

THE OXEN THAT LAUGHED

By Sitting Bull

as told to One Bull

Some time after my return from Fort Randal where my people and I were held prisoners, to Standing Rock Reservation I moved to the Grand River Country to the place where I was born. The Indian Agent, James McLaughlin, wishing that my entire mode of living be changed gave me several minor implements to start farming. Since I left Canaca, I was left afoot practically, though, when I returned to my people at Standing Rock Reservation, they kindly helped me out with what I needed, ponies, household goods, clothing and other necessities of life. Like the rest of the natives, one thing I received as my share of annuities issued was a yoke of oxen. I already received a brand new lumber wagon -- a Moline and a set of work harness. I started to learn to drive this ox team for I had to haul my wood and water some distance from my new home. I got along very nicely only one thing I could not controll them when driving near water on a hot day.

One hot summer day, I took my two wives out into the woods to get wood for fuel and to pick wild fruit. I drive the ox team hitched to my new wagon and as they were travelling along so nicely, I did not try to hurry them. I just let them take their own way of moving along. After securing a good load of dry wood and a pail-ful of berried we started back for home. We took a different route for home for a change.

When we were about half way, I noticed that the oxen were getting very thirsty. I decided that we stop at the first water-hole on the way to quench their thirst. No sooner had I this good intention they seemed to be aware of it and started on a dead run. Without commands of any sort they switched off the road, very quickly forgetting absolutely of the load entrusted them and made a bee-line for a pond that was near by. I was helpless -- they took no heed to my commands to halt -- my wives and myself