

December 28, 1929.

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

Dear Mr. Beede:

I was just leaving town for a few days, when I got your marvellous letter. I took time out to tell you how vastly it has helped me, and how much I thank you for it. Surely no one has the insight into Indian character and into Sitting Bull's own life which you possess. I need not tell you, too, how much I value your confidence in my ultimate success in this book! At least my sincerity and willingness to take pains are in my favor. And with you to help me, I feel more hopeful than ever before.

Your letter suggests a few queries, which I would like to add to those sent you yesterday.

I note that in your preface to SITTING BULL & CUSTER, you say SB found that whiskey interfered with his occult powers, and would not use it. One Bull also told me that SB always advised his young men never to touch it. And Father Genin tells how in 1867 SB threatened with death any who sold it in his camps. Did you ever hear any story which showed how SB came to have this aversion to liquor? Any personal experience? Such stories do much to animate a biography, and explain in terms of experience the mind of the man.

I note that you say SB had a strong sense of humor on occasion. One Bull said the same, but the only "joke" he could recall was that SB was fond of suddenly tossing a ball to some person unexpectedly, in order to test his quick-wittedness. A few jokes would go far to enliven my story and convince readers of the man's sense of humor. As you know, a lot of folks suppose the Indian has none.

You speak of his soliloquies during his sacred rites. I wonder if I can learn what he said at such times. When he was 'in vision,' do you think it was a trance state, or clairvoyance? How was the medicine bowl used? He used the sacred stone on occasion to find things or make prophecies. I was told that the Indian using the stone endowed it with certain powers of mind. I am not clear whether this means that he believed it to have them, or thought them into the stone.

What you tell me of his name being used in war is extremely interesting; no wonder he was famous. Of course I am very anxious to get all the detail possible on his career as warrior, about which all the white men are so skeptical. They seem to imagine that the Sioux had no wars except those with the troops!! But especially I am happy to have your interpretation of these customs.

Evidently, SB was an intellectual of the first water. His theory of the eventual domination of the Indians here is such a piece of logic and insight as one seldom encounters in a book nowadays. Such intellect combined with such courage, strength, and control make a rare combination. No wonder all men were impressed by him.