

ever known. Over in the Bad Lands, the market hunters had by this time well nigh completed their work of extermination. The elk and bears were gone. Deer, antelope, and bighorn would soon be but a memory. History, it would seem, was about to repeat itself. The destructive high-speed machinery of commercialism had begun to supplant the sublime reclamation machinery of nature. Slowly, surely, revolving through the ages, out of the desert it had evolved "God's Country." Now, the inverse process had set in.

Frequently these Indians were running into ranches which in very fact had been stolen from them by the rapacious white invader. Ranches, at most of which they stood to receive the kind of welcome which the advanced Christian civilization of the white races usually accords to a yellow dog. And why?

Simply because they had refused to submit tamely to being robbed of their own. Like bristling spines of the cactus, they had ranged themselves in defence of the flower of their inheritance which the covetous invader would pluck in the name of his God and progress. They had ranged themselves in defence of their homes, their liberty, and their sustenance, seeking to uphold their simple life and naturally evolving civilization against the artificially stimulated, ²⁰⁷ hot-house variety of the invader, which, in the light of their simple philosophy of the earth, might not endure, because, as they sensed it, it short-sightedly sought to outdistance time and destiny through perversion of natural laws.

Bearing forcefully on this, I should say, clarifying the Indian point of view, is the comprehensive question once propounded to me by an educated Sioux Indian while we were out together on a hunting expedition.

"Ever notice," he inquired, "the way natural fertility begins to die out as soon as the land is settled? Reason is, they suck it dry. Keep on, all they'll have is a mountain of gold with a fence around it. Then, where'll they be?"