

to have caught the spirit of forbearance and self-control of their commander, the whole sad affair might and probably would have been brought to a close without the distressing and bloody events with which this story must close. /page 581/ Under General Miles's direction, steps were taken to assure the Indians of the intention of the government to deal justly by them, although there would be no flinching from the stern and inflexible administration of the law toward those who remained hostile. It was perhaps a mistake that the old Seventh Cavalry, whose gallant leader, General Custer, and so many of their comrades had been slain by this very tribe should have been among the soldiers detailed to this duty. Among them, "Remember Custer!" has been their battle-cry, and common report has credited them with an inflexible determination to revenge his death and that of their comrades.

Each day brought conflicting reports, but it was evident that the influence of the "Medicine man" was waning and that the tribe was recovering from its alleged frenzy. Little by little the bands of hostiles approached the agency, urged forward by the good generalship of Miles, who had so disposed of his forces that the bands were surrounded on all sides, save that towards the government station. It had been determined to secure a surrender of the hostiles and that their guns should be taken from them. Of all requirements this is the hardest for an Indian. His gun is next to his life. Without it he is as nothing. For it he will risk everything.

In this manner time dragged along until December 27th. ⁹⁰ on that day Big Foot's band was discovered shortly before noon by Little Bat, one of the Indian scouts. The hostile camp was eight miles northwest of Major Whiteside's camp on Wounded Knee. When this was reported to Major Whiteside he ordered four troops of the Seventh Cavalry into the saddle and marched to the point indicated by the scout. As the military approached the hostiles formed in a long line of battle 150 strong, armed with guns and knives, the latter stuck