

Under the prevailing conditions, prior to this, it was commonly understood in the range country not only that the rations allotted to these Indians by executive order were altogether inadequate, but that they were even being deprived of a large share of these, due to the crooked work on the part of those in charge of the distribution at the Agencies. However that may have been, let the blame, the shameful inhumanity of it, attach where it may. As I have said, within the extended experience of us ranchers, they were always hungry. Wherein, within our understanding, lay the true basis of the great Messiah craze. As helpless as a bird with a broken wing, under what they had, not unnaturally, come to regard as a systematized scheme of oppression designed to compel their uttermost submission, they held forth pleading hands to the thirty-two points of the compass; lifted plaintive voices to the unanswering sky. In the bewilderment of their oppression, the pangs of hunger, they hailed the prophecy of some Medicine Man that the Messiah would come, and with his coming, the day of their deliverance.

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From the outset, Sitting Bull had refused to be/come an "Agency Indian" or to bow his neck to the yoke of the self-constituted authority of the invader.

Moreover, his influence among the Indians was great, so that he had always constituted a rankling thorn in the side of officialdom. Particularly he was reputed to dislike the Indian Agent at Standing Rock, whom he had come to regard as the Pharaoh of the oppression that was being visited on his people. On the other hand, it was generally understood that this Agent cordially hated Sitting Bull, because he knew that the latter was on his trail. Knew that the old chief was out to compel his removal from office and the substitution of military, rather than civil, administration at the Agency. Be that as it may, strong feeling was generally reputed to exist between the two men, and to this Agent's influence was largely ascribed the eventual determination of the authorities to arrest Sitting Bull in his connection with the "Ghost Dancing."

In case of trouble, the soldiers at Fort Yates were being held in instant readiness for action. On the 12th of December, Lieutenant-Colonel Drum received