

Savage Knights of the Great Plains in Full Battle Array

Referring to the time and care taken by Indian warriors in preparation for a fight when time and opportunity allow, it should be remembered that with the aborigines of the Plains, a battle is somewhat in the nature of a grand ceremonial. It is the ultimate goal and supreme test of every participant, wherein his standing among his people and reputation as a warrior are finally determined. Thus, the more spectacular the better, as evidenced by the war bonnet, which a white soldier entering a combat would consider a handicap.

On their old Nebraska reservation in 1861-62, I saw some of the great Pawnee warriors paint their horses, particularly if they were white or had white spots on them, which would make them better marks for the guns or bows and arrows of their enemies. They would also braid the tails of their horses, and fasten colored feathers in the tails and manes. I have known them to take at least two hours to paint their faces, tie colored feathers in their scalp locks and prepare themselves and horses for a fight. That was in the tribal battles between the Sioux and Pawnees, which figure so largely in the history of the latter people, and led to a great reduction in their numbers from the great numerical superiority of their enemies.

Editorial note: "Fighting trim" varied from such a panoply as Petah La Shara wore when the photograph page 4 was taken to the meagre clothing in which Night Chief is shown on page 31.

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The two following paragraphs are from Capt. North's description of the charge into Dull Knife's village (part of assembled material for the Mackenzie cavalry fight, November 25, '76) -- very interesting references to the Pawnee shot of triumph, briefly mentioned on page 27. It would surely be worth going a long distance to here those words in the original!

As one of the enemy went down, the Pawnees would give a shout of triumph.