University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma
February 7th, 1933

Mr. Barron Brown
Densmore Hotel
Kansas City, Missouri

My dear Mr. Brown:

I was happy to get your letter of February 3 asking about my book Sitting Bull. Under separate cover I am sending a circular. The book is published by the Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

I particularly wish to thank you for your kind suggestion as to the Chicago Fair. I shall call the matter to my publisher's attention. I think you should, by all means, write and illustrate a booklet about Captain Keogh's horse, Comanche. I knew Professor Dyche, who used to visit in our home. Undoubtedly the story, like most stories concerning Indian wars, has never been properly told.

I was naturally much interested in your remarks as to your conversations with survivors of the Custer fight. My thirty years experience in gathering historical data from Plains Indians, chiefly Cheyennes and Sioux, prompts me to offer a word of caution however. I do not think many old Indians will be frank with a white man who works through an interpreter in the employ of the Indian Bureau. I make it an invariable rule to let the old man choose his own interpreter. Sitting Bull has been made the scape-goat of the Indian Bureau and no interpreter who values his job is going to tell the truth about him, even if the informant should do so. The best interpreter at Fort Yates is undoubtedly Frank Zahn. Though a government employee, he is not a tool of the Indian Bureau. I have found also that old Indians are slow to give their confidence to strangers and that one must always avoid leading questions and that one must not deal in generalities. I see that the old men have told you the same story they tell to all who do not press them for details. When an Indian states, for example, that Gall was a great warrior, ask him what battles he took part in, what men he killed, what coups he counted, get the names of eye-witnesses, dates, places, names of the members of the party and of the leaders and so on. If you can find any specific exploits with which Gall is credited, you will add something valuable to Western history. I think I have read it all and I have yet to find an account of any exploit by this man. Crazy Horse, on the other hand, was undoubtedly a warrior of the first water, and I have a long list of his exploits which I have turned over to the lady now writing his life. But Crazy Horse, though active in the Custer fight, was the subordinate of Sitting Bull, as his following constituted only one of the six Sioux camps summoned by Sitting Bull to fight the soldiers. You will find the true account of Sitting Bull's part in Sioux history in my biography. I talked with survivors of every tribe with which he had contact, both friends and enemies, and checked their stories through different interpreters at times and places far apart. Of course it is hardly worth talking with any man under eighty years of age now about warfare in the sixties and seventies.

I spent five years gathering the data for my biography of Sitting Bull and sifting it. There is very little in the book for which I could not produce two or more eye-witnesses. The art of gathering data from old Indians is not to be learned in a hurry. George Bird Grinnell has been most successful in this field and by the way, Willis Roland I consider the most reliable interpreter among the Northern Cheyennes. If you could get a letter to him from George Bird Grinnell (see Who's Who for address) he could be extremely helpful. But it is best to know something of the language and the sign language if one is to check one's interpreter and be quite sure.

I grew up among the Southern Cheyennes and knew particularly well the band which bore the brunt of attack at the Battle of the Washita and the Sand Creek Massacre. It