

December 28, 1929.

Mr. A. McG. Beede,  
Fort Yates, N.D.

Dear Mr. Beede:

Your last letter was very helpful and inspiring, and I am eagerly awaiting another. Meanwhile, it occurs to me to ask a question or two, which no one so well as yourself can answer.

Can you give me the meaning of the Dakota terms for white men? I know of two such terms, the one translated Long Knives, and I suppose properly applied only to the cavalymen; the other Wasechun (or some such spelling) translated somewhere as Guardian Spirit. I shall be very happy if you can give me the correct interpretation- and probable origin- of these (or any other) Dakota words for white man. My book will succeed only if I can break the shell of preconceptions in the readers mind (or rather, around it), and fresh terminology is one of the ways of doing this. Hence my query.

Do you know of any other things printed by M R Gilmore which might help me? I have seen his paper on the plants used by the tribes of the Missouri valley, in which you aided him so materially. Also his little paper on the up-bringing of an old-time Dakota boy in Indian Notes. But I suppose he has published other things. Is he still alive? Have you his address?

I wonder if you can give me an estimate (not to be quoted) of McLaughlin's character? What was his strength and his weakness? I have been learning a great deal of his doings towards Sitting Bull, in which it would appear that SB was largely blameless, and wished only to be let alone. However, I wish to be sure that I am getting the whole story. What was the trouble between them, and what steps aggravated it to such a deadly hatred? Of course I know that there was the religious factor, and the refusal of SB to go again with Buf. Bill (thereby cutting off a source of income for McL.), and there was the necessity (as McL. saw it) of depressing SB in order to exalt the chiefs he had chosen as his tools, and the police. But the interplay of these factors, and SB's reaction (and that of his group) has not been very clear. I shall be happy to have your understanding illuminate my ignorance.

I wish you a very Happy New Year.

Faithfully,

W.B. CATBELL