



Editor's note: As an instructor in creative writing, Dr. Walter S. Campbell has taught courses in professional writing at the University of Oklahoma for 18 years. As an author using the pen-name of Stanley Vestal, the professor has been writing books, stories and articles for more years than that. His latest volume, "Sitting Bull, Champion of the Sioux" (University of Oklahoma Press; \$5), is a revised edition of an earlier work and carries the true story of the Indian White Bull who killed Custer, a story Dr. Campbell, fearing harm for the Indian, would not release until now after White Bull's death. The story culled from the new book has made newspaper headlines in recent days.

Tulsa Orpha B. Russell discusses Dr. Campbell's work in the following articles; Under the Reading Lamp welcomes Mrs. Russell as today's guest columnist.

"GOOD biography, like the good life, is based upon knowledge and inspired by human sympathy," Dr. Walter S. Campbell (Stanley Vestal) tells his writing classes at Oklahoma university. The Oklahoman practices what he preaches. Adopted into the Sioux tribe by Chief White Bull, Sitting Bull's elder nephew, Vestal in his new book presents information given to him by the Indians who endured the hardships and fought with Sitting Bull, related as only one Indian will talk to another Indian: "Sitting Bull, Champion of the Sioux."

This account of the death throes of a mighty nation and its leaders, the only Sioux who could see through the curious wiles

The Greatest Sioux

of white men, is the story of the "greatest of the Sioux" and his struggle to keep his people free and united.

The stubborn persistence of the man in the face of conquest, exile, starvation, treason and death cannot fail to win the hearts of all who care for last causes and forsaken beliefs and impossible loyalties, Vestal believes, and adds that it is hard to understand how Sitting Bull was able to get along with a language that contains no profanity.

Gen. Nelson A. Miles said, "The art of war among the white people is called strategy or tactics; when practiced by the Indians it is called treachery." War was no remote hearsay to Sitting Bull. He had been born and reared in the midst of it. At 14, he followed his father on the warpath. Indian warfare on the plains was simply a gorgeous mounted game of tag to the boy. Sitting Bull counted his first coup and his father dubbed him "Ta-tan'ka I-yo-ta'ke, "Sitting Bull." The name was of sacred and mysterious origin and he was always a religious man.

Frank Grouard, a captured mail carrier adopted by Sitting Bull, and who lived in Sitting Bull's camp for three years, told Vestal, "No man in the Sioux nation was braver than Sitting Bull. There was nothing of the traitor about the man . . . he did not hide his enmity."

Sitting Bull got as far away from white men as it was possible to go. Until he surrendered, at the age of 50, few whites had had even casual contact with him. He imitated no man . . . he imitated the buffalo. There was nothing second hand about Sitting Bull; he was headstrong, stubborn, afraid of nothing. Well built, but not handsome, he weighed 250 pounds at death. Careless about his clothes, he had a charming smile, laughed easily, sang his way to popularity and was a composer of note in his tribe.

He was married nine times, yet no man ever stole one of his wives. He was a good husband, good provider and a good father.

"There can be no truer friend or braver man than the American Indian of the better type." . . . Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 1878. Vestal quotes.

Charles Erskine Scott Wood as declaring, "I know of no Indian war that could not have been avoided by a little common humanity of frontiersmen, honesty of the Indian ring in Washington, and common sense by the commissions sent out."

The first important speech made by Sitting Bull, of which there was immediate record in writing, presented in this biography. Some 5,000 people heard Sitting Bull ask that forts and soldiers be removed and say that he would not sell any of his country nor permit white men to cut their timber along the rivers. He also asked that steamboats be stopped from using rivers of the Sioux.

Sitting Bull said, "I don't want a white man over me. I don't want an agent. I want to have the white man with me, but not to be my chief. I ask this because I want to do right by my people, and cannot trust anyone else to trade with them or talk with them."

For more than eight years Sitting Bull waited for the United States to enforce its treaty with his tribe. Then, at a council on Tongue river, Sitting Bull announced, "We are an island of Indians in a lake of whites. We must stand together or they will rub us out separately. These soldiers have come shooting; they want war. All right, we'll give it to them."

Maj. James McLaughlin said, "He was by far the most influential man of this nation for many years—neither Gall, Spotted Tail, nor Red Cloud . . . exerting the power that he did."

The true story of the battle at Little Big Horn reveals the killer of Gen. George A. Custer to be White Bull, a young nephew of Sitting Bull's.

Sitting Bull's fame does not rest on the killing of Custer and his troops. He told White Bull, "Great men are usually destroyed by those who are jealous of them." And, so he died, dragged naked and unarmed from his bed and shot in the back by Indian police under orders of Major McLaughlin.

Vestal believes that it is only a matter of time until the state of South Dakota will erect a fitting memorial to her great son. He is by all odds the most famous man ever born within her borders. He is also the most interesting. As leader of the largest Indian nation on the continent, the strongest, boldest, most stubborn opponent of European influence, Sitting Bull was the very heart and soul of that frontier. When the true history of the New World is written, he will receive his chapter. For Sitting Bull was one of the Makers of America.