curling drift of the blackpowder smoke---and the ox teams as they turned eastward with their multiplied thousands of hides for the tanneries...."while the flesh of the buffalo rotted upon the prairies." (b)

AND NOW--with a blast of the engines whistle, the VISION turned to REALITY. I awoke to the realization THAT SOMETHING HAD TRANSPIRED WHICK EXPLAINED THE ACTION OF THE INDIAN, perhaps an excuse for them---and certainly an indictment against the Whites.

As that engine disappeared into the setting sun; that same sun set upon the eon old economy of the Indian ! As the sun arose the next morning it arose upon thousands of longhorns coming up the Chisholm trail, to take over the buffalo range. (c)
And from the East there poured a horde of hungry landseekers, like so many crickets.
All of this conspired to crowd the impoverished Indian from his nativity--crowding him unto unwholesome Reservations whence they became contanimated with the Sins of the Whites...where they fell victims to the diseases of the Whites..where they learned the vices of the Whites.

(a) Report to Commissioner of Indian Affairs Dec 1907--Warren K. Moorehead.
"Between 1840 and 1849 there were but few attacks against whites on the plains, and most of these occurred to the south, in Texas, or along the Santa Fe trail. It was not until and during the summer 1849 that extensive emigration set in towards Calif... Expeditions, not only of United States troops but of adventurers, buffalo hunters, and miners, penetrated to the far west. Among these were travelers who thought an Indian no higher than a dog, and fired upon peaceful parties of hunting Indians without the slightest provocation....
THE WHITE PEOPLE INTRODUCED WHISKEY AND SMALLPOX. It is therefore not surprising that all the Plains Indians soon assumed a hostile attitude toward any being with a white skin.
I have talked with many Indians of Pine Ridge and they all agreed that the destruction of the buffalo was the greatest calamity ever brought upon their race. They could forgive the whites for attacking their villages, and for the disregard of treaty promises, and overlook the seizure of their lands, but they could not forget that the Americans made useless and unnecessary slaughter of that grand, majestic native animal, typical of the "spirit of the plains,"..But few men appreciated what the buffalo was to the Indian. He was used for TWENTY TWO different purposes.
His meat sustained life; it was cut in strips and dried, it was chopped up and packed in skins, its tallow and grease were

notes

preserved--all for winter use; its bones afforded material for implements and weapons; its skull was preserved as great medicine; its hide furnished blankets, garments, boats, ropes, and a warm and portable house; its hoofs produced glue; its sinews were used for bow strings and made a most excellent substitute for twine. .....They never killed wantonly, and the buffalo would have been in existence today if his destruction depended solely upon the Indian hunters...."

(b)...Extermination of the Buffalo, Hornaday 1887.)
"Every intelligent person is familiar with the enormous exportation, aggregating millions, of hides to eastern and foreign markets during the period embracing the years 1850 and 1883. Thousands of men flocked west to hunt buffalo solely for their hides. Most of them were inexperienced and destroyed animals before they learned how to properly prepare a robe for sale. The plains were in a few years lined with millions of skeletons. Complains were made by the Indians, who depended solely upon the buffalo for existence, to the government at Washington, but without avail. To be a buffalo hunter became popular. Buffalo Bill killed 4280 in 18 months...."

(b)...Buffalo Bone Days..M.I.Mc Creight..

(b)...Buffalo Land, Webb.." 1870 some 50,000 buffalo killed by hunters in Kansas. About one third went into robes, a third for meat, and a third merely killed for sport Approximately 16,500 robes, 3,300,000 pounds of meat salvaged, some 33,000 robes wasted and 20,000,000 pounds of meat left on the prairies...."

(b)...J.A.W.Hudson, trapper on Republican river 1873...
"Now I will tell you something about the Sharps guns. There were three kinds in general use. The Sharps carbine, used by the military was known as the .56 carbine. It was a heavy gun with a short barrel, very handy to use in the saddle. It was a slow fire and a slow bullet and only used for short range shooting. No self respecting hunter would be seen with this gun as it was not at all accurate except at close range and it lacked hitting power and range..It was a mystery to me why the army used it, unless they figured the Indians would fight at close range. However, the Indians soon learned its effective range and kept away The "Reliable 40-90" which I have in my possession was effective at a much longer range and it was quite accurate. This was our favorite gun. The bore was smaller than the carbine, the barrel is quite long and heavy, and the cartridge carried a hefty load of powder..
The "Big 50 " was the favorite buffalo gun. It was much heavier than either of the other guns, and it used a very long cartridge with 120 grains of powder. I owned one of these buffalo guns and used it some. However, the buffalo did not last long after we came to Nebraska and I disposed of the "50" for the lighter 40-90 which we used for antelope hunting.

(c) Chisholm Trail, Ridding...
Cattle etc Mc Coy.
Personal narratives to E S Sutton by Mrs. Carter Darnell, Texas to Nebraska 1865-1885..

Soon the Indian became an outcast, a victim of the worst characteristics of both the Whites and of the Reds--without home and without friends.. There seemed to be but one alternative, he must fight, ravage, steal ! Yes, do anything to avenge his lost estate--while a Bureau of Indian Affairs, stinking to the high heavens, was serenely indifferent to the despoilation of the Indian Empire. (a)
Even the buzzards could not stand the stench--they refused to soar over the Reservations.

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(a) Plains Of The Great West, Col R.I.Dodge 1877.
"The Sioux held a council, which was attended by the dissatisfied element of other bands, and decided to drive out all the whites found in their hunting territory.....After the terrible massacre of 1862 in Minnesota the Indians became more bold.....
...Chief Big Eagle makes the statement the causes which led up to the trouble was the Whites were constantly urging the Indians to live like the white man....Some of the ~~Indian women~~ whiteman abused the Indian women....The Indians did not think the traders had did right.....Killing off all the buffalo..... "

(a) White Chief, Belden.....
" Red Cloud, chief of the Sioux, one of the ablest and most intelligent Indians in the country, said to an officer of the Army that he knew the White man could wipe out his tribe, but he was fighting for his home. It was a question of starving or being killed and of the two he would rather be killed. This is Indian Philosophy and from his stand point, it was right."

(a) Corrupt Indian Affairs Officials...Genl G A Custer p 114...1867
"The ways of Congress are sometimes peculiar--not to employ a more expressive term...It is somewhat remarkable that those measures which are plainly intended to promote the public interests are seldom agitated or advocated in the "third house" (One, Senats--Two, Representatives--Three, Lobby) While those measures of doubtful propriety or honesty usually secure the almost undivided support of the lobby....and do assemble so powerful and determined a lobby as a proposed interference with the system of civilian superintendents, agents, and traders with the Indians....From almost every state and territory the retainers of the Bureau flock to the National Capital. Why this rallying of the clans? Is there any principle involved? The answer is, "There is too much money in the Indian question to allow it to pass into other hands."
This I believe is the true ~~question~~ solution of our difficulty with the Indians of the present day. It seems almost increditable that a policy which is claimed to represent and to be based on sympathy for the red man and a desire to secure to him his rights, is shaped in reality and manipulated behind the scenes with the distinct and sole object of reaping a rich harvest by plundering both the Government and the Indians.
The salary of an agent is comparatively small. Men without means, however, eagerly accept the position; and in a few years, at furthest they almost invariably retire in wealth. Who ever heard of a retired Indian agent or trader in limited circumstances?

Cont'd

note Cont'd

How do they realize their fortunes upon so small a salary ?
In the disposition of the annuities provided for the Indian by the Government the agent is usually the distributing medium.....there is no system of accountability, no vouchers given or received, no books kept....If the agent, instead of distributing to the Indians all of the goods intended for them by the Government, only distributes one half and retains the other half who is the wiser ?
...I have seen Indians dispose of buffalo robes to traders, which were worth from fifteen to twenty dollars each, and get in return only ten to twenty cups of brown sugar, the entire value of which did not exceed two or three dollars.. This is one of the many ways agents and traders had of amassing sudden wealth.
I HAVE KNOWN THE HEAD CHIEFS OF A TRIBE TO RISE IN COUNCIL IN THE PRESENCE OF OTHER CHIEFS AND OF OFFICERS OF THE ARMY AND ACCUSE HIS AGENT, THEN PRESENT, OF THESE OR SIMILAR DISHONEST PRACTICES.
....Trace many of our difficulties with the Indians to these causes....
...we should urge the abolishment of a system which has proven itself so fruitful in fraud and dishonest dealing toward those whose interests it should be their duty to protect..

Before the advent of the Whites, the Indians lived, we shall say, in an Indian Eden. (a) The elements may have been extreme at times, but when so, he merely holed up and let Nature have her frolic.
There was no disease as we know disease today.
There was no poverty--every Indian sought honor by dividing his surplus with the aged. (b)
There was no immorality, the Indian lived a strict code of ethics, the violation of which meant castigation from the tribe.
There was no widowhood, the deceased's brother was required to take into his tepee his brother's wife.
There were no orphans, the children became his children.
There was no race suicide--no denial of the laws of nature--IT WAS honorable to have children and a disgrace to be barren.
Above all, the Indian had his own pagan God, an only God and one in whom he trusted. In his pagan way, the Indian was a better 'christain' than any of us because he lived his religion.
The Indian did not fear death as do we of today, but he welcomed it as a release from a sordid world into a better and closer relationship with the Great Spirit.
Adversity was not charged against the Keeper Of The Happy Hunting Grounds; but it did warn the Indian that he as an indivdual had displeased his pagan God, whereupon he made immediate atonement.
Evil things were caused by the Evil Spirit-both of which were to be shunned. (c)
The Indian has never been truly converted to our religion. He may have accepted it as he is too much of a diplomat to fight the inevitable, but in his heart he is yet an Indian..
He has but one answer to our attempt to christianize him. It may be tersely stated in the eloquent words of Sitting Bull :
"My God answered my prayers--What more can yours do ? " (d)

(a).."My Life As An Indian." Willard J Schultze. Com, Ind Affairs.
(b).. "Sitting Bull" Stanley Vestal..."Fighting Cheyennes" Grinnell
(c)...Report of Commission Ind Affiars 1863.
"The Kaws never took kindly to the religion of the whites. They said: "It may be alright for you, but ours is better for us" ...They believed in the Great Spirit Manitou of other tribes, Wau-con-dah in theirs..During these later years of contacts with the whites the vices acquired far exceed the benefits or virtues received."

(d)....Commissioner Of Indian Affairs..1863..Personal interview with Red Cloud..Warren K Morehead..
"Of late years he was rather inclined toward the faith of the Catholics. But when younger he was reported to have said that he believed in no White man's God, but held to the Great Spirit, Waukantanka, and propitiated the evil spirit also; that, if he tried to do his duty, help his people, and was a good man, he should not fear to meet the Great Spirit in the hereafter. That so far he agreed with the Missionaries of the different denominations, but because they were in discord among themselves as to just how the Great Spirit should be worshipped, he considered that not one of them was better than another; that his pagan religion was as good as theirs, and that he should so as his heart prompted him."

(d)....Letters to E S Sutton from Mrs. Rosa Ecoffey, daughter of John Y. Nelson and a half..sister of Red Cloud. Now in charge of Indian Relations of Pine Ridge Agency. 1938...

General Custer was a more profound student of Indian life and character than is generally recognized. I do not feel safe in leaving my subject without first quoting these words from his book, "My Life On The Plains."

" To those who advocate the laws of civilization to the Indian, it might be profitable to investigate the effects which such application produces upon the strength of the tribes as expressed in numbers. Looking at him as the fearless hunter, the matchless horseman and warrior of the plains, where nature placed him, and contrasting him with the reservation Indian, who is supposed to revel in the delightful comforts and luxuries of an enlightened condition, but who in reality is grovelling in beggery, bereft of many of the qualities which in his wild state tended to render him noble, and heir to a combination of vices partly his own, partly bequeathed to him from the Paleface, one is forced, even against his desire, to conclude that there is an unending antagonism between the Indian nature and that which his well meaning white brother would endow him. Nature intended him for a savage state; every instinct, every impulse of his soul inclines him to it.. He himself cannot be civilized, he fades away and dies. Civilization such as the white man would give him deprives him of his identity. Education, strange as it may seem, weakens rather than strengthens his intellect. Where do we find such specimens of educated Indian eloquence comparing with that of such native, untutored orators as Tecumseh, Osceola, Red Cloud of the Sioux, Red Jacket, and Logan. Or to select from those of more recent fame, Satanta of the Kiowas Unfortunately for the last named Chief, whose name has been a terror to our ~~#####~~ frontier settlements, he will have to be judged for other qualities than that of eloquence."

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Most of us are acquainted withe the Epic and Heroic battle known to History and "Beecher Island." (a)
Only in a small way can we appreciate the suffering and mental anguish these defenders endured. All of us feel like cheering with joy as we read of the relief party being sighted on the far hills. (b)
...And tears come to our eyes as we Memoralize the men who fought and who died on the sands of the Arickaree ! (c)

(a)...Spontaniously Forsyth's first words to Carpenter were; "Welcome to Beecher Island"

(b)...First to arrive was Gel Carpenters Det.Tenth U.S. Cavalry (colored) Few hours later Bankheads Second of the Fifth U.S. Cavalry...Vol 12 Kans 'Fort Wallace.'

(c)...Known as Forsyth's Scouts. 51 men, armed with Spencer repeating carbines with 140 rounds per man, 4000 extra rounds of ammunition on pack mules..Also Colts revolvers with 30 rounds.
Lt.Beecher, Dr Mooers, Wm Wilson, and Culver killed. Farley died from operation. All five bodies buried at Island.. Vol 5 ...

We shudder with justified horror---and we can not resist a feeling of hatred and bitterness toward the savages as we recall how they raided the settlements of Kansas, leaving in their wake misery, sorrow, mutilation, and the ashes of burned homes, but worse yet, the ashes of despoiled womanhood. (d)
We of this country see but this side of the story. We only know the horrors of the fiendish warwhoop and of the massacre, therefore, in a way, we can be pardoned if we consider a Good Indian is a Dead Indian.
Comparatively speaking, we had nothing to do with the causes which lead up to these raids, consequently, in a menner, we are the innocent sufferers...

But TIME has a way of healing wounds.
Above all else the American people love fair play.
Subconsciously we have never been satisfied with the total acceptance of that old opinion of the Indian. We have felt a bit ashamed of our deportment. Most certainly it has not been above reproach and in many, too many instances we have lacked the courage to seek the Truth because we fear the answer.
Grudgingly we have changed our ideas a bit, but in so doing we have salved our conscience by saying;
"The Indian Did Not Make Use Of This Land---We Redeemed This Land---- We Civilized This Land, Therefore It Is Ours."

The Indian used this land as God intended, he lived in harmony with the Divine Plan. He took of Nature only that which was necessary for his existence for he did not aspire to wealth.
The Red man did not despoil the things God put here for mankind, but it took the White man to commit the unpardonable rape of the West.
Under the economy of the Indians, Nature had been a bountiful provider. The very things which had been favorable to him, or merely disagreeable incidents, now became the enemy of so-called Civilization because the Palefaces had the unadulterated gall to challenge Nature. He attempted to improve upon God's Plan, and Nature rebelled.. She is now having the 'last laugh'.
Her children are bastards--they are known to 'Civilization' as "Blizzard", "Drouth" "Erosion" "Pests" Dusters" and "Vermin. "

(d)...Colonel Scully went to Indian Territory after Cheyennes 1868..Prior raids began north of the Neosha and followed to Smoky Hill, Saline and Solomon. in 60 days 117 settlers killed and 7 white women taken captive.-"Wellman." "Custer.." "History of Kans."

Can we blame the Indian for his bitterness--for his hatred of the Whites, for his rebellion, and for retaliating ? (a)
There were broken promises and broken treaties.
There were unlivable conditions upon the Reservations. (b)

AND THERE STOOD THE BEWILDERED RED MAN !

He had been taught to believe in a White man's God--in Prayer--
In Truth--and in Brotherly Love !

BUT HE WAS NOW FULLY DISILLUSIONED !

The Indian reverted to the warpath, the only life he knew--and he lived according to the only code he might trust.
He treated the Whites exactly as he treated his Indian enemies---
---and exactly as he himself expected to be treated is ever so unfortunate as to be the victim. (c)

(a)....Contributing cause, Chivington's Massacre Nov 28 1864 on Big Sandy. Emissaries went to Northern Cheyennes and Sioux and persuaded them to join Southern Cheyennes and Arapahoes . Custer..Grinnell...Dictionary of Am. History V 8 V - - Will Hodge
Leavenworth Daily Conservative Jul 1 1865..Kans Vol XV pa 525
"A letter from Senator Doolittle, at Fort Larned, to Hon. James Harlan, Secretary of the Interior, expresses apprehension of an extensive Indian war on the upper Arkansas. The Cheyennes, Kiowas, Comanches and Arapahoes, numbers five to seven thousand warriors, are banded together to make war on the exposed settlements. The Senator believes that peace can be made with the chiefs if justice is done them. They have lost confidence in the whites from the cowardly butchery of the Cheyennes on Lance Creek, an affair in which the blame was on our side..."

(b)....Tribes used to Northern climate and high altitudes were moved to Reservations in Indian Territory, where they died like flies from disease caused by impure water, poor and different food and unsanitary conditions...
Commission Investigating Indian Affairs, Cong Record 1865-67..

(c).... Sitting Bull....White Bull...Warpath, Vestal..
Death on the Praries, Wellman.
(Wellman can not be accepted as a reliable authority. Many errors have been detected..I quote from a letter under date Nov 9 1939 by E A Brininstool;
"Yes, that book of Wellman's "Death on the Prairies " is the limit. It is full of absurbities and false statements, and should have ~~###~~ "died abornin'", as far as its historic worth is concerned....Wellman acknowledged to me that I "had him" on certain errors."

This brings us to the story---"The Indian's Side Of The Beecher Island Battle."
Before going further I wish to impress upon you that anything I say does not detract from the heroic and uneven battle fought by the Scouts, In presenting these facts I feel that it adds to their Glory, not that my weak efforts are necessary for their Deeds are emblazoned above all the efforts of the worlds most accomplished Writers and Master Artists...
Politically the battle was not important, and tactically it was not unique, yet in personal valor and physical stamina the Battle Of Beecher's Island epitomizes all that is strength and all that is valor in the saga of the West.

I realize it seems very popular to assail the heroes of the Past. To do so seems to elevate the writer to the Literary Class, up among the highbrows.. But I think you agree with me that it merely proves the depravity of the writer--he is endeavoring to reduce these people to his own level of thinking.
Surely we admit our heroes were not all virtue, but who of us are ? Perhaps some were beyond the pall of polite society, but what of polite society ? Much of it hides behind a veneer of subterfuge which would make Satan curl his tail with glee.
So why point a finger of scorn ? Rather, do as the Indians did; take pride in the deeds of others--praise their good qualities--glory in their happiness--extoll their virtues, even that of ones enemies..

I believe two of the first stories which I heard about Beecher Island were those of Comstock's death, and of Barney Day and his scalps.. Both stories were intended to discredit these two ~~Scouts~~ men and I am happy to be able to clear their names.

Sharp Grover and Scout Comstock.

Sharp Grover was accused of having killed his friend in order to acquire the Rose Creek ranch owned by Comstock.
Sharp Grover did not kill Comstock, but Comstock was killed by the Indians. ~~which~~ I offer the following evidence as proof of Grover's innocence. Exhibit "A"--the story as told by Charley Carmack, Ambulance Driver ~~Barney Hay, one of Forsyth's Scouts~~, who was at Ft Wallace at the time..Exhibit "B" is a similar narrative by old Tom Maddigan who run a saloon at the Fort and who knew the facts of Grover's death at a later date. Exhibit "C" is a unique story told ~~to~~ me by Frank Yellow Bull, whose father was at the Indian village and who knew the men who counted "coup" on Comstock's body..
We also have General Custers version, which should be considered s seriously inasmuch as Comstock was both a scout for and a close friend of Custers..Col. Wheeler, who was clerking in the Commisary at the time of the killing, gives an identical narrative in his book "Buffalo Days." Sometime after the incident, Mr. Wheeler became owner of the Rose Creek hay ranch which supplied forage to the Fort..
Briefly the story is. Comstock and Grover, against the advice of those at the Fort, went to the Cheyenne village where they hoped to obtain information relative to the rumored warpath, but they did this under the guise of trading. Perhaps something happened to cause ill feeling. One story is that Comstock had a fine revolver which the Indians coveted. While returning to the Fort the Indians overtook the two men and a running battle ensued in which Comstock was killed. Grover, altho seriously wounded, fought off the savages until his rescue by troopers who became worried over their absence and went in search of them..

Write 2 Cy.

(A)...Charley Carmack and Old Tom Maddigan relate the following story to Geo W. Williams, Mc Donald Ks.
As told to E S Sutton by Geo W Williams;
" There have been many conflicting stories about the death of Scott Comstock who was chief of scouts for the 5th Cavalry stationed at Fort Wallace, Kansas. One is to the effect that Grover killed Comstock in order to get the Rose Creek hay ranch which Comstock owned. Later, Grover was supposed to have been killed by a friend of Comstock's in retaliation.

I know the truth of that deal. It was given me by two men who knew the circumstances. One was old Tom Maddigan, who ran a saloon near the Fort. The other was Charley Carmack, ambulance driver for the Fort. While Charley is a windy sort of a cuss, especially when telling of his own exploits, but when he has something to say about the other fellow, you can generally bank on it.

The Cheyennes claimed to be friendlies--but they never were friendly except when hungry and during weather which was too severe ~~bad~~ to get out to raid and raise hell. In 1868 there was an encampment of the Cheyennes about 10 miles southwest of Fort Wallace. Comstock and Grover were very close friends, but I do not think they were pardners in the hay ranch. It seems Comstock owned the ranch..
Both Comstock and Grover decided to ride out to the Indian village ~~camp~~, which was a damn fool thing to do, but both men were daredevils and did not know what fear meant. They really went for military information, but they pretended it was ~~tried~~ to trade horses. Some of the bucks admired the sixshooter Comstock carried, they wanted to trade, but Scott refused. About dusk the men decided to leave camp. Perhaps they suspicioned the Indians. Anyway, not far from camp they saw two bands of Indians coming, and it was soon evident the Reds intended to overtake the men. ~~as~~ The Indians now divided and a band approached from either side. A running battle ensued. Comstock's horse was shot and as it fell it caught Comstock's leg and pinned him to the ground. The Indians soon dispatched both horse and man. Grover, although badly wounded, managed to escape to the Fort, where a detachment was immediately formed and they set out to the scene of the battle.
Charley Carmack was connected with the Fort and was ambulance driver. Comstock's body was picked up and returned to the Fort where it was buried in the military cemetery. Charley described to me the location of the grave, which was unmarked, as were many others. Later I tried to locate the grave, but failed. Just how it happened that Grover later came into possession of the Rose Creek ranch is something I do not know.
Grover was just recovering from the effects of the wounds when the Forsyth Scouts were formed. He became their chief of scouts and was on that fateful trip in pursuit of Roman Nose.
The trail led to the Republican and at last to the point of battle..

Sometime after the Beecher Island affair, Grover went on one of his periodical drunks. When intoxicated he was abusive and an overbearing bully. This time he picked on the wrong man at the wrong time. He went into the drug store of Doc Whiteford's and he was bandishing his guns and acting real ornery. He was too drunk to shoot straight, but I do not think he meant to do any shooting. However, Doc thought otherwise.

(A) continued..
Doc was a small weazened squirt, but he came out from behind his counter with a .45 which was nearly as large as he himself and he proceeded to galvinate Grover. All of this is a matter of record. Whiteford was arrested for the killing of Sharp Grover. He was hauled up before the local judge, a flannel mouthed Irishman who asked Doc if he was "guilty or not guilty ? " Doc admitted that he was guilty of the killing of Sharp Grover, but he added that under the same circumstances he would do the same thing again.
That set the judge back on his withers. The judge scratched his red poll and then said he guessed he would have to pronounce sentence. He then said. " So you plead guilty. Alright, I find you Not Guilty fer lack of evidence."

(B)..Same story told by Tom Maddigan.
Also by Col. Wheeler, commisary Clerk at Ft Wallace in his "Buffalo Days."

(C) "My Father He gets scairt at Turkey Legs Village, 1868"
As related to E S Sutton by Frank Yellow Bull, a full blood Cherokee...1935.

Our people all civilized, we never go on the warpath--just live on government Reservation where we got put when the Whites steal our land in the East. We came with the Five Nations long ago. Our people all farmers.

One time when my father was a young man one of his friends said; "Come, we make party and go west--we do some hunting and maybe steal some horses." My father thought that be fine.
They traveled along the "Strip" where the Government says our people can travel to get to buffaloes--but it too far and our people dont go much, only some young men looking for trouble. When they got over in Staked Plains they blundered into some Comanches and got real scairt for their lives, but that was all. The Comanches were friendlies..They visited and hunted and feasted several days. Comanches say, "You young men go with me. Lots of Indians, many tribes, going up on Republican for big hunt and pow-wow. Maybe start war on Whites."
My father was civilized--he was a christian By God !--and he says to himself--"Now I am here--me and my men cant fight these bad Comanches--if we run away they think we talk and maybe Comanches get mad and come get us..So we go part way with these men. Maybe something good happen."

They was going up into Arkansas country to visit. My father and his young men go along. They jogged along. They visited some Indians near Big Sandy and then Comanche men say, "Now we go over on Smoky and see my wife's brother--a Cheyenne."
My father thought that be alright. They was having a good time. He wanted to see the country so my father he went along--their little ponies jogged right along.
The Comanche says to my father. "We friendly Indians--Cheyenne friendlies, but we better be careful--too many soldiers after Black Kettle--they after some bad Comanches and Apaches. We go at night and see my brother. He is at Cheyenne camp six-eight miles from Fort, maybe more. Soldiers see us they sure kill us."

(C)...cont'd..

My father says they visit Cheyennes. Lots to eat. Chief says: "You are good men. Comanches tell good story. You been away from your women long time. I will send good woman your tent for to cook."
My father says toomany strangers come out to village. Some white men come--mostly Indians come at night and talk-talk. My father he got ~~got~~ scairt and says to his men; "We better go home."
One day some white men, two white men came out to village. All village worried and say; "What do they want ? Those men came for something--they came from Fort--they work for the military.. Maybe they want to kill Comanche friends."
Those men wanted to trade. But my father says they talk too much--they look around too much. They says; "Lots Indians go warpath, huh !" Turkey Legs says, "Huh !" They says, "Maybe so, I dont think so, huh !" Chief he says, "Huh !"
Comanche men stay hid in tents, afraid soldiers come after them---maybe soldiers think Comanche men hostiles and kill them.
But Comanche men not hostile--just friendlies visiting brother.
No can believe Whites, whites always full deceit.
The two white men see fine woman, wife of Cheyenne, sister of Arapaho boy with us. The white men make bad pass. All Comanche friends very mad.. Whitemen wanted trade horses--trade some knives for buckskin but all time talk, all time talk too much. Rattling tongue maybe say nothing but head and eyes asking other things. Comanche men says to my father. "Tonight we go home, maybe we go up north where all tribes going. You maybe go home. Those white men are going to get soldiers, maybe attack us, maybe rub us out..Maybe we better rub out white men before they bring military ."
That scairt my father. My father says. "My mother is old--she needs me, I go home tonight, By God !"
My father he see White men go from camp. Comanche men get their horses, they afraid get rubbed out. Some Comanche and Cheyenne men follow the whites from the village, they all think soldiers now come to kill Comanche, maybe rub out village. Maybe they better stop two white men first.
My father went outside and hid--my father and his men did. After while warrior came back to village. He cried out loud. Camp Crier then called out loud, "We had to rub out white men--they come to kill us--one man is killed--other man is down in wallow shooting fast. White men was noisy, white men was quarreling. Maybe soldiers say White man kill his friend.. Maybe Cheyennes better break camp quick.. Maybe better move. Soldiers hear shooting and come quick...
My father he got up his horses, his men get their horses. When it gets dark my father he starts for Cherokee Reservation--good and fast..

Bad Indians all on warpath that summer..Come winter my father heard about big battle on Arickaree. Soldiers killed. Indians killed--not many Indians killed. Indians dont like to be killed. Indian warriors like to count "coup"--dead Indians cant count "coup", Huh !
My father he thought; "Maybe some Comanche friends in fight."
My father he didnt fight--my father was a civilized christian, By God !"

(D)...Death of Comstock..."Life On The Plains" pa 100 Gen Custer. 1868.

The Indians were camped in their village not far from Big Springs in Western Kansas and were professedly at peace. Still, no one familiar with the deceit and bad faith invariably practiced by the Indians when free to follow the bent of their inclinations, ought to have thought of trusting themselves in their power. Yet Comstock,----did that which he certainly would have discouraged in others. He left the camp of the troops, which was but a few miles from the Indian village, and with but a single companion rode to the latter, and spent several hours in friendly conversation with the chiefs. Nothing occured during the visit to excit suspicion. They were urged tostay the night with the Indians. The invitation was refused. Comstock always carried in his belt a beautiful white handled revolver, and wore it on occasions. This had attracted the covetous eyes of the savages--Comstock refused all offers to exchange it, no matter how tempting.. Months before, when riding together at the head of a column, in pursuit of the Indians, Comstock had observed that I carried a revolver closely resembling his, remarked that I ought to have a pair, and then laughlingly added that he would carry it until he found the Indians, and after giving them a sound whipping he would present me the revolver.
Comstock and his companion rode out of the village for their own camp, they had proceeded but a ~~short~~ mile from the village when they observed about a dozen young warriors galloping after them. Still suspecting no unfriendly design, they continued to ride until joined by the warriors. The entire company then rode until the Indians succeeded in separating the two white men---each with Indians riding on wither side of them. At a presoncerted signal a combined attack was made by the savages on the two white men. But the latter attemptpted to defend themselves-----, Comstock was fatally wounded at the first onslaught, and soon after was shot from his horse. His companion, being finely mounted---soon outstripped his pursuers and reached camp with but few slight wounds. The Indians did not seem disposed to press him closely as is their usual custom, but seemed anxious to secure Comstock. He, after falling to the ground, was completely riddled with steel arrows, and his scalp taken. The principal trpphy, however, in the opinions of the savages was the beautifully finished revolver---and they afterwards confessed when peace was proclaimed with their tribe, it was to obtain this revolver that the party of young warriors left the village and followed Comstock to his death.

Barney Day And His Scalp.

Now a word about Barney Day, the Scout. The Denver Post of July 27th 1930 carried a story written by Frank S. Byers in which it was purported that Day killed a chief Medicineman who had been snipping from the crouch of a cottonwood tree. It was said Day ended the savages career and carried away his scalp along with his war bonnet, which was kept as a trophy. Mr. Byers goes on to say that he hopes to secure this scalp for the Colorado Museum of Natural History.
After Mr. Day recovered from the wounds he received at Beecher Island, he worked in a General store at Fort Wallace and became well known.
I asked a personal friend of Day's concerning this scalp. This is what he told me.
"I was well acquainted with Bernard, more commonly called "Barney" Day and knew him to be a man of his word and one who talked little.
At Beecher Island, his trigger finger was hit by an Indian bullet while his finger was in the trigger guard. The finger was practically shot off. Barney took out his knife and cut it off.
Barney is credited with the killing of the chief Medicineman of the Cheyennes under Roman Nose. This Medicineman was a sharpshooter and had secreted himself in a tree some eastof the Island. It was not long until Barney discovered that this bird was causing real damage and in time Barney saw him poke his head around the tree as he aimed at the scouts. Barney knocked the devil from his roost.
Barney denied to me he has scalped the medicineman, altho he did get a wonderful fine warbonnet. Later Barney came in possession of a scalp, as well as other trophys, but I never credited any of the wild yarns that were circulated about the Scouts scalping their foes." B

Scouts Morton and Whitney tell a very conservative and accurate story of the battle and their statements agree with that of the Indians in which no mention is made of the taking of scalps by the Forsyth Scouts. However, scalps were taken by others of the troops which I will cover later on.

(a)....."Buffalo Days"
"It was said they killed the chief, Roman Nose, and the head Medicine man in one of the charges.....
...Medicinemen, however, rarely go into battle, but remain near by 'making medicine' to encourage the others."

(b).....Chauncey Thomas, Denver Colo writes me : (1940)
William N.Byers was my uncle by marriage, and the interview you mention with his son, my first cousin, Frank Byers.
I've had the scalp in my hands, and the war bonnet on my head, when I was on the Day ranch 8 ot 10 miles down the Grand river near Hot Sulphur Springs, Middle Park, Colorado.
Barney was of course dead then, shot in the Grand Lake county Commissioners shooting scrape at Grand Lake in 1882, I think.
Barney said the Medicine man looked " ten feet long stretched out dead" as they found him after Barney shot him. I stood 6 ft 1 in my cow heels and the end of the Bonnet dragged several inches on the floor, tho it showed signs of wear there. The Red must have been fully 6 ft 6 or more.
When they moved to California they (his son) took the things with them. Where they are now I dont know. All of the Day's are now dead. Barney used on the Island a 40-70 straight shell hammer Sharps with double set triggers, about 9 pounds.

(c)....Forsyth and others speak of killing a Medicineman. The Cheyennes deny it.

DOG SOLDIERS

The term "Dog Soldiers" and "Crazy Dogs" have come into much disrepute. General Forsyth writes; "Dog Soldiers was a name given about a hundred of the various Sioux and other tribes that were for some reason renegades and outcasts--bad men generally--who had been compelled to withdraw from the association of their own people..Banded together, they were practically Indian Pirates."

General Custer gives a similar description, altho more moderately toned: "The Dog Soldiers were a band of warriors principlally composed of Cheyennes, but made up of the turbulent and uncontrollable spirits of all the tribes...Neither they nor their leaders had ever consented to the ratification of any of the treaties to which their brothers and other tribes had agreed. Never satisfied except when at war with the white man, they were by far the most troublesome, daring and warlike band to be found upon the plains. Their warriors were all fine looking braves of magnificient physique, and in appearance and demeanor more nearly conforming to the ideal warrior than those of any other tribe. How they came by the name "dog Soldiers" I have never learned.

One explanation is that they were principally of the Cheyenne tribes and when first known as Cheyenne Soldiers. Cheyenne was originally "chien" which is the French word for 'dog'..Hence the term "Dog Soldier"

Nothing can be further from the truth. The dog was held in high esteem by the Indians. The 'dog' was the symbol of fidelity and alertness, two traits to which the Indian aspired. The term 'dog' was never applied as an expression of contempt or derision, nor as a curse, as do the present day Mohammedians.. The fact is that the Indian did not know how to swear. Swearing is strictly a white man's vice and one of the sins bequeathed to the Indian..The Indian's method of reproach or expression of contempt was to ridicule, a pastime in which he excelled.

The Nebraska Historical Society furnished me with this information . "Throughout the plains there existed a military organization so similar among the various tribes as to suggest a common origin...In each tribe the organization consisted of from four to twelve societies of var ying rank and prominence ranging from boys to old men.

The name of each society had reference to some mystic animal protector or to some custom. Among the Kiowas there were six societies known as Rabbit, Young Mountain Sheep, Horse Caps, Black Legs, Skunkberry People, and Chief Dogs..

Among the Cheyennes the Dog Men (Dog Soldiers) acquired such prominence in the frontier wars by virtue of their superior number and bravery of their leadership that the name "Dog Soldier" has frequently been used by writers to designate the whole warrior organization. The " Dog Soldier" group was composed usually of the bravest and most able warrior Their mission seems to have been chiefly one of leadership. The principal leaders were the generals and director of battle and often performed feats of great personal bravery."

Grinnell, perhaps our most eminent authority on the Indian, gives this description." The "crazy Dogs" was one of several soldier societies of which others were Red Shields, Dog Soldiers, Crooked Lances, Kit Fox, Bow Strings, and Chief Soldiers.

In large camps these societies was always on duty to enforce the orders of the chiefs and they generally kept order in camp.

Neither the Cheif Soldiers nor the Red Shields took part in the police work, for these societies were composed of the older men."

Cont'd

"It sometimes happened that the young men became arrogant and endeavored to exert undue influence on the camp. The powers of the various soldier societies were great and they often punished men who violated customs or camp rules.. Sometimes they even whipped the men, beat them with clubs, and even killed their ponies." (Fighting Sheyenne)

In 1867 the Government appointed a Commission to meet with the Plains Indians in an effort to formulate a Treaty and to designate Hunting reserves as well as Indian Reservations. In October of that year General Harney, General Sanborn, Wm. Bent and Kit Carson met with the Black Kettle Cheyennes, Southern Arapahoes, Kiowas, and Commanches, on the Little Arkansas. Most of them accepted the treaty, but the Dog Soldiers however refused as it ceded their lands on the Republican and Smoky Hill.
Previously, General Hancock and Major Wyancoop met with the Northern Cheyennes at Fort Larned. General Custer gives a vivid description of the conference. This was in the spring of 1867, the meeting was held on the prairies some 21 miles from the Fort--but for the sad condition of the Indian ponies, following a severe winter, the indications pointed to a battle.
Pawnee Killer represented his Sioux people while Chief White Horse was there with the Northern Cheyennes. Roman Nose seemed to have been the principal speaker and his impassioned oration is a literary gem. Generally speaking, the result was negative. "My Life on the Plains" Custer

We find that Sitting Bull, White Bull, White Horse, Red Cloud, Dull Knife, Roman Nose, Pawnee Killer and Whistler, all of them outstanding leaders, chiefs and warriors, were all members of a similiar society. And to have been admitted into one of these societies, they first had to prove themselves to the satisfaction of the Indian Council. You will see from these statements that the Dog Soldiers were not renegades but they were a dominant and a constructive factor in the Indian economy. When dealing with the 'dog men' one dealt with the flower of Indian manhood. We can liken them to our higher degrees of Masonry. (Fredrick Webb Hodge) (Dict Of Am Hist.)

The Cheyennes say this preparatory to the fight:
"White Horse and Tall Bull* chiefs of the Dog Soldiers, went down to the Sioux camps and avised them to make ready and REQUESTED that the Indians ATTACK IN A BODY."
"Failure to organize has always been the weakness of the Indian. Small groups were likely to steal off, make independent attacks in the hope they might accomplish some great thing which would gain applause from their fellows." (Fighting Cheyennes)
The Dog soldiers were opposed to these independent attacks. Before a buffalo surround theDog Men policed the camp to deter ambitious men who would steal away to be first at the kill.
Had this been done prior to the Beecher Island battle, and had the entire encampments attacked in a body as requested by Roman Nose, therewould have been an entirely different and a more tragic ending. Military authorities are agreed that the disturbance created by the ambitious warriors gave Forsyth sufficient warning to prepare a defence. Withoutthis warning, the Scouts would surely have been rubbed out.

(* Tall Bull Killed By Maj. North, Jul 11-1869
Battle of Summit Springs - under Gen. Eugene A. Carr)

Those eight young warriors, six of them Sioux and two Cheyennes, Starving Elk and Little Hawk, made the premature raid on the Scouts with the hope of stampeding the horse herd. All they thought of was the stealing of horses.. They succeeded in getting only seven animals.
However, they did change the entire course of History insofar as it concerned the settlements of Western Kansas.
They warned the Scouts of the impending attack.
Those precious moments were sufficient to prepare a defence.
Those eight young men wrecked the potential power of an ambitious plan in which the Indians were to have driven the Palefaces from the plains.(a)
Military authorities believed that the Indians were massing on the Upper Republican for a great assult upon the settlements.
The army disregarded the fact this territory was a favorite place for the Indians to gather for the annual buffalo surround.
However, the gathering of the several tribes appeared suspicious to the Military,although the Indians declare their purpose was to hunt buffalo. If some of the young warriors raided the settlements, it was merely an indivudual affair, not a concerted action.

(a)...."At the present writing a heavy cloud portending a general Indian war along our entire frontier, from the British possessions on the north to the Mexican Border on the south, hangs threateningly over us....Gen Custer..1867...
....."The Sioux held a council....and decided to drive out all the whites found in their hunting territory." Col. R I Dodge.
..... Dict American Hostory....
..... Leavenworth Daily Conservative, Jul 1 1865. Kans Vol XV..
"Emissaries went north and persuaded the Northern Cheyennes and Sioux to join them." Wellman..

On September 16th there were two large villages of Ogalalla Sioux under Pawnee Killer some 12 miles southeast of the Arickaree, which we assume to have been on the South Fork or one of its tributaries.
Nearby was a large village of Northern Cheyennes under White Horse and Tall Bull, chiefs of the Dog Soldiers.
In the same vicinity was a village of Northern Arapaho's under Chief Little Man. (b)

We have no definite record of the location of the Southern Cheyennes. They were the people whom the Scouts had just followed from the Smoky Hill. Their trail continued on up the Arickaree from Beecher Island, so it seems safe to say there was a large encampment of Southern Cheyennes some distance up that river, or perhaps their village was over on the South Fork. It is possible there were two of the villages . General Carpenter tells of finding the site of a large village on the South Fork southwest of the battlefield. Perhaps this was the location to which the maurading southern Cheyennes went. (c)

(b)....Fighting Cheyennes. Grinnell.
(c)....Carpenters Story Of The Relief. Vol 5. also Personal letter to Brininstool.

Then too, there was a camp of Brule Sioux in the vicinity of the Island, perhaps over on the Black Wolf. Two days before the battle a war party of Brules left camp to raid the settlements of Kansas. Some of the young men deserted this war-party and as they were returning to their village, they discovered the Scouts coming up the Arickaree. It was these young warriors who warned the Cheyennes.(a) Scout Murphy, who was one of a reconnoitering party sent out by Genl. Forsyth immediately after the Indians attempt to stampede the horse herd, reports that an Indian village was seen from the hills NORTH of the island. (b)

There is one pertinent fact...These villages DID NOT anticipate a clash with the military, and they were taken more or less by surprise. (c)
It is also self-evident the Southern Cheyennes felt satisfied that they had definitely escaped the Scouts, else they would have warned the other tribes. (d) Either that or the Cheyennes did not know of the other villages which would negate the military theory of Indians massing for a grand assult upon the Whites.

There is an oft repeated story of a "TRAP" having been set by the hostiles and had Forsyth gone but a mile further that first evening he and his command would have been ambushed and rubbed out. THERE IS NO evidence to substantuate that theory.
The contrary is too apparent !
Had this 'trap' actually been set and failed its mission, Without a doubt the hostile Indians would have immediately charged the unsuspecting Scouts while they were making camp and at a time they were the least prepared for an attack.
I do believe the Strong Arm of Providence caused the Command to go into camp at the unusual hour of 4 p.m. The site chosen was of great strategic importance. There was an Island to retire to. The approach was barren except for the deep grass. The valley was wide, which forced the attacking party to a long exposure under gun fire---and the hills were too far away to be a protection to the enemy, or a place from which they could fire down upon the defenders.

(a).....Fighting Cheyennes.
(b).....Vol 5 Beecher Island Manual.
(c).....Capt L H North..Nebr Hist Vol 15..
"I want to tell you right here one of the Indians failings. When he knows that an enemy is after him it is impossible to take him unawares, but ~~when~~ let him think himself safe and he is the most careless being on earth."
(d)....."Story Of a Soldier" Forsyth.
(e)..... Vol 6 Winifield Freeman, Kans.

Instead of a trap having been set, this is what actually happened. The Northern Cheyenne's were warned by the young men who saw the approaching troopers. The Cheyenne's immediately notified the Arapaho and Sioux villages and requested that they all attack in a body. These villages were from ten to twelve miles from the Arickaree where the Scouts were on the march.
It was nearing the noon hour when the Brule messengers arrived. Criers then warned the camp. Ponies were hurriedly brought in from the prairies and the best war horses selected.
The warriors must bring out their finest war-bonnets, fighting equipment, and most potent charms. Many of the warriors must perform certain rites to insure their safety and all had to paint themselves. (a)
There was no reason for undue hurry, the Scouts could not escape. By late evening everything was in readiness. However, the Indians did not know exactly where the Soldiers were, nor their mission, but they did expect the Whites to attack their village.
Toward evening the Indians set out for the Arickaree and that night they camped not far from the battlefield.
By early dawn they were ~~awakened~~ directed toward the Scouts by the noise of the eight young men who attempted to stampede the horses of the military.

The first attack was a massed affair and had they gone through with the charge they would have pulverized the Scouts by the sheer weight of horseflesh. But, when the charging savages came within rifle range, they lost heart. The men divided, everyone for himself, and they passed by either side of the Island..
Later, one man who was known as Bad Heart did ride across the Island and soon after that, he charged through again without harm to himself.. (b)
NO INDIANS WERE KILLED in the first charge.

(a)....."The Fighting Cheyennes"
"Sitting Bull."
"Hand Book of American Indians"

(b).....Winners of The West--by Scout John Hurst.
"Another warrior coming from the north almost ran over me on horseback, and would have done so had not his pony shied to one side, and the Indian had hard work to keep his seat, insomuch that he had no chance to fire at me. However, I was glad his pony took him away, for had he fallen off it would have meant death to one of us. I shot at him as his pony rushed along, but did not see the Indian fall."
.B....."The Fighting Cheyennes"...Same story as told by Hurst.

From Fighting Cheyennes

Later, while the Indians were circling the Island, Dry Throat was the first man to be killed.
The second man killed was Weasel Bear. His nephew, White Thunder, undertook to recover the body and he himself was killed.
These two men were killed by some Scouts who were hidden in the deep grass opposite the island. The Indians did not know of these advance pickets, but at first thought the shots came from the island. (a)

The warriors were then ordered to advance on foot. They approached the island as near as they dared. Just south of the island grew some small trees which afforded slight protection. Some Indians crept through these trees, rushed toward the breastworks and hid in dry holes in the sand. After making this hiding place, they raised their heads to shoot. It was here that Prairie Bear and Little Man were slain while Good Bear was only wounded, later, he got up and run away. It was these three men which the Scouts claim were killed near the Island and some reports would have us believe they were scalped by the besieged troopers.

Scout Schlesinger, the Little Jew, relates that the Scouts did scalp three Indians whose bodies laid near the Island. The Indians say the bodies were recovered. They were not mutilated.
Schlesinger tells of an interview with John Y. Nelson at which time John said he was accused by his Indian wife, a half sister of Red Cloud of having killed her cousin at Beecher Island.
Her reason being that a soldier who wore a buckskin jacket and who was hidden in the grass near the island, along with two or three companions was seen to kill Ermine Bear and White Thunder, while Prairie Bear was wounded.
Nelson wore such a jacket, but he was not at the fight although he claimed to have been with the relief party coming from Cottonwood. Schlesinger says it was Stillwell who wore the buckskin jacket.

Two Crows, Black Moon, and Bear Feathers attempted to recover the bodies of Ermine Bear, White Thunder and Prairie Bear.. However, the dead and the wounded trip lay in the grass most of the day. Finally the young men were able to remove the bodies by tying a rope to their legs and drawing the bodies away. This was necessary as the sharp eyed Scouts would shoot any time the grass was disturbed. Grinnell in "Fighting Cheyennes" makes the statement that it was Stillwell and two other Scouts who killed these Indians, as well as Roman Nose.
Nelson, in his book, "Fifty Years On The Plains" tells of many slain Indians, an impossible number. However, Nelson would not spoil a good story for the sake of a few facts.
Whitney, Morton, and Forsyth all mention these Indians being killed, as do the Cheyennes. However, none of them mention mutilation.
Surely some of the pro-Indian friends, Nelson, Grinnell, or James Willard Schultz who was raised among the Indians and who knew men who had participated in the fight, would have related the scalping if it had actually been done.

Notes

(a)......"Life Of George W Brown" Kans Vol 17
"Jack Stillwell told me the story....Jack and Peter Trudell...with three other men, were ordered to go to the East end of the Island and hold it if possible."
"Roman Nose....when he arrived within 30 yards of Stillwell and his party his spear was observed to fall from his hands and as his body was in the act of falling from the pony his shouting warriors caught him and carried him away."

.....Scout Hurst writes it was the elder Farley and his son who killed these Indians as well as killing Roman Nose.

.....Forsyth says the two Farleys, Harington and Gantt...

(b).....Scout Hurst related to A E Brininstool:
"The next excitement was when the white flag was held up by the Indians for a truce.....Finally decided not to trust them...I have since thought that as there were two dead Indians lying close to our defences, they may have t taken that method to approach and get the bodies.
These two Indians had been shot by Louis Farley, who had been lying in the tall grass on the north bank of the stream, with a broken leg. Both these Indians were in plain view of him as they crept along a ridge of sand made by the water where it divided on each side of the island. Farley shot them both through the head, and when I saw the bodies both Indians had rifles, as well as bow and a quiver of arrows each. The killing of these two warriors had an intimidating effect on the others, and stopped that mode of warfare..Farley was brought into our rifle pit about dark that night. When the relief command reached us his leg was in such condition that amputation was resorted to, and he died the night of the operation."

Later, there were two instances in which Indians were scalped by the troopers, but not by the Forsyth Scouts. Both the soldiers and the Indians confirm this statement.
Whitney writes in his diary, dated Sept 27th:
"Arose early this morning to prepare to start to Fort Wallace. Rolled out about ten oclock, marched twenty miles and camped at four on the south branch of the Republican. Five of our boys killed and scalped a Cheyenne about one half mile from camp." (a)

And again, Oct 20th at Carpenters battle on the Little Beaver, two Cheyennes, Break The Arrow and Bobtailed Porcupine, were killed and both of them scalped by the troopers.. (b)

The possession of Indian scalps by the troopers can be accounted for in this manner, the death scaffolds when found, were torn down and relics taken, and in many instances, scalps also. (c)

By Schlesinger as related to Brininstool, Vol xv, Kans.

(a).....The first days travel we reached the Republican river. Clark and I were flanking on the left and reached the river a little ahead of the main column. There was a sudden falling away of the ground to the bottom where the river flowed, forming a flat plateau about 75 to 100 yards before reaching the river bed. Here we camped for the night.

Note (a)

Before Clark and I descended to the bottom we looked around and saw four Indians running toward three horses. Three of them jumped on the horses and in great agitation galloped away through the water to the other side of the river and kept on to the south as fast as their ponies could carry them, leaving their companion behind. He ran after them, but of course could not overhaul them. Before the three Indians had crossed the river we noticed two or three of our company, who were flanking on the right, hasten down to the bottom toward the Indians. I dont remember what shooting was done, but about this time the main body of soldiers came upon the scene and swarmed down, surrounding the lone Indian, so that we lost sight of him, and when we got there we could not get near for the crowd. I heard he defended himself bravely before he died, and that it was only because his revolver missed fire that none of our men were hurt.

Here also was an Indian burying ground, which the four Indians were guarding evidently. There was one mound composed of stones piled up around a body covered with a buffalo robe. There were six or eight scaffolds, composed of four poles stuck in the ground and a buffalo hide stretched across each pole, on the top of each scaffold lay a corpse fully dressed and wrapped in blankets. All the bodies were pulled down from their lofty perches.. I had no scruples in rolling one out of his blankets.....The Indian had on a head dress composed of buckskin beautifully beaded and ornamented, with a polished buffalo horn on the frontal part and eagle feathers down the back... I also pulled off his earings and fingerrings, which were tin. I also got his beaded knife scabbard and other trinkets. The blanket, one earring and scabbard are still in my possession. I had great trouble carrying my souvenirs away, owing to the awful stench.....At Wallace one of the officers offered me $50.00 for the head dress but I refused....Next morning it was missing from my tent. !"

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c .....I moved to Cleveland...There at Buffalo Bills show I met John Y Nelson...His wife, an Indian squaw...had been on the north hill watching the fight with her people....Nelson said, " Do you remember the three dead Indians you people scalped on the edge of the Island. One of them was a relative of my wife and a man wearing a buckckin shirt was seen to shoot and kill him. All these years my wife and her people have been under the impression that I was with you during the fight, and accuse me because I happened to be there with the rescue party; and partly b because I wore a buckskin shirt"... I was pleased to testify to his innocence.. I infommed Nelson that it must have been Jack Stillwell who wore the buckskin shirt.
In correspondence with Jack Stillwell, I told him the incident. His reply was: "If you have a chance, tell John Nelson to handle the truth more carefully, for I know him well."

Note (c)...Fighting Cheyennes... Carpenters battle Oct 13-30-1868

The soldiers walked up to where the men lay and looked at the one who was dead and the one who was wounded, and shortly after straightened out their wagons and went away, just before dark. The soldiers cut off parts of the scalps of the dead Indians. The one who was not dead was killed, the soldiers afterward said, by opening a vein in the neck. The Indians saw that he had a small cut in the neck.

Roman Nose.

We are all interested in Roman Nose, so named by the whites because of his physiognomy, but called by his own people, Sauts, The Bat. (Handbook Am Ind. Vol 2)
He was the romatic figure of the battle, and perhaps the out standing man of influence of that time. He was a Northern Cheyenne, of a tribe from whence came warriors and statesmen of note--and they were a people who never acknowledged defeat.. Roman Nose was not a chief. However he was the acknowledged leader of the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers, who were the dominant factor of that tribe.
Roman Nose did not enter the battle until late the first day.

Shortly before Forsyth's command was discovered Roman Nose had been feasting at the Sioux Camp. The woman who prepared the food used a metal fork to remove the bread from the pan. This was not known at the time the food was eaten. Later, Roman Nose was appraised of this fact by Eight Horns, one of the Dog Soldiers.
Roman Nose then replied; " THAT BREAKS MY MEDICINE."
Roman Nose was the possessor of a war-bonnet which had been made by the noted White Bull. One of the taboos was that the owner of that bonnet MUST NOT eat food taken from the pot with a metal instrument, instead, it MUST BE taken out with a pointed stick.
An elaborate ceremony of purification was necessary to restore the protective power of the bonnet. Tall Bull insisted that this ceremony be undertaken at once, but the approach of the soldiers interfered.
Roman Nose remained at the Northern Cheyenne Village, some ten miles from the scene of the battle, while the balance of the warriors rode away.

After the failure of the first charges, runners went back to the Cheyenne village where Roman Nose was in the act of purification. The messengers told Roman Nose of the fighting and that a good many Indians were being killed. He then got on his pony and rode to the battlefield. Fighting had then ceased. Everyone was waiting to see what he would do. He stopped at the top of the hill where Tangle Hair overtook him and they sat down together.
Several other warriors came up and dismounted.

White Contrary then rode up and chided Roman Nose for sitting behind a hill while his men were waiting for him to assume leadership. Roman Nose replied;
"At the Sioux camp the other day something was done that I was told MUST NOT be done. This is what keeps me from making the charge.
"IF I DO GO INTO THIS CHARGE I SHALL SURELY BE KILLED ."

Roman Nose, knowing this, went off to put on his war bonnet and to paint himself. He then mounted his horse and rode swiftly toward the Scouts.

Behind him came many Indians. Unaware of the Scouts hidden in the grass, Roman Nose rode almost over them. It was the same men who had shot Weasel Bear and White Thunder.. The same men killed Roman Nose.. The ball entered his back just above the hips. Roman Nose fell from his horse at the edge of the grass. A little later he was able to creep from the sand to the bank. Before long some warriors crept down and carried him off.
Roman Nose lived but a short while. He died about sun down. (a)
(a) The Fighting Cheyennes)

It has been said that Roman Nose wore a white buffalo robe. A 'White Buffalo Robe ' is a sacred object which MUST NOT be handled or used by anyone.. No woman is permitted to touch the hide or take part in the tanning.. The flesh of the white buffalo MUST be left on the prairie and the skin MUST be presented as a votive offering to the Great Spirit. (a)

There were no buffalo horns on the war-bonnet worn by Roman Nose. That bonnet was made by White Bull long ago and it had great protective power. Buffalo horns have no symbolic relationship to the war-bonnet. Feathers indicate heroic deeds and accomplishments but buffalo horns do not. Therefore only certain approved feathers are used--each feather and its position being definitely prescribed by age old custom. (Grinnell--Belden)

The Burial Of Roman Nose.

Medicine Woman, the wife of Porcupine Bull was interviewed by Grinnell. It was she who helped the wife of Roman Nose to bring up her lodge poles and raise a scaffold for the burial. The body of Roman Nose was encased in a buffalo robe and placed upon this scaffold.
It is doubtful we shall ever know where it was erected. However, I think it is correctly assumed that the rites were performed near the South Fork, perhaps in one of the tributary canyons. The Northern Cheyenne village from which Roman Nose rode was approximately 12 miles south or southeast of the battlefield. It seems to have been a definite custom to return the bodies of the slain warriors to their village and naturally the rites would be held in that locality...

I believe most of us have heard the story told by Scout Pliley. It was to the effect that while he was hidden on the banks of the South Fork the second day from the Island, he saw some squaws make preparation for a burial, and from the elaborate activities it was assumed it must be for a warrior of note.
I am not assuming to say who the dead warrior was, neither do I know where he was buried. Scout Pliley did not know--and he said he was not greatly concerned. His own safety was at stake--if he failed in his mission to reach succor at Fort Wallace, his comrads on the besieged island were doomed.

About 1900 the body of an Indian was discovered under a limestone ledge, in about the location of Pliley's hiding place.
Evidently it was the body of an Indian of rank. There were ten brass rings on each arm. Over the head was draped a series of rings similar to those used on harness. These rings were woven on a piece of rawhide.

Fragments of rotten cloth indicated he had been buried in a United States Army officers coat, the epaulets being intact. He had been wrapped in an army blanket. His dog was buried with him along with many beads and perhaps his most cherished trophy, a skull which was suspended from his wrist by a rawhide throng.

There are several stories concerning this body. I have every reason to believe the above is correct. I know the man who was present when the skeleton was discovered (and for some time he had a few of the bones). I have talked with the people who lived on the place of internment. Generally it was believed to have been the body of Roman Nose.
But we have no authority to accept that theory.
The body of Roman Nose was left on a scaffold and it is very doubtful anyone would have gone to the trouble to remove it to a new resting place as the Indians in general left the country . Most of the Northern Cheyennes and Sioux left immediately after the battle. The Southern Cheyennes were fearful of further pursuit by the troops and they seem to have disappeared, evidently returning to their reservation.
Carpenter tells of a village on the South Fork which showed evidences of being hurriedly abandoned. The Arapahoes moved, but they stayed in the territory, along with a few Cheyennes..

The following article may explain the origin of that officers coat. It was written and signed by Hugh M Johnson, Lt. 5th U S Infantry.

".....The country from Fort Wallace to Arickaree Fork was passed over the following December in an unsuccessful endeavor to secure the bodies of those killed in the fight. We surprised a village of Indians at the scene of the fight, fought them off, and found the body of one of the Scouts, but Lt. Beecher and Dr Mooers graves were empty."

(a) Vol 17 Kans. Brininstool..
Scouts Donovan and Pliley...."To Colonel Carpenter.
The men bringing the word crawled on hands and knees two miles, and then traveled only at night, on account of the Indians, whom they saw daily."...Sig High Johnson, 1st Lt 5th ..
(the morning of the rescue)
While breaking camp...some mounted men were observed away off on the hill to the south. Signals were exchanged, and presentlly strangers rode down to Carpenters camp...one being Jack Donovan, one of Forsyth's soouts who had left the lines the second night of the siege, and started for Fort Wallace. He had been accompanied by another scout, Allison Pliley. These two men had reached Fort Wallace shortly after the departure of Colonel Bankheads party. He succeeded in getting several men to accompany him, and had started back to the island, but had taken the wrong course, and only by sheer luck had fallen in with Carpenters command. Pliley had remained at the fort, unable to make the return trip.
(b)..Related to E S Sutton by Archie Cody, at Beecher Island.
"....My most vivid rememberance was a talk by Allison Pliley. I was but a youngster then. He and some other men came over to our camp fire. He told us Donovan and himself reached

Note..
the South Fork of the Republican, some 15 to 20 miles from the battlefield, just as day was breaking..They found a well covered spot on the north bank of the river where he and Donovan crawled back under an overhanging bank and bushes, I believe he said they were forced to stay partly in the water. Sometime that morning their attention was attracted by several squaws coming near the river. From their actions, the men decided it was a burial party and from the elaborate preparations, it was evidently for a warrior of note. Several of the squaws came close to their hiding place and an inquisitive dog discovered the men. Before the dog could bark, Pliley grabbed the animal by the throat and mouth and immediately doused him under water, where he was held until drowned..Pliley says that was the climax of his life. Soon the women left. Who they buried, where the body was buried was something he did not know. The fact is, he was not greatly concerned over the burial of a dead Indian. There were more weighty matters upon his shoulders....
He also told us the location of his hiding plac . It was in a large loop of the South Fork where it bends to the south. His hiding place was on the north bank near the east end of the loop. It was from that general direction the women came, and evidently they returned to the north as the men did not see signs of the savages as they worked south the following night..
He also mentioned that a short distance from the river was an outcropping ledge of sandstone...

(c)...Fighting Cheyennes....
"Soon after the fight at Beecher Island the two villages of Sioux moved up the Republican river and the Northern Cheyennes also went away. There remained only the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers, with a few Northern and a few Southern Cheyennes and a half dozen lodges of Sioux.

(d)...Scout H H Tucker. Vol 5
They (the dead scouts) were buried on the Island.
.D....Homer Wheeler, Commissary Clerk Ft Wallace Man Vol 17
"In early November went with Capt Ed Butler of the 5th Cav to recover the bodies buried on the Island. All graves had been marked, but those of Lt Beecher, Dr Mooers and William Wilson were empty, presumably robber by Indians. The bodies of George W Culver and Louis Farley were removed to the Post cemetery."
.D.....Mj Forsyth..From Div of Ref, Washington DC..
"On the 26th we started for Fort Wallace, every attention possible being bestowed upon the dead and wounded. Captain Bankhead informed Geleral Sheridan, ' I can not remove the dead, but doctors say I can move the wounded tomorrow morning to Fort Wallace."
..D....Buffalo Days..Col Homer W Wheeler.
"We, with Bankhead, had to march about one hundred and twenty miles; Carpenter a shorter distance. We reached the battle ground a few hours after Carpenter.. Those of the scouts who had been killed, four in number, were buried before we arrived. This was necessary as the bodies had commenced to decompose..(Beecher, Mooers, Culver, Wilson killed--Farley died from amputation of his leg and buried before troops left for the Fort.)
A few months after the battle, Capt Butler of the Fifth Inf

with his company was sent to recover the bodies of those buried at the scene of the fight.. He found only the bodies of Farley and Culver..Capt Butler surprised an Indian village near the scene of the fight and gave them battle. He had a howitzer along. The Indians had little use for a gun of such proportions and scampered out of range. Capt. Butler brought back the bodies of Farley and Culver which were buried at Fort Wallace."

....Shortly after returning from the rescue of Col Forsyth's command we started on another scout, Col Bankhead commanding..... We came to a stream we thought was the Republican.....to our great surprise we found we were on the Forsyth battleground... Upon this occasion we found the heads of the scout's horses all placed in a peculiar position, undoubtedly the work of the Indians engaged in the Forsyth fight. These heads had been placed in a hollow square, all facing the north. In the center of this square had been left an opening about six feet wide, pointing to the south. On each side of this opening had been placed three or four heads, thus forming a wing about eight feet in length. The ground was well packed down around and inside this square. Indications were that the Indians had returned after the fight, remaining there several days, dancing and celebrating. From this point we returned to the post, after a march of five or six days. We did not discover any fresh signs of Indians on this scout, although we were gone nearly a month....."Buffalo Days"....Wheeler.

The Number of Indians Killed.

Winifield Free,am, a man widely known and one who wrote graphically and whose story of Beecher Island one is most apt to read; gives a very eloquent story, but I am forced to say, a very misleading account of the battle.
I quote in part from Vol 6 of the Kansas Historical Society, which tells of the recovery of the body of Dull Knife, a Sioux Chief.

"Such lamentations were never heard before by white men--and the awful cry of grief, reinforced by new auxiliaries from noncombatants, produced a preoration to the tragic scene, sublime beyond the power of pen or tongue to portray....And now they are returning for the body of their dead chief, marching down the valley in a solid column on foot--not a warrior wearing a thread of clothing to obscure his hideous form; each brave sang his woeful death song--the spectacle was appaling, and the scene dreadful to behold. Steadily marched the warriors--unheeding the deadly fire from the Island that thinned their ranks every step..With increasing speed they came forward, until they reached the body of their dead chieftain, and bore it away amid the hail of bullets, until hardly half of this heroic band reached the distant hills to receive the acclamations of the exultant squaws.
Upon the river bed and at the verge of the island lay the bodies of hundreds of red men who fell in the conflict---the battle ended with the recovery of the body of Dull Knife."

Mr. Freeman ends by saying: " In recent years it has been ascertained through Indians who were engaged in the battle of the Arickaree that they lost between 700 and 800 warriors."

Now, compare Mr. Freeman's statement of 700 killed with that of General Forsyth, who says: "I counted 32 dead and an undetermined number wounded."
Scout Whitney, who made daily notes in his diary, writes:
"About 50 red devils were killed and wounded."
The Cheyennes claim but 9 warriors were killed...

Both the Indians and the Scouts dismiss the charge of the warriors who advanced afoot with a scant comment.. Genl.Forsyth says it broke up in "abject failure before reaching the Island."
I have already related the Indians description of this phase of the battle in which they marched toward the island until they were within effective rifle range, when they broke for cover and then tried to crawl near enough to the Scouts to snipe them:. Two Indians were killed, which discouraged further sniping.

Now a word about Mr. Freeman's Dull Knife.
We have been unable to learn of a Sioux of that rank by the name of Dull Knife (even if we grant that part of his story to be true) I am inclined to say the entire story is a figure of the imagination.
Dull Knife was a Cheyenne who at that time was in the north giving the soldiers plenty of trouble.. It was Dull Knife who escaped from the Fort Reno Reservation in the fall of 1878, some ten years after the Battle of Beecher Island.. He made one of the most marvelous and strategic marches in the annals of the Western frontier. He made monkeys of the entire military forces of that territory between Fort Reno and Fort Robinson Nebraska.
Dull Knife's band raided the settlements on the Prairie Dog, Sapa and Beaver..At least 41 victims are buried in that vicinity. He stole horses on the Republican, killed George Rowley on the Stinking water, and finally surrendered at Fort Robinson.
Later, they attempted to escape from the barracks where they were imprisoned (unjustly), a terrible fight ensued in which the larger percent of his people were killed, but Dull Knife himself, with some of his people did get through the January snows to Ft Keogh Montana. Dull Knife died in 1885 at the age of 78.

(a).....Geo W. Brown."My Life".. (This seems to be the only authority for the statement that there was a Dull Knife killed--however, facts do not bear it out and the fallac y of the statement is self evident)
"Dull Knife, of the Sioux Tribe...Some of the scouts who had fought with Dull Knife out from Laramie recognized him.. ..the advancing columns numbered 1200 or more.... when scarcely 100 yards away the order to fire was given. A sheet of death blazed out, killing Dull Knife and many of his bravest warriors....the slaughter was appaling"

(b).....My Life On The Plains. Genl Custer.
During the fight Forsyth counted 32 dead Indians within rifle rainge of the Island. Twelve bodies were

(b)...Cont'd
subsequently discovered in one pit, and five in another.

(c)...Dull Knife of the Southern Cheyennes.---By G A Custer. pa 254
"The three chiefs begged to be released, upon the ground that their people had delivered up the two girls ; but this I told them was but one of the two conditions imposed; the other required the tribe to return to their reservation.....
The three captive chiefs had been confined inside the same enclosure with the women and children, but in separate tents. The commanding officer decided to remoce them to rooms in the guardhouse, adjoining the stockade.
From accounts given me by the Indians afterwards, it seems the men of the guard, in the execution of the order, entered the stockade, muskets in hand, and upon the failureof the chiefs to comprehend what was required of them, the soldiers attempted to push the chiefs from the stockade by force....the chiefs, suspicious and imagined that they were being led or driven forth to execution, determined to die there and then. An attack was made at once upon the guard with knives which they had carried under their blankets.
One of the chiefs, Big Head, fell dead at the first fire of the guards,..The oldest of the three, Dull Knife, received a bayonet wound through the body which proved fatal in a few days. The Third, Fat Bear, was felled with a blow from the butt of a musket, but did not receive serious injury...
The Cheyennes then, in accordance with their promise made to me, returned to their reservation and having this far complied with the terms of their agreement then made, it devolved upon the military authorities to return them to their people whom we had.....retained as prisoners of war.
An order was accordingly issued releasing the only surviving chief, Fat Bear, and the woman and children then held at Fort Hays..."

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With your permission I will read that part of the diary of Chauncey B. Whitney which was written from day to day, concerning the battle..

Sept 17th..."At daybreak this morning was aroused by the cry "Indians Eight tried to stampede the stock, got 7. In a few moments the bottom was completely covered with red devils. Went across river to an island, where fighting commenced. About 500 attacked us on all sides. Balls flew fast and thick. The Colonel was the first man wounded. Lt. Beecher was wounded twice, in a few moments 8 ot 10 men were hurt, some fatally.....With a butcherknife we soon had a trench which completely covered us from the enemy. Behind the works we fought the red devils all day till dark. Only two men were hurt after we intrenched. Culver was killed and McCall wounded. William Wilson was also killed early this morning."

Sept 18th...."Indians made slight charge on us, but were speedily repulsed. They were after their of their dead who lay about 20 yards from us. About 50 of the red devils were killed and wounded. They kept firing from the hills all day. No one hurt today. Two men started for Fort Wallace."

Sept 19.. Indians made another attempt this a.m. but were easily driven off. About 10 p.m. myself and A L Pliley were requested by the Colonel to go to Fort Wallace, we found the Indians had surrounded the camp and forced us to return. Was awake all night. It rained all night steady.
Sept 20.. Sunday and all quiet. No attack this morning.
Sept 21.. No Indians seen today. All dined and supped on horse meat.
Sept 22.. No Indians today. Killed a coyote this morning, it was very good. Most of horse meat gone. Found some prickly pears which were very good. We are looking anxiously for succor from the fort.
Sept 23.. All horse meat gone. Tried to kill wolves, but failed. The boys began to cut putrid horse meat.
My God Have You Deserted Us.

The Cheyenne and Sioux claimed only NINE killed and they said they did not know any whites had been killed.
Grinnell consulted Indians who had participated in the fight. Some were then living in Oklahoma, others in New Mexico, but most were in Montana. All agree on the number slain and gave the identical names. They were:

TWO Sioux,	Names unknown.
ONE Arapahoe,	Little Man, a chief.
SIX Cheyennes,	All Dog Soldiers.

Two of these were Northern Cheyennes..Roman Nose and Prairie Bear.
Four were Southern Cheyennes..Dry Throat, White Weasel, White Thinder, Killed By A Bull.

I believe the Indians told the truth as they knew it.
However, several villages participated in the battle, which lasted several days. Some of the Indians left the battlefield earlier than others. Without doubt several warriors died from wounds following the battle which would not have been generally known.
Therefore, it is probable more Indians were killed than they admit.
The number of slain can safely be placed between that of the 'Indian Nine' and 'Forsyth's 32'.

We are forced to ask, "How could the Scouts, all seasoned frontiers men fire into a massed attack with so little effect ?"
The answer is--"There was no massed attack."
The mass always broke up before reaching effective gun range.
The Indians lost heart and they scattered. They circled the defenders and they charged indivudually, but they were suberb horsemen and they hid behind their well trained war ponies, exposing only an arm or a leg.
With few exceptions the Indian never charged over a foe if that enemy stays put. He is an individualist pure and simple, and in his estimation there is no particular honor in winning a battle except that he himself be able to count 'coup.' To do so he must exhibit special acts of bravery and he will take most any chance in order to win acclaim from his fellows. It is his own life he is risking, therefore he is within his right.
On the other hand, the Chief is responsible for the lives of his warriors and for their safe return. If they are led into a trap, or there is a needless loss of life, he will soon find himself without men.

(Spencer .56 carbines had very little hitting power and were not accurate at a distance. The ball would drop several feet at 300 yards.)

The Last Indian Killed.

Forsyth writes:
"On the third day a large and very fleshy Indian, having as he thought, placed himself out of range, taunted and insulted us in ever possible way. He was perfectly naked and his actions exceedingly aggravating. We had three Springfield rifles which I knew would carry much further than our Spencer rifles.. I directed the men using these rifles should sight them at their limit of 1200 yards. At the crack of the three rifles he sprang into the air with a yell of surprise and rolled over stone dead, while the Indians in his vicinity scattered."

Tall Bull, the Cheyenne Dog Soldier chief says:
"The last man killed in the fight was "Killed By A Bull" a Cheyenne Dog Soldier. He was shot on the hill, at a considerable distance from the breastworks of the soldiers, while he was helping to carry the body of Dry Throat."

It was the body of Killed By A Bull which was found by Lt. Carpenter as his command went to the rescue of Forsyth. The body, Carpenter says, was covered with a white robe and wrapped in buffalo hides. It lay upon a ~~####~~ low willow couch in a deserted tepee, southwest of the battlefield, on the South Fork. This was in the vicinity of the Southern Cheyenne camp. Carpenter makes the statement that the body was identified as that of Roman Nose. (Vol 17 Kans) Tradition makes the same claim, some basing their opinion on Carpenter's statement. Others say that cowboys identified the body and marked the spot. However, that story can be discounted entirely as there were no cowboys nor were there cattle in the country for at least 6 years after the battle.
Then there is the conflicting claim that the skeleton found southeast of the Island was Roman Nose. (6)

The Cheyenne Indians who were interviewed did not know of these conflicting statements, therefore it seems the better part of wisdom to accept their version.
The Cheyenne's say it was the body of Killed By A Bull which was buried in his tepee by his wife and this body was disturbed by Carpenters men..While on the other hand, the body of Roman Nose was 'encased in a buffalo robe and placed upon a scaffold made of his tepee poles' southeast of the Island

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(a)...By Brininstool, from Carpenters own story. mms.
Also Buffalo Days--also story by Hurst.
Carpenters command was overtaken by a messenger about 45 miles west of Fort Wallace, about 100 miles southwest of the besieged troops.
First days travel northward was about 35 miles, they camped at some water holes for the night. 20 miles further they reached an imposing dry river bed, perhaps Lauchman Creek which is dry and flows northeast to the South Fork. Scouts failed to loacte Indian trails. Traveling north, they soon picked up another river, this with a stream in a wide, grass covered valley. Here they discovered the first Indian trail, showing some 2000 ponies had passed within the last two days. This was the South Fork of the Republican.
"With a picked force Carpenter rode to a high hill from which a good view of the country could be had. Suddenly one of the

Note (a)

troopers called Carpenters attention to several Indian scaffolds.. they were located on a nearby hill, and the command rode over to make an examination....when they had been pulled down and inspected, their skin wrappings disclosed several warriors who had died from gun shot wounds. There were five bodies....
....their attention was drawn to a large white object in a ravine across the valley. It turned out to be an Indian tepee made of freshly tanned buffalo skins....found the body of an Indian lying on a small platform, wrapped in buffalo hides. He apparently had been a man of prominence, as many Indian trappings and articles were found at the head and feet..He too had been killed by a bullet....The trail treked across country toward the Beaver, Nearby evidence showed that quite a large body of Indians had been camping here several days....

(b)....Roman Nose Hoax...By Harry Oneall as told to ESS

....While working on a well some four or five miles inside the Colorado line, a kid came rushing to us and said he had found a dead man. We dropped our tools and hurried over to the place. ....There were some fragments of an old army blanket scattered about where the packrats had pulled them away from the body..We went to work and in a short time had removed sufficient stone and dirt to bring forth a skeleton. From the course black hair we was satisfied it was the body of an Indian. On one arm was an armlet of some 5 or 6 claws or talons strung on a rawhide throng. The skin had been dried down tight to the bone. There were other artifacts and articles, among them the skeleton of a dog, and also a human skull hung on a piece of rawhide.
About that time there was talk of a re-union at Beecher Island and we conceived the idea of exhibiting the skeleton as that of Roman Nose. We had no authority for the statement, except the current knowledge that the Cheyenne camp was southeast of the Island, and on the South Fork and it was most probable Roman Nose had been buried out there.. One time I talked with an Indian and he had told me a little about the battle. All I recalled distinctly was that the Indians put most of their dead on scaffolds or in the branches of trees to keep them away from the wolves..They said the women fixed up Roman Nose and buried him over on the South Fork. Anyway, it was a good story and a good show.
I recall there were three or four of the genuine Scouts and also one of Carpenters nigger soldiers there--about 1900.
We put the skeleton in a box and charged ten cents a look. Plenty of people paid their dimes so see Roman Nose(?) and they went away happy--so did we--but we couldnt stand prosperity, we got lickered up, and we pulled out. I dont know what became of the skeleton.. I think my pard, Bill, had some of it until his wife made him throw the horrid thing away...
I do not now recall the name of the farm. But it was located on the big loop of the South Fork.. I believe his name was Harvey.

(c)...Col. Homer Wheeler told Brininstool.
"It was said the Scouts killed the chief, Roman Nose, and the head medicineman...But it was not positively known for some time after the battle that Roman Nose was the head chief in the Beecher Island fight, altho it was supposed that a great chief had been killed."

Very absurd

John Y Nelsons 'yarn' about the relief of Beecher Island.
"Fifty Years On The Trail"

"....One morning the general sent for me and asked if I knew where the South Fork of the Arickaree was.. I replied it was some 100 miles distant. He replied there was a party of soldiers from the south besieged there, one had escaped and brought the news. He wished to sent two companies of soldiers at once.
We started off westward and rode all night as hard as we could, arriving about ten oclock the following morning. The party consisted of Lt. Col. Forsyth and fifty picked scouts, who for seven days and nights had been without food, fighting for dear life the whole time.
The attacking Indians force consisted of some 3,000 men, who had fortunately taken their departure just before we arrived.
The scene that presented itself was terrible. The scouts had retreated to a small ~~island~~ cottonwood grove, dismounted, and tied their horses to the trees. The Indians had killed all the horses first, and they were dying, still tied to the trees.
The men had dug holes in the ground with their knives and crept into them. Out of the fifty, forty were killed and wounded.
There were dead white men, dead Indians innumerable, and dead horses all over the place. Three other rescue parties arrived shortly after we did. We handed the men over to one of these, collected as many soldiers from the others as we could get together, and started after the Indians.
After four days traveling we came up pretty close to them, and the commanding officer asked me how many I thought they numbered. I examined the place of their last encampment, counting the fires where the teppes had been, estimated the number not less than 4,000 and reported accordingly. As we only mustered 250, all told, the officer throught the sooner we made tracks the better. He said he didnt want to fight 4,000 men, which he reckoned was a larger party than the one he had lost, so we returned to headquarters and reported the result of our mission to General Bradley..

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The Indians consider the Beecher Island fight of little consequence. However, they say it was a VERY HARD FIGHT.
As they value personal valor and its attendent glory above all else, they missed the greater significience.
Not an Indian was able to count 'coup'---Not an Indian was able to add a feather to his war bonnet--Not an Indian, with the possible exception of Bar Heart who rode over the Island, was able to count a superior deed. (baring the heroism of recovering their own dead and wounded).
Consequently the battle was a washed up affair, and a rather expensive affair for themselves, the sooner forgotten the better.
Through a peculiar process of reasoning, the Indian did not know he had lost face. He was unable to evaluate the causes and effects upon his own morale. All he sensed was that he as an individual had not won acclaim.
He did not know he had lost something far more valuable--PRESTIGE--and in losing it, the leadership of the chiefs was questioned and their power broken.
The tribes immediately reverted to their primitive instinct to scatter. When the Indians left that battlefield, they left their confidence---and when they separated, they separated forever....

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One of the most beautiful traits of humanity is Sentiment.
Sentiment is the thing that cements Love.
Sentiment is the motor that energises Loyality.
Sentiment and Love are the Sweet Potions that make Home--and Home is the fundamental instinct of mankind, whether Red or White.
It is the instinct to Own land and to be independent and to surround oneself with the golden family circle.

We venerate the place where mankind has baptized the soil with his own blood--making of it a sacred spot.
It is only when man places home on the Altar above Life that we find Sentiment the marble base--It Is the tangible object upon which we may place our fingers and proudly say; IT WAS HERE !

Thus in again Memoralizing this epic week and this sacred spot, we know we are memoralizing an unselfish motive, which is the dominant instinct of Humanity, that of establishing a Home....
In doing so, let us not venerate this idealism as that of the White man only, but of the Red man too !
He was fighting for---and in his own peculiar way, protecting his own Home.
It just so happened the Red man stood in the path of the Jaugernaut 'Civilization'. He refused to, or could not adapt himself to this new and strange economy--Consequently he was crushed !

E. D. Swallow Jr.
Sept 22 — 1940

MS1446

As The Indian Knows Beecher Island

By E.S.Sutton
Annual Reunion Sept 22-1940

Along in July I received a letter from Ray in which he indicated I was to appear on this program. He closed by saying, "Now Everette, this subject is right up your alley---It's Duck Soup for you." Well, the words "duck soup" struck a responsive cord in my memory. Ray has perhaps forgotten the incident, but as lads we spent a day communing with Nature.. Like Sherman we intended to live off the country. However, when evening came we had bagged only a Bluewing Teal, a skinny mudhen and two small frogs..So we decided to make Duck Soup...It was a pitiful sight to watch those things as they stewed in a gallon tin---But that was nothing compared to the taste !

1905

IT recalls the story of the negro parson who often used the word 'Status quo'.. It impressed his congregation. At last a perplexed Deacon asked, " Parson, what do you mean by that there word 'Status quo' ?" The Parson replied, "That means the Mess We Is In."

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As we go along I hope each of us will visualize ourselves as an actor in this drama of the Plains---WE MUST LIVE THE PART---else history is of little value.
I did not come to entertain but to cite facts..Yes, it will take thought ! Well, perhaps that is hard on us mortals..
As Bill Hanley says, " Brains are an awful responsibility. Man has been wobbling around with them ever since it happened."
Perhaps that is why there is so much sorrow in this world---It seems life's problems must solve themselves, using tragedy as a conveyance, rather than experience.

Fathers time

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In presenting the Indian version of the Beecher Island Battle, I find it necessary to review history in order that we may appreciate what the Indian HAD and what he LOST.
But I shall not bore you with repetition of the accumulated details of the past one hundred years. Instead I hope to summarize the review in story form, hinging the incidents upon the experience of the elder Mr. Hersey.
The '60's saw the end of both the Indian Empire and the buffalo, altho the closing chapter was written in the early '70's.

1874

I believe the "Parade Of The Wooden Soldiers" the most intriguing motion picture I have ever seen...It was a dream of a picture !
At heart we are all children and we love to dream.
Well, dreaming is a wonderful thing, if we dream properly.
Dreamers--there are two kinds. The kind that rides along and lets thoughts flutter across their minds and then there are the kind who see a vision and rides off to make it come true.

Monday

Well---you recall how the toys; all so prettily painted sat upon the shelf in the toy shop.. How appealing they were ! How dear to the children ! But yet so lifeless !
Then all at once, in the stillness of the midnight hour there was heard that dreamy, enchanting song, "The Parade Of The Wooden Soldiers". It AWOKE the toys on the shelf..It put life into their little bodies ! It DID something wonderful to them ! They danced down from the shelves, and they had a glorious time playing together.. There were the painted dolls--the tin soldiers--and the circus animals..Even the coo-coo clock enjoyed the sport altho it could not romp about the floor-but it certainly counted time for the rollicking, frolicking little toy people !

I too had a similar vision !

First I would take you to the Denver home of Luman J. Hersey, the father of our mutual friend Ray. Mr. Hersey was a lover of nature. He was a scientist of renown. He was cultured, and above all else, he was a gentleman.
To know him was a PRIVILEGE, but to be entertained in his home was an EVENT. At times his house was crowded with friends, when this happened I was a happy and excited lad. It meant I would get to sleep in the attic with Mr. Hersey.
That ATTIC !.What a Treasure Room ! What a Delight ! What a place to Dream ! There were mounted birds--a deer hide--a wolf pelt on the floor--guns, fishing tackle,oars,boots,traps, shells by the case, antlers and Pictures. But the picture which impressed me the most was that of Chief Ouray, a personal friend of Mr. Hersey's.
Then there was an old print of a Kansas Pacific train---but most challenging of all was a pair of polished buffalo horns hanging on the wall.

In the still, thought-provoking hours of the night Mr. Hersey would paint a word picture as he crossed the Plains of Kansas in the middle '70's.. He related those experiences and impressions so vividly they pulsed into life, just as did the Toys in the toy shop ! Things began to take shape ! The objects in the room became animated ! Suddenly I was in the Land Of Yesterday, ~~in the~~ Land Of Enchantment ! The flickering light from the street lamp fell upon the buffalo horns; shadows formed, a shaggy head appeared, the small reddish eyes took light, and then the oddly awkard body lumbered away in that peculiar gait of the bison !
The wolf rug seemed to rise from the floor, a gaunt grayish Lobo that followed the herd.
Chief Ouray then stepped from the picture to take his place with that of his tribe..And the Uncle Sam engine began to rustle from its leaves--it belched forth black smoke--and We were Now Travelers !

All day long the little high-wheeled engine traversed the Plains of Kansas. Imagine the excitement of the passengers as they watched the Stage Driver as he lashed his horses in a vain attempt to keep abreast the train---but with a parting toot the train pulled away.
The Stage Lost In The Advance Of Civilization.

Long ago the last homestead was passed. And now the buffalo appeared. First a salty old bull which had been exiled from the herd by the younger animals--then scattering bunches--and now seen across the Western horizon were great clouds of dust ! Yes, it was a Kansas Duster ! But it was caused by thousands upon thousands of buffalo as they continued that strangest of all pilgrimages, the annual migration to their winters feeding grounds. The frantic toots of the engine's whistle went unheeded--the train, unable to penetrate that living mass came to a screeching halt. Rifles spat hot lead from the car windows, buffalo stumbled and fell, others crippled away--but the herd never turned aside. In evident enjoyment the passengers killed the magnificient animals for the mere pleasure of killing. Ashamed that his fellowmen should be guilty of this wanton murder Mr. Hersey vowed to dedicate his efforts to the conservation of wildlife.

Following the herds there came the Indians ! It was their Autumn hunt! At this time they would procure their winter's supply of meat---and prepare hides from which they would make clothing, tenting and bedding...The 'buffs' provided nearly every need of the Indian !

And then there came the buffalo hide hunters ! I can yet hear Mr. Hersey's voice, vibrant with indignation, as he pictured the ruthless slaughter of the buffalo ! I could hear the booming report of the Sharps .50---and see the curling drift of the blackpowder smoke---then the oxteams as they turned eastward with their multiplied thousands of hides for the tanneries....while the flesh of the buffalo rotted upon the prairies !

And NOW---with a blast of the engine's whistle--the VISION turned to REALITY ! I awoke to the realization THAT SOMETHING HAD TRANSPIRED WHICH EXPLAINED THE ACTION OF THE REDMEN, perhaps an excuse for them---but certainly an indictment against the whites .'

As that engine disappeared into the setting sun, the same sun set upon the eon-old economy of the Indian ! As the sun arose the next morning it arose upon thousands of longhorns coming up the Chisholm Trail, taking over the buffalo range !
And from the East there poured a horde of hungry landseekers, like so many crickets !
All of this conspired to crowd the improverished Indian from his Nativity---crowding the redmen onto unwholesome Reservations whence they became contaminated with the Sins Of The Whites-- -where they fell victims to the diseases of the Whites--where they learned the vices of the Whites..
Soon the Indian became an outcast, a victim of the worst characteristics of both the Whites and of the Reds---without home and without friends !
There seemed but one alternative...He must fight--ravage ! Steal !
Yes, anything to avenge his lost estate---while a Bureau of Indian Affairs, stinking to the High Heavens, was serenly indifferent to the despoilation of the Indian Empire !
Even the buzzards could not stand the stench--they refused to soar over the Reservations.

Before the advent of the Whites, the Indians lived, we shall say, in an Indian Eden..The elements may have been extreme at times, but when so, he merely holed up and let Nature have her frolic..
There was no disease as we know disease today.
There was no poverty--every Indian sought honor by dividing his surplus and tending the aged.
There was no immorality, the Indian lived a strict code of ethics, the violation of which meant castigation from the tribe, often death.
There was no widowhood, the deceased's brother was required to take unto his tepee his brother's wife..
There were no orphans, the children became his children.
There was no race suicide--no denial of the Laws Of Nature--IT WA S honorable to have children and a disgrace to be barren.
Above all, the Indian had his own pagan God, an Only God--it was a God in whom he trusted.. The Indian was a better "christian" than any of us, because he lived his religion, according to his own Pagan Ideals.
The Indian did not fear death as do we of today, but he welcomed it as a release from a sordid world into a better and closer relationship with the Great Spirit..
Adversity was not charged against the Keeper Of The Happy Hunting Grounds; but it did warn the Indian that he as an individual had displeased God, whereupon he made immediate atonement.
Evil Things were caused by the Evil Spirit--both of which were to be shunned !
The Indian has never been truly converted to our religion. He may have accepted it as he is too much of a diplomat to fight the inevitabele, but in his heart he is yet an Indian..

He has but one answer to our attempt to christianize him, it may be tersely stated in the eloquent words of Sitting Bull :
"My God answered my prayers---What more can yours do ? "

General Custer was a more profound student of Indian life and character than is generally recognized.. I do not feel safe in leaving my subject until I have quoted these words from his book, "My Life On The Plains."
"To those who advocate the laws of civilization to the Indian, it might be profitable to investigate the effects which such application produces upon the strength of the tribes as expressed in numbers.
Looking at him as the fearless hunter, the matchless horseman and warrior of the Plains, where Nature placed him, and contrasting him with the Reservation Indian, who is supposed to be revelling in the delightful comforts and luxuries of an enlightened condition, but who in reality is grovelling in beggary, bereft of many of the qualities which in his wild state tended to render him noble, and heir to a combination of vices partly his own, partly bequeathed to him from the Paleface, one is forced, even against his desire, to conclude that there is an unending antagonism between the Indian nature and that which his well meaning white brother would endow him. Nature intended him for a savage state; every instinct, every impulse of his soul inclines him to it.. He himself cannot be civilized, he fades away and dies.. Civilization such as the white man would give him deprives him of his identity.. Education, strange as it may seem, weakens rather than strengthens his intellect. Where do we find such specimens of educated Indian eloquence comparing with that of such native, untutored orators as Tecumseh, Osceola, Red Jacket, and Logan; or to select from those of more recent fame, Red Cloud of the Sioux, or Satanta of the Kiowas? Unfortunately for the last named Chief, whose name has been a terror to our frontier settlements, he will have to be judged for other qualities than that of eloquence."

my life on Plains

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Most of us are acquainted with the Epic and Heroic battle of Beecher Island.. Only in a small way do we appreciate the suffering and mental anguish of these men endured.. All of us feel like cheering with joy as the relief cavalry was sighted on the far hills !-------And tears come to our eyes as we Memoralize the men who fought and who died on the sands of the Arickaree !

Sept 27-1868 Coupeter

We shudder with justified horror---and we can not resist a feeling of hatred and bitterness toward the savages as we recall the raided settlements of Kansas---leaving in its wake Misery ! Sorrow ! Mutilation ! And the ashes of burned homes ! But worse yet, the ashes of despoiled womanhood ! We of this country see but this side of the story---we know only of the horrors of the massacre andwe have felt that the only Good Indian is the Dead Indian !
We had nothing, comparatively speaking, to do with the causes of these raids---consequently, in a way we were the innocent sufferers !

Dudbrook 1878 Bloody Knife 1867

But TIME has a way of healing wounds. Above all else the American people love and demand Fair Play. Subconsciously we have never been satisfied with the total acceptance of our old opinion of the Indian,. We have felt a bit ashamed of our deportment. Most certainly it has not been above reproach and in many--too many instances we have lacked the courage to seek the Truth, fearing the answer.
Grudgingly we have changed our ideas a bit, but in doing so we have compromised by saying; "The Indian did not make USE of this land---WE REDEEMED this land !----WE CIVILIZED this land !
THEREFORE IT IS OURS !

The Indian used this land as God intended. The Redman lived in harmony with the Divine Plan. He took of Nature only that which was necessary for his existence. The Indian did not aspire to wealth. He did not despoil the things God put here for mankind.
It took the Whiteman to commit the unpardonable rape of the West !
Under the economy of the Redman Nature had been a bountiful provider. The very things which once were favorable to the Indian, or merely a disagreeable incident, now became the enemy of so-called Civilization ! The Whiteman had the unadulterated gall to challenge Nature, he attempted to improve upon God's Plan---therefore Nature rebelled.. Nature is having the last laugh ---Her children are now bastards---- they are known to Civilization as "Blizzard" "Drouth" "Erosion" Pests" "Duster" and "Vermin"...

Can you blame the Indian for his bitterness--for his hatred of the Whites--for his rebellion--and for reatliating ?
There were broken promises and broken treaties. There were unlivable conditions upon the Reservations..

AND THERE STOOD THE BEWILDERED INDIAN !

He had been taught to believe in a Whiteman's God---in Prayer--
In Truth !---In Brotherly Love !

BUT HE WAS NOW FULLY DISILUSIONED !

The Indian reverted to the warpath, the only life he knew--and he lived according to the only code he might trust.
He treated the Whites exactly as he treated his Indian enemies---- --and exactly as he himself expected to be treated if ever so unfortunate as to be the victim !

This brings us to the story---the Indian's side of the Beecher Island Battle...
Before going further I wish to impress upon you that anything I say does not detract from the heroic and unever battle fought by the Scouts.. In giving these facts, I feel it adds to their Glory !

I realize it seems very popular to assail the heroes of the Past. To do so seems to elevate the writer to the Literary Class--up among the highbrows.. But I think you agree with me that it merely proves the depravity of the writer--he is endeavoring to reduce these people to his own level of thinking.. Surely we admit these men were not all virtue---who of us are ?
Perhaps some were beyound the pall of polite society--but what of polite society ? Much of it hides behind a veneer of subterfuge that would make Satan curl his tail with glee.. So why point a finger of scorn? Rather, do as the Indians do--Take Pride in the deeds of others--praise their good qualities---Glory in their happiness--extoll their virtues--even that of one's enemies.

I believe two of the first stories I heard about Beecher Island were those of Comstock's death and of Barney Day and his scalps.
I should like to give you the Indian version.

Grover Sharp and Scout Comstock.

Grover Sharp was accused of having killed his friend in order to acquire Comstock's ranch. But I have the following story as related by Barney Day, one of Forsyth's Scouts. A similar one is told by old Tom Maddigan who run a saloon at Ft Wallace at that time. Their stories are also the story of the Indian, John Yellow Bull, who was at the Indian village and who knew the men who counted "coup" on Comstock's body.
Also, we have General Custer's version, which should be considered seriously inasmuch as Comstock was both a Scout for and a close friend of Custer's...

These stories all contradict the libel in which Grover Sharp is reported as a murderer...

Comstock and Sharp, against the advice of those at the Fort, went to the Cheyenne village under Chief Turkey Leg where they hoped to obtain information about the rumored warpath, but they did this under the cloak of trading. Perhaps something happened to cause ill feeling. One story is that Comstock had a fine revolver which the Indians coveted..While returning to the Fort the Indians overtook the two men and a running battle ensued in which Comstock was killed and scalped..Grover Sharp, altho seriously wounded, fought off the Indians until his rescue by troopers who became worried over the absence of the men and went in search of Comstock and Sharp....

Death of Comstock

By Genl Custer
"Life On The Plains" pa 100

Summer of 1868

The Indians were camped in their village not far from Big Springs in Western Kansas, and were professedly at peace. Still, no one familiar with the deceit and bad faith invariably practiced by the Indians when free to follow the bent of their inclinations, ought to have thought of trusting themselves in their power.
Yet Comstock, -----did that which he certainly would have disapproved in others.. He left the camp of the troops, which was but a few miles from the Indian village, and with but a single companion rode to the latter, and spent several hours in friendly conversation with the chiefs.. Nothing occurred during the visit to excite suspicion. The Indians assumed a must peaceful bearing toward them-----. They were urged to stay the night with the Indians..
The invitation was refused. Comstock always carried in his belt a beautiful white-handled revolver, and wore it on this occasion. This had attracted the covetous eyes of the savages---Comstock refused all offers to exchange it, no matter how tempting.. Months before, when riding together at the head of the column, in pursuit of the Indians, Comstock had observed that I carried a revolver closely resembling his, remarked that I ought to have the pair, and then laughingly added that he would carry it until he found the Indians, and after giving them a sound whipping he would present me the revolver..
Comstock and his companion rode out of the village for their own camp, they had proceeded about a mile from the village when they observed about a dozen young warriors galloping after them..Still suspecting no unfriendly design, they continued to ride until joined by the warriors.. The entire company then rode until the Indians succeeded in separating the two white men-----each with Indians riding on either side of them. At a presoncerted signal a combined attack was made by the savages on the two white men..But the latter attempted tp defend themselves------. Comstock was fatally wounded at the first onslaught, and soon after was shot from his horse..His companion, being finely mounted----soon outstripped his pursuers and reached camp with but few slight wounds. The Indians did not seem disposed to press him closely as is their usual custom, but seemed anxious to secure Comstock. He, after falling to the ground, was completely riddled with steel arrows, and his scalp taken.. The principal trophy, however, in the opinion of the savages was the beautifully finished revolver-----and they afterwards confessed when peace was proclaimed with their tribe, it was to obtain this revolver that the party of young warriors left the village and followed Comstock to his death.

Barney Day And His Scalp.

Now a word about Barney Day, the Scout..The Denver Post of July 27th 1930 carried a story written by Frank S. Byers, in which it was purported that Day killed a chief Medicineman who had been snipping from the crouch of a cottonwood. It was said that Day ended the savages career and carried away his scalp, which was kept as a trophy.
Mr. Byers goes on to say that he hopes to secure the scalp for the Colorado Museum of Natural History...
I asked a personal friend of Day's concerning this scalp. Day worked in a generalstore at Ft Wallace and was well known...I was told Day never mentioned shooting the Medicineman and denied the ownership of the scalp. Both Morton and Whitney tell a very conservative and accurate story of the battle---their statements agree with that of the Indians--none of them mention the killing of the Medicineman nor the taking of scalps....

Dog Soldiers

The term "Dog Soldiers" and "Crazy Dogs" has come into much disrepute.
General Forsyth writes : "Dog Soldiers was a name given about a hundred of the various Sioux and other tribes that were for some reason renegades and outcasts---bad men generally---who had been compelled to withdraw from the association of their own people.. Banded together, they were practically Indian pirates."
General Custer gives a similar description, altho more moderately toned; "The Dog Soldiers were a band of warriors principally composed of Cheyennes, but made up of the turbulent and uncontrollable spirits of all the tribes...Neither they nor their leaders had ever consented to the ratification of any of the treaties to which their brothers and other tribes had agreed. Never satisfied except when at war with the white men, they were by far the most troublesome, daring and warlike band to be found upon the Plains. Their warriors were all fine looking braves of magnificient physique, and in appearance and demeanor more nearly conforming to the ideal warrior than those of any other tribe.
How they came by the name "Dog Soldiers" I have never learned.
One explanation is that they are principally of the Cheyenne tribes and when first known as Cheyenne Soldiers. Cheyenne was originally "chien" the French word for dog..Hence the term "Dog Soldier."

Nothing can be further from the truth. The dog was held in high esteem by the Indians.. The "dog" was the symbol of fidelity and alertness, two traits to which the Indian aspired. The term "dog" was never applied as an expression of contempt or derision, nor as a curse, as do the present day Mohammedeans.
The fact is that the Indian DID NOT know how to swear. Swearing is strictly a Whiteman's vice and one of the sins bequeathed to the Indian. The Indian's method of reproach or expression of contempt was to ridicule--a pastime in which he excelled.

The Nebraska Historical Society furnished me with this information. "Throughout the Plains there existed a military organization so similar among the various tribes as to suggest a common origin.-----In each tribe the organization consisted of from four to twelve societies of varying rank and prominence ranging from boys to old men.
The name of each society had reference to some mystic animal protector or to some custom..Among the Kiowas there were six societies known as Rabbit, Young Mountain Sheep, Horse Caps, Black Legs, Skunkberry People, and Chief Dogs.
Among the Cheyenne the Dog Men (Dog Soldiers) acquired such prominence in the frontier wars by virtue of their superior number and bravery of their leadership that the name "Dog Soldier" has frequently been used by writers to designate the whole warrior organization.. The "Dog Soldier" group was composed usually of the bravest and most able warriors,

must - (from The publications of The Bureau of American Ethnology Washington D.C.) see Miss Berry's Report -

Their mission seems to have been chiefly one of leadership. The principal leaders were the generals and director of battle and often performed feats of great personal bravery."

Grinnell, perhaps our most emminent authority on the Indian gives this description; "The 'Crazy Dogs' wasone of several soldier societies, of which others were Red Shields, Dog Soldiers, Crooked Lances, Kit Fox, Bow Strings, and Chief Soldiers.
In large camps these societies was always on duty to enforce the orders of the chiefs and they generally kept order in camp.
Neither the Chief Soldiers nor the Red Shields took part in the police work, for these two Societies were composed of the older men. It sometimes happened that the young men became arrogant and endeavored to exert undue influence on the camp.. The powers of the various soldier societies were great and they often punished men who violated customs or camp rules..Sometimes they even whipped the men, beat them with clubs, and even killed their ponies."

Kit Carson
Forsyth

In 1867 the Government apppointed a Commissionto meet with the Plains Indians in an effort to formulate a Treaty and to designate Hunting reserves as well as Indian Reservations. In October of that year General Harney, General Sanborn, Wm Bent and Kit Carson met with the Black Kettle Cheyennes, Southern Arapahoes, Kiowas and Comanches on the Little Arkansas. Most of them accepted the treaty, but the Dog Soldiers (representing the Northern Cheyennes) however refused as it ceded their lands on the Republican and Smoky Hill.

Previously
Fighting Cheyenne

~~Again~~, General Hancock and Mj Wyancoop met with the Northern Cheyennes at Fort Larned..General Custer gives a vivid description of this conference.. This was in April 1867, the meeting was held on the prairies some 21 miles from the Fort--but for the sad condition of the Indian horses,following a severe winter, the indications pointed to a battle..Pawnee Killer represented his Sioux people while Chief White Horse was there with the Northern Cheyennes..Roman Nose seemed to have been the principal speaker and his impassioned oration is a literary gem.. Generally speaking, the result was negative.

We find that Sitting Bull, White Bull, White Horse, Red Cloud, Dull Knife, Roman Nose, Pawnee Killer and Whistler, all of them outstanding leaders, chiefs and warriors, were all members of a similar Society---and to have been elected to these societies, they had first to prove themselves to the satisfaction of the Indian Council.
You will see from these statements that the Dog Soldiers were not renegades but a dominant and a constructive factor in the Indian economy. When dealing with the 'Dog Men' one dealt with the flower of Indian manhood--we can liken them to our higher degrees of Masonary.

The Cheyennes say this of the preparation for the fight;
"White Horse and Tall Bull, chiefs of theDog Soldiers, went down to the Sioux andArapahoe camps and advised them to make ready and requested that the Indians ATTACK IN A BODY."
Failure to organize has always been the weakness of the Indian.
Small groups were likely to steal off, make independent attacks in the hope they might accomplish some great thing which would gain applause from their fellows"
The Dog Soldiers were opposed to these independent attacks.
Before a buffalo surround the Dog Men policed the camp to deter ambitious men who would sneak away to be first.
Had this been done prior to Beecher Island, and had the entire encampment attacked in a body as requested by Roman Nose, there would have been an entirely different and a more tragic ending.
Military authorities are agreed that the disturbance created by the ambitous warriors gave Forsyth sufficient warning to prepare for a defence. Without this warning, the Souts would have been rubbed out.

good Phrase

These eight young men, six of them Sioux and two Cheyennes, Starving Elk and Little Hawk, made the premature raid on the Scouts in the hopes of stampeding the horse herd--all they thought of was the stealing of horses..They succeeded in getting only seven animals. However they did change the entire course of history !
They warned the Scouts of the impending attack.
Those precious moments were sufficient to prepare a defence.
Those eight young men wrecked the potential power of an ambitious plan in which the Indians were to have driven the Whites from the Plains!
Military authorities believed that the Indians were massing on the upper Republican for a great assult upon the Settlements..
The army disregarded the fact this territory was a favorite place for the Indians to gather for the buffalo surround.
However, there were too many tribes in that circumscribed territory, it was very evident there was some unrevealed reason for the gathering of these tribes...

On September the 16th there were two large Villages of Ogallala Sioux under Pawnee Killer some 12 miles southeast of the Arickaree. We assume ~~th~~ to have been on the South Fork or one of its tributaries. Nearby was a large village of Northern Cheyennes under White Horse and Tall Bull, chiefs of the 'Dog Soldiers'
In the same vicinity was a village of Northern Arapahoe's under Chief Little Man.

We have no record of the camp of the Southern Cheyennes. It was these people whom the Scouts had just folllowed from the Smoky Hill. Their Trail continued on up the river from Beecher Island, so it seems safe to say there was a large encampment of Southern Cheyennes some distance up the river.. Gen. Carpenter tells ~~us~~ of finding the site of a large village on the South Fork, southwest of the battlefield, perhaps this was the village of maurading Southern Cheyennes.

Then there was a camp of Brule Sioux in the vicinity of the Island, perhaps over on the Black Wolf..Two days before the battle a party of Brule Sioux warriors left camp to raid the settlements of Kansas. Some of the young men deserted this warparty and as they were returning to their camp, they discovered the Scouts coming up the Arickaree..It was these young men who warned the Cheyennes.
Scout Murhpy reports that a reconnoitering party of Scouts saw a village from the hills NORTH of the Island...

There is one pertinent fact--these villages DID NOT anticipate a clash with the military. They were taken more or less by surprise.
It is also evident the Southern Cheyennes felt satisfied they had definitely escaped the Scouts, else they would have warned the other tribes...EITHER THAT OR THE CHEYENNES DID NOT KNOW OF THE OTHER VILLAGES which would negate the military theory of Indians massing for a grand assult upon the Whites...

There is an oft repeated story of a "TRAP" having been set by the hostiles and had Forsyth gone but a mile further that first evening he would have been rubbed out.
There is no evidence to substantiate this statement.
The contrary is too apparent !
Had this trap actually been set and failed its mission, WITHOUT A DOUBT the hostile Indians would have immediately charged the unsuspecting Scouts while they were making camp and while they were unprepared...
I do believe the Strong Arm Of Providence caused the Command to go into camp at the unusual hour of 4 p.m. ..The site chosen was of great strategic importance. There was an island to retire too..The approach

was barren except for deep grass. The valley was wide, which forced an attacking party to a long exposure under gunfire--and the hills were too far away to be a protection to the enemy, or a place from which they could fire down upon the defenders....

Instead of a trap having been set, this is what did happen---
The Northern Cheyenne's were warned by the young men who saw the approaching troops. The Cheyennes immediately notified the Arapahoe and Sioux villages and requested that they all attack in a body.
These camps were from ten to twelve miles from the Arickaree.
It was nearing the noon hour. Criers warned the camp. Ponies were brought in from the praries and the best war horses selected.
The warriors must bring out their finest bonnets, charms, and fighting equipment. Many must perform certain rites to insure their safety.
All had to paint themselves.
There was no reason for hurry, the Scouts count not escape.
By the time everything was in readiness it was late evening.
The Indians did not know exactly where the Soldiers were, and they feared the Whites intended to attack them; however they set out for the Arickaree and that night they camped not far from the battlefield.
By early dawn they were directed toward the Scouts by the noise of the eight young men who attempted to stampede the horses of the military.

The first attack was a massed affair. Had they gone through with the c charge it would have pulverized the Scouts by the sheer weight of horse flesh. Instead, when the savages came within rifle range, they lost heart. The men divided, everyone for himself, and they passed on either side of the Island... Later, one man, Bad Heart did ride over the Island and soon after, he rode back without harm...
NO MAN WAS KILLED in the first charge...

After this charge, while circling the Island, the first man to be killed was Dry Throat.
The second man killed was weasel Bear, or Ermine Bear..
His nephew, White Thunder undertook to recover the body and he himself was killed.
These two men were killed by some Scouts who were hidden in the deep grass opposite the Island..The Indians did not knew of these advance pickets, but thought the shots came from the Island...

The warriors were then ordered to advance on foot. They approached the island as near as they dared. Just south of the island grew some small trees which offered protection. Some Indians crept through these trees, rushed toward the breastworks and then hid in the dry holes in the sand..After making this hiding place, they raised their heads to shoot. Two of these men were shot, one was Prairie Bear, the other was Little Man, the third, Good Bear was not killed.
It was these three men which both the Indians and the Scouts agree were slain near the Island. These were the same men that reports would have us believe were scalped by the Scouts.

Scout Schlesinger relates that the Scouts DID scalp three Indians whose bodies laid near the Island. The Indians say the bodies WERE recovered.
John Y. Nelson was accused by his Indian wife, a half sister of Red Cloud of having killed her cousin at Beecher Island. Her reason was that a Scout WHO WORE A BUCKSKIN JACKET and who was hidden in the grass near the island, along with two or three companions killed Ermine Bear and White Thunder, while Prairie Bear was wounded.
Nelson wore such a jacket, but he was not at the fight altho he claimed to have been with the relief party coming from Ft. Cottonwood.
Schlesinger says it was Stillwell who wore the buckskin jacket...

Two Crows, Black Moon and Bear Feathers attempted to recover the bodies of Ermine Bear, White Thunder and Prairie Bear..
However, the dead and the wounded trio lay in the grass most of the day, but at last the young men were able to remove the bodies by tying a rope to their legs and drawing them away.. This was necessary as the sharpeyed Scouts would shoot any time the grass was disturbed.
Grinnell in "Fighting Cheyennes" makes the statement that it was Stillwell and two other Scouts who killed these Indians, as well as Roman Nose.
Nelson, in his book, "Fifty Years On The Plains" tells of many slain indians, an impossible number. However, Nelson would not spoil a good story for the sake of a few facts..
Whitney, Morton, and Forsyth mention these Indians being killed, as do the Cheyennes...
However, none of them mention mutilation..Surely some of these pro Indian friends; Nelson, Grinnell, James Willard Schultz who was raised among the Indians and knew men who participated in the fight, would have related the scalping IF IT HAD ACTUALLY BEEN DONE.

Later, there were two instances in which Indians were scalped by the troopers..Both the soldiers and the Indians confirm this statement.
Whitney writes in his diary, dated Sept 27th ;
"Arose early this morning to prepare to start to Fort Wallace.
Rolled out about ### ten oclock, marched twenty miles and camped at four on the south branch of the Republican. Five of our boys killed and scalped a Cheyenne about one half mile from camp."

And again, Oct 20th at Carpenters Battle on the Little Beaver, two Cheyennes, 'Breaks The Arrow' and 'Bobtailed Porcupine', were killed and both of them were scalped by the troopers.

Roman Nose.

We are all interested in Roman Nose, the Romatic figure of the battle, and perhaps the outstanding man of influence of that time.
He was a Northern Cheyenne, of a tribe from whence came warriors and Statesmen of note- -and they were a people who never acknowledged defeat..Roman Nose was not a chief. However he was the acknowledged leader of the Cheyenne Dog Soldeirs, the dominant factor of that tribe.
Roman Nose DID NOT enter the battle until late the first day.

Shortly before Forsyth's command was discovered Roman Nose had been feasting at the Sioux Camp.
The woman who prepared the food used a metal fork to remove the bread from the pan.. This was not known at the time the food was eaten.
Later, Roman Nose was appraised of this fact by Eight Horns, one of the Dog Soldiers.. Roman Nose then replied:

"THAT BREAKS MY MEDICINE."

Roman Nose was the possessor of a warbonnet which had been made by the noted White Bull. One of the taboos was that the owner of that bonnet MUST NOT eat food taken from the pot with a metal instrument, instead, it MUST BE taken out with a pointed stick.
An elaborate ceremony of purification was necessary to restore the protective power of the bonnet--Tall Bull insisted that this ceremony be undertaken at once, but the approach of the soldiers interfered.

Roman Nose remained at the Northern Cheyenne village, some ten miles from the scene of the battle while the balance of the warriors rode away.

After the failure of the first charges, runners went back to the Cheyenne village where Roman Nose was in the act of purification. THE messengers told Roman Nose of the fighting and that a good many Indians were being killed..He then got on his pony and rode to the battlefield. Fighting had then ceased..Everyone was waiting to see what he would do..He stopped at the top of the hill. There Tangle Hair overtook him and they sat down together.. Several other warriors came up and dismounted.

White Contrary then rode up and chided Roman Nose for sitting behind a hill while his men were waiting for him to assume leadership.
Roman Nose replied:
"At the Sioux camp the other day something was done that I was told MUST NOT be done. This is what keeps me from making the charge.
" IF I DO GO INTO THIS CHARGE I SHALL SURELY BE KILLED "

Roman Nose, knowing this, then went off to put on his warbonnet and to paint himself.. He then mounted his horse and rode fast toward the Scouts. Behind him were many Indians.. Unaware of the Scouts hidden in the grass, Roman Nose rode almost over them. It was the same men who had shot Weazel Bear and White Thunder.. The same men killed Roman Nose. The ball entered his back just above the hips.
Roman Nose fell from his horse at the edge of the grass. A little later he was able to creep from the sand to the bank. Before long some warriors crept down and carried him off..
ROMAN NOSE LIVED A SHORT WHILE...HE DIED ABOUT SUNDOWN.

It has been reported that Roman Nose wore a white buffalo robe. A 'White Buffalo Robe' is a sacred object which MUST NOT be handled or used by anyone..No woman is permitted to touch the hide or take part in the tanning.. The flesh of the white buffalo MUST ne left on the prairie and the skin MUST be presented as a votive offering to the Great Spirit.

There were NO buffalo horns on the warbonnet worn by Roman Nose. That bonnet was made by White Bull long ago.. It had great protective power ! Buffalo horns have no symbolic relationship to the warbonnet. Feathers indicate heroic deeds and accomplishments, buffalo horns do not.. Therefore, only certain approved feathers are used--each feather and its position being definitely prescribed by age old custom...

The Burial Of Roman Nose..

Medicine Woman, the wife of Porcupine Bull was interviewed by Grinnell. It was she who helped the wife of Roman Nose to bring up her lodge poles and raise a scaffold for the burial. The body of Roman Nose was encased in a buffalo robe and placed upon this scaffold.
It is doubtful we shall ever know the place this scaffold was erected. However it is assumed, and I think correctly, that the rites was performed someplace near the South Fork, perhaps in one of the tributary canyons..The Northern Cheyenne village from which RomanNose rode was approximately 12 miles South or Southeast of the battlefield. It seems to have been a definite custom to return the bodies of the slain warriors to their village, naturally the rites would be held somewhere in that locality..

I believe most of you have heard the story told by Scout Pliley. It was to the effect that while he was hidden on the banks of the South Fork the second day from the Island, he saw some squaws make preparation for a burial, and from the elaborate activities it was assumed it must be for a warrior of note..

I am not assuming to say who the dead warrior was, neither do I know where he was buried..Scout Pliley did not know--and he said he was not greatly concerned. His own safety was at stake--if he failed in his mission to reach succor at Ft Wallace, the Scouts on the besieged Island were doomed...

About 1910 the body of an Indian was discovered under a limestone ledge..In about the location previously mentioned..Scout Pliley told his story before the discovery of this body..
Evidently it was the body of an Indian of rank..There were ten brass rings on each arm.. Over the skull was draped a series of rings, similar to those used on harness. These rings were woven on a piece of rawhide. Fragments of rotten cloth indicated he had been buried in a United States Army officers coat, the epaulets being intact. He had been wrapped in an army blanket.. His dog was buried with him along with many beads and perhaps his most cherished trophy, a skull which was suspended from his wrist by a rawhide throng.

There are several stories concerning this body. I have every reason to believe the above is correct.. I know the man who was present when the skeleton was discovered and for sometime he had a few of the bones. I have talked with the people who lived on the place.
Generally it was believed the body was that of Roman Nose, but we have no authority to accept that theory.
The body of Roman Nose was left on a scaffold. It is very doubtful anyone would have taken the trouble to remove the body to this spot as most of the Northern Cheyennes left immediately after the battle, as did the Sioux. The Southern Cheyennes were fearful of further pursuit by the troops and they seem to have disappeared. Carpenter tells of a village on the South Fork which showed evidences of being hurriedly abandoned.. The Arapahoes moved, but stayed in the territory, along with some Cheyennes.

The following article may explain the origin of that officers coat. It was written and signed by Hugh M. Johnson, Lt. 5th U.S. Infantry. "---The country from Fort Wallace to Arickaree Fork ---was passed over the following December in an unsuccessful endeavor to secure the bodies of those killed in the fight. We surprised a village of Indians at the scene of the fight, fought them off, and found the body of one of the Scouts, but Lt. Beecher and Dr. Mooers graves were empty."

The Number of Dead Indians.

Winfield Freeman, a man widely known and one who wrote fluently and whose story of Beecher Island one is most apt to read, gives a very eloquent story, but I am forced to say, a very misleading account of the battle.
I quote in part from Vol. 6 of the Kansas Historical Society, which tells of the recovery of the body of Dull Knife, a Sioux Chief.

" Such lamentations were never heard before by white men--and the awful cry of grief, reinforced by new auxiliaries from noncombatants, produced a preoration to the tragic scene, sublime beyound the power of pen or tongue to portray.....And now they are returning for the body of their dead chief, marching down the valley in a solid column on foot--not a warrior wearing a thread of clothing to obscure his hideous form; each brave sang his woeful death song--the spectacle was appaling, and the scene dreadful to behold..Steadily the march continued---unheeding the deadly fire from the Island that thinned their ranks every step..With increasing speed they came forward, until they reached the body of their dead chieftain, and bore it away amid the hail of bullets, until hardly half of this heroic band reached the distant hills to receive the acclamations of the exultant squaws.

"Upon the river bed and at the verge of the island lay the bodies of hundreds of redmen who fell in the conflict---the battle ended with the recovery of the body of Dull Knife."

Mr. Freeman ends by saying: "In recent years it has been ascertained through Indians who were engaged in the battle of the Arickaree that they lost between 700 and 800 warriors."

Now compare Mr. Freeman's statement of 700 killed with that of Genl. Forsyth who says : "I counted 32 dead and an undetermined number wounded." Whitney, in his diary writes; "About 50 red devils were killed and wounded." While the Cheyennes claim but 9 were killed.

A word about Mr. Freeman's Dull Knife..We have been unable to learn of a Sioux of that rank by the name of Dull Knife--I am inclined to say the story is a figure of the imagination.
Dull Knife was a Cheyenne who at that time was in the north giving the soldiers plenty of trouble.. It was Dull knife who escaped from the Fort Reno Reservation in the fall of 1878, some ten years after the Battle of Beecher Island..He made one of the most marvelous and strategic escapes in the annals of the Western frontier..He made monkeys of the entire military forces of that territory.
Dull Knife's band raided the settlements on the Prairie Dog, Sapa and Beaver. At least 41 victimes are buried in that vicinity.
He stole horses on the Republican, killed Rowley on the Stinking Water and finally surrendered at Fort Robinson. Later they attempted an escape from the barracks where they were imprisoned, a terrible fight ensued in which the larger percent of his people were killed, but Dull Knife himself, with some of his people did get through the January snows to Ft. Keogh Montana.. Dull Knife died in 1885 at the age of 78...

With your permission I will read that part of the diary of Chauncey B. Whitney which was written from day to day, concerning the battle.
Sept 17th---
"At daybreak this morning was aroused by the cry "Indians" Night tried to stampede the stock, got 7 head. In a few moments the bottom was completely covered with red devils. Went across river to an island, where the fighting commenced. About 500 attacked us on all sides. Balls flew thick and fast. The Colonel was the first man wounded. Lt. Beecher was wounded twice, in a few moments 8 or 10 men were hurt, some fatally. ----With a butcherknife we soon had a trench which completely covered us from the enemy. Behind the works we fought the red devils all day till dark. Only two men were hurt after we intrenched. Culver was killed and Mr Call wounded. William Wilson was also killed early this morning."
Sept 18th---
"Indians made slight charge on us, but were speedily repulsed. They were after three of their dead who lay about 20 yards from us. About 50 of the red devils were Killed and Wounded. They kept firing from the hills all day. No one hurt today. Two men started for Fort Wallace."
Sept 19th---
"Indians made another attempt this a.m. but were easily driven off. About 10 pm myself and A.L. Pliley were requested by the Colonel to go to Ft. Wallace, we found the Indians had surrounded the camp and forced us to return. Was awake all night. It rained all night steady."
Sept 20th---
"Sunday and all quiet. No attack this morning."
Sept 21st---
"No Indians seen today. All dined and supped on horse meat."

Sept 22d---
"No Indians today. Killed a coyote this morning, it was very good. Most of horse meat gone. Found some prickly pears which were very good. We are looking anxiously for succor from the fort. "
Sept 23rd----
"Still looking anxiously for relief---Starvation is staring us in the face."
Sept 24th---
" All horse meat gone. Tried to kill wolves, but failed. The boys began to cut putrid horse meat....My God Have You Deserted Us ? "

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The Cheyenne and Sioux claim only NINE killed and they say they did not know any Whites had been killed..
Grinnell consulted Indians who participated in the fight. Some were then living in Oklahoma, others in New Mexico, but most were in Montana. All agree on the number clain and gave the identical names. They were:

TWO Sioux, names unknown.
One Arapahoe, Little Man, a chief.
SIX Cheyennes, all Dog Soldiers.
Two were Northern Cheyennes--Roman Nose and Prairie Bear.
Four were Southern Cheyennes--Dry Throat, White Weasel, White Thunder, Killed By A Bull.

I believe the Indians told the truth as they knew it. However, several villages participated in the battle, which lasted several days. Some of the Indians left the battlefield earlier than others..Without doubt several warriors died of wounds following the battle. Therefore, it is probable more Indians were killed than they admit. The number of slain can safely be placed between that of the "Indian nine" and Forsyth's 32..

We are forced to ask, "How could the Scouts, all seasoned Indian fighters fire into a massed attack with so little effect ? "
The answer is--"There was no massed attack." The mass always broke up before reaching effective gun range, the Indians lost heart, they scattered.. They circled the defenders, and they charged individually, but they were exceptional horsemen and they hid behind their well trained warhorses, exposing but an arm or a leg..
With few exceptions the Indian never charges over a foe if that enemy stays put. He is an individualist pure and simple, and in his estimation there is no particular honor in winning a battle except that he himself be able to count COUP --to do so he must exhibit special acts of bravery and he will ######## take most any chance in order to win accalim from his fellows.. It is his own life he is risking, therefore he is within his rights.
On the otherhand, the Chief is responsible for the lives of his warriors and for the safe return of his men. If they are led into a trap, or there is needless loss of life, he will soon find himself without men.

The Last Indian Killed.

Forsyth writes:
"On the third day a large and a very fleshy Indian, having as he thought, placed himself out of range, taunted and insulted us in every possible way. He was perfectly naked and his actions exceedingly aggravating. We had three Springfield rifles which I knew would carry much further than out Spencer rifles. I directed the men using these rifles should sight them at their limit of 1200 yards. At the crack of the three rifles he sprang into the air with a yell of surprise and rolled over stone dead, while the Indians in his vicinity scattered."

There were no Cattle or Cow Boys for at least 6 years after Battle

Tall Bull, the Cheyenne Dog Soldier chief says:
"The last man killed in the fight was "Killed By A Bull" a Cheyenne Dog Soldier. He was shot on the hill, at a considerable distance from the breastworks of the soldiers, while he was helping to carry the body of Dry Throat."

It was the body of "Killed By A Bull" which was found by Lt. Carpenter as his command went to the rescue of Forsyth. The body, Carpenter says, was covered with white robes and wrapped in buffalo hides. It lay upon a low willow couch in a deserted tepee, southwest of the battlefield, on the South Fork.. This was in the vicinity of the Southern Cheyenne village..Carpenter makes the statement that the body was identified as that of Roman Nose..
Tradition makes the same claim, some basing their opinion on Carpenters statement, Others say some cowboys identified the body and marked the spot..Then there is the conflicting claim that the skeleton found southeast of the Island was Roman Nose.

The Cheyennes who were interviewed did not know of these conflicting statements, therefore it seems the better part of wisdom to accept their version..
The Cheyennes say it was the body of "Killed By A Bull" which was buried in his tepee by his wife and which was disturbed by Carpenters men...While on the other hand, the body of Roman Nose was " encased in buffalo robes and placed upon a scaffold made of his tepee poles" southeast of the battlefield...

The Indians consider the Beecher Island Battle of little consequence. However, they say it was a Very Hard Fought Battle.
In valueing personal valor and its attendant glory above all else, they missed the greater significience.
Not an Indian was able to count "coup"---Not an Indian was able to add a feather to his warbonnet--- Not an Indian, with the possible exception of Bad Heart who rode over the Island, was able to count a superior deed. Consequently the battle was a washed up affair, a rather expensive affair for themselves and the sooner forgotten, the better. Through a peculiar process of reasoning, the Indian DID NOT know he had lost face. He was unable to evaluate the causes and effects upon his own morale. All he sensed was that he as an individual had not won acclaim.
He did not know he had lost something far more valuable--PRESTIGE--and in losing it, the leadership of the chiefs was questioned, their power broken. The tribes immediately reverted to their primitive instinct to scatter. When the Indians left that battlefield they left their confidence--and when they separated, they separated forever...

One of the most beautiful traits of humanity is Sentiment. Sentiment is the thing that cements Love,..Sentiment is the motor that energises Loyality..Sentiment and Love are the sweet potions that make Home---and HOME is the fundamental instinct of mankind, whether White or Red. It is the instinct to OWN land and to be independent and to surround oneself with the golden family circle.

We venerate the place where mankind has baptized the land with his own blood--making of it a sacred spot ! It is only when man places Home on the Altar above Life that we find Sentiment the marble base--IT IS a tangible object upon which we may place our finger and proudly say; IT WAS HERE !

Thus in again Memoralizing this epic week and this sacred spot, we know we are memoralizing an unselfish motive, the dominant instinct of Humanity, that of establishing a Home...

In doing so, let us not venerate this idealism as that of a Whiteman only, but of the Redman too !
He was fighting for---and in his own peculiar way, protecting his own Home.
It just so happened the Redman stood in the path of the Jauggernaut Civilization. He refused to, or could not adapt himself to this strange economy---Consequently he was crushed !

E D Sutton
Sept 22-1940

Charley Carmack
and
Old John Maddigan
Tell Of The Killing Of Comstock and Sharp

Related to E S Sutton Jun 20th 1940
By Geo W. Williams, Mc Donald, Kans.

There have been many conflicting stories about the death of Scott Comstock who was chief of scouts for the 5th Cav., stationed at Ft Wallace. One is to the effect that Sharp killed Comstock in order to get the 'Rose Creek' hay ranch which Comstock owned. Later, Grover was supposed to have been killed by a friend of Comstock's..

I know the truth of that deal, it was given me by two very reliable persons, one was old John Maddigan, who ran a saloon near the Fort, the other was Charley Carmack, ambulance driver for the Fort. While Old Charley is a windy sort of a cuss, there are times when he told the truth...

The Cheyennes claimed to be friendlies-(but they never were friendly except when hungry and during weather which was too bad to get out to raid..) In 1868 there was an encampment of the Cheyennes about 10 miles southwest of Ft Wallace..Comstock and Grover were very close friends, but I do not think they were pardners in the hay ranch.. It seems Comstock owned the ranch.
Both Comstock and Grover decided to ride out to the Indian camp, a damn fool thing to do, but both men were daredevils and did not what "f ear" meant..They really went for military information, but they tried to trade horses. Some of the bucks admired the sixshooter Comstock carried, they wanted to trade, but Scott refused.. About dusk the men decided to leave camp. Perhaps they suspicioned the Indians..Anyway, not far from camp they saw two bands of Indians and it was soon evident the Reds meant to overtake the men as the Indians now divided and a band approached from either side..A running battle took place. Comstock's horse was shot, as it fell it caught Comstock's leg and pinned him to the ground. The Indians soon dispatched both man and horse..Grover, altho badly wounded, managed to escape to the fort, where a detachment was immediately formed and returned to the scene of the battle..
Carmack was connected with the Fort and was ambulance driver. Comstock's body was picked up and returned to the Fort where it was buried in the military cemetery.. Charley described to me the location of the grave, which was unmarked, as were many others.. Later, I tried to locate the grave, but failed..
Just how it happened that Sharp came in possession of the Rose Creek hay ranch is something I do not know..
Grover was just recovering from the effects of his wound when the Forsyth Scouts were formed, he became their chief of scouts and was on that fateful trip in pursuit of Roman Nose. The Trail led to the Republica and at last to the point of battle.

Sometime after the Beecher Island affair, Sharp went on one of his periodical drunks. When intoxicated he was abusive and an overbearing bully..This time he picked on the wrong man at the wrong time.. He went into the drugstore of Doc Whiteford's and he was bandishing his guns and acting real ornery. He was too drunk to shoot straight, and I do not think he meant to do any shooting. But Doc thought otherwise. Doc was a small weazened squirt, but he came out with a .45 nearly as large as he was and he proceeded to galinate Sharp..All of this is a matter of record.. Whiteford was arrested for the killing of Grover, he was hauled up in court before the local judge, a flannel-mouthed Irishman, who asked Doc if he was "guilty or not guilty." of the killing of said Grover Sharp?

Doc admitted he was guilty, but added that under the same circumstances he would do the same thing again..
That set the judge back on his withers.. The judge scratched his red poll and then said he guessed he would have to pronounce sentence. He then said: " So you plead guilty, alright, I find you NOT GUILTY fer lack of evidence."

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Charley Carmack
By Chas W Williams as related to E S Sutton

Old Charley Carmack is quite a character, he is getting old, being something over 94. Charley is given to telling wild tales, some of which are o.k. and some are pure imagination and some are up-and-down fiction...I have known Charley every since we hit the country in '79...

I just read an article in which old Charley claimed he was with the Scouts at Beecher Island. There was no such a name in the list of soldiers.. He made this explanation, claiming he had deserted from the Union Army during the Civil War and came up into Kansas under an assumed name. He used the name Charley Peatt..Now, I have read the book on the Battle Of Beecher Island and I have seen the pictures of Peatt and we who know Charley Carmack all these years know they are not the same..Charley would never go to the Beecher Island celebrations and always fought shy of mixing with men who were connected with the battle. Along about 1898 the oldtimers decided to make an annual meeting at the Island.. There was some argument about the location..A bunch of men took Charley over to the Arickaree and asked him to show them the place "where you fought." Well, Old Charley was so confused it was pitiful.. None of the other men who had really taken part in the fight had the least trouble in going direct to the Island..
One time some of the fellows conceived the idea of roping Charley into going. They stopped Charley on the street and asked him if he wanted to take a ride as they was going to scout over the country and wanted to see the spot where the Kidder massacre happened as well as other points of historical interest. Charley fell for the trap and wound up at Beecher Island, but he was conspicious for his shyness and it was impossible to get him up with the other oldtimers.
Charley also claimed he assumed the name of Wilson. There were two WILSONS on the roster, one was killed.. But no one around here was any more impressed with that story than with the Peatt yarn..
He waa taken over to the Island once in the early days, that was before the place was made a Memorial. He claimed he knew all about the fight because he was there, but he couldnt locate the place and he couldnt tell a decent story of the engagement and he couldnt name but a few of the Scouts..

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1.2. 7 The Five Civilized Tribes — 30

My father, he gets scairt at Turkey Legs Village.
(1868)

Comstock Gratt

As told to E S Sutton by Frank Yellow Bull,
a full blood Crekokee...1935

Our people all civilized, we never go on the warpath--just live on Government Reservation where we got put when the Whites steal our land in the East. We came with the Five Nations long ago..Our people all farmers...

One time when my father young man one of his friend say, "Come, we make party and go west--we do some hunting and maybe steal some horses."
My father thought that be fine. They traveled along the "Strip" where the Government says our people can travel to get to buffaloes--but it too far and our people dont go much, just some young men looking for trouble.
When they got over in Staked Plains they blundered into some Comanches and got real scarit for their life, but that was all. The Comanches was friendlies. They visited and hunted and feasted several days. Comanches say, "You young man go with me, Lots of Indians, many tribes, more Indians then you can count, more Indians than White people going up on Republican for Big Hunt and pow-wow. Maybe start war on Whites."
My father was civilized -he was a christian By God !---and he says to himself- "Now I am here--me and my men cant fight these bad Comanches--if we run away they think we talk and maybe Comanches get mad and come get us.. So we go part way. Maybe something good happen."

They was going up into Arkansas country to visit. My father and young men go along..They jogged along...They visit some Indians near Big Sandy and then Comanches say, "Now we go up on Smokey and see my wifes brother--her man a Cheyenne."
My father thought that be alright. They was having a good time.. He wanted to see the country so my father he went along, their little ponies jogged right along.
The Comanche says to my father, " We friendly Indians--Cheyenne Friendlies--- but we better be careful--too many soldiers after Black Kettle--they after some bad Comanches and Apaches..We go at night and see my brother. He is at Cheyenne Camp six eight miles from Fort--maybe more. Soldiers see us they sure kill us."
My father says they visit Cheyennes. Lots to Eat. Chief says, "You are good men. Comanches tell good story. You been away from your women long time. I will send woman your tent for to cook."
My father he says too many strangers came village at night and talk-talk. Some Whitemen, Most Indians..My father he got scairt and says to his men, "We better go home."
One day some Whitemen, two white men came out to village. All village worried and say, "Those men came for something--they came from Fort---they work for soldiers---What do they want ? ----Maybe they want to kill Comanches ."
Those men wanted to trade. But my father says they talk too much--they look around too much. They says, "Lots Indian go warpath, Huh ? " Turkey Legs says, "Huh !" They say, "Maybe so, I dont think, Huh !" Chief he says "Huh."
Comanche men stay hid in tents--afraid soldiers come after them--maybe soldiers think Comanche men hostiles--kill them..But Comanche men not hostile, just freindlies visiting brother. ~~but~~ Who can believe Whites, full of deceit..
Two white men see fine woman--wife of Cheyenne, sister of Arapahoe boy with us. The whitemen make bad pass. All Comanche friends very mad.
Whitemen wanted trade horses--trade some knives for buckskin but all time talk- all time talk too much. Rattling tongue maybe say nothing but head and eyes asking other things.

all right

My Father gets Scairt At Turkey Legs Village.

Comanche men says to my father, "Tonight we go home, maybe we go up north hunting where all tribe are going. You maybe go home. Those white men are going to get soldiers--maybe attack us--maybe rub us out..Maybe we rub out Whitemen before they kill us."
That scared my father. My father says. "My mother is old--she needs me--I go home tonight."
Father he got up his horses, his men get their horses. When it gets dark and Whitemen gone away my father he starts for Cherokee Reservation---good and fast.
My father he see Whitemen go from camp..Comanche men get their horses--they fraid get rubbed out..Some Comanche and Cheyenne men follow the Whites from camp, they think soldiers now come to kill Comanche--maybe rub out village. Maybe they better stop two whitemen first.

My father went outside and hid--my father and his men did..After while warrior came back to village. He cried out loud. Camp Crier then cried out loud, "We had to rub out whitemen--they come to kill us---one man is killed--other man is down in wallow shooting. Whitemen was noisy, whitemen was quarreling, Maybe soldiers say Whiteman kill his friend..Maybe Cheyennes better break camp...Maybe better move.. Soldiers hear shooting and come.."

Bad
"Indians all on warpath that summer..Come winter my father heard about big battle on Arickaree..Soldires killed. Indians killed--not many Indians killed. Indians dont like to be killed. Indian warriors like to count "coup"--dead Indians cant count coup, huh?
My father he thought, maybe some Comanche freinds went up there--my father he didn't---my father was a civilized christian, By God !

Note
I have included this story, assuming it is the Sharp-Comstock affair mentioned by Custer - The Story was told to me 5 years ago - at that time I did not know about the killing of Comstock - I questioned Frank yellow Bull for names and name of fort - he Replied " my Father he told me this way" He definitely mentioned the Beecher Island fight, which Balances rest of Story perfectly.
E.S.S.

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