

Hampshire Arms Hotel
Minneapolis, Minn.
Dec. 31, 1928

Dear Mr. Campbell:

Your recent letter has been forwarded to me here, and I am glad to note that you are going to Standing Rock next summer. I think it would be better not to try to write Mr. Higheagle, as you are to be on the reservation so soon, and it is impossible to get a balanced view of your subject by questions and answers. He would not have time for long, careful letters, and he is very conscientious.

In regard to Songs 191 and 192 in my book--I simply recorded the statements of reliable men who said Sitting Bull used the songs as indicated. Of course he used other words,--perhaps praising himself or his source of power. Indians often change the words of tunes. The fact that one is a grass-dance tune would not reflect favorably on the high standards of Sitting Bull. A man who treats the sick with sincerity has his own songs, received in dreams or bought of a man who received them in that manner. It might be possible, however, for even such a man to use somewhat miscellaneous ~~son~~ melodies, with his own words, in some portions of his treatment--before he got really started. I remember querying this statement and the Indians repeated that it was so,--Sitting Bull used these songs.

I did not happen to hear any stories of Sitting Bull's demonstration of his medicine power but have no doubt that such narratives are available, yet I may have heard such incidents ~~but~~ do not recall them. As to how the medicine man received the messages from sacred stones and similar sources--that is a long and varied subject and is pretty clearly outlined (for the Sioux) in my book on that tribe. Sitting Bull undoubtedly used his sacred stone and it might have been in any one of a number of ways, according to his gauge of his own power. The stone might simply protect his health and that of his family or it might enable him to locate lost articles or ~~people~~ persons--all that is individual,--the point is that he believed it was powerful.

There is an article--or paper--by Dr. LaFlesche of the Bureau on "Who is the medicine man?" That may give a clear idea of the character of a medicine man, though I confess I have not read it. A study of Sitting Bull, if it is to be a contribution to the literature of the subject, should be based on a clear knowledge of Indian psychology and an equally clear idea of both the good and bad sides of the medicine man's character. Then S.B. can be evaluated. He cannot be interpreted in any other way, for he was intensely "Indian," and he was not a good, straight medicine man. With all good wishes, sincerely,

W. E. Surin

*In regard to this
Higheagle (Union Danamores' interpreter)
told me that she "knew" nothing
about Sitting Bull's music!*

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Medicine songs

Sacred Stone