

File 21

The Royal North-West Mounted Police A Corps History by Captain Ernest J. Chambers (Corps of Guides) Author of a series of Canadian Regimental Histories, etc, e

Entered according to the Act of the Parliament of Canada in the year One Thousand Nine Hundred and Six by Ernest J. Chambers at the Department of Agriculture.

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Chapter 5. The Sitting Bull Incident

Unwelcome Visitors from the United States Impose Several Years Hard Work and Grave Responsibilities-The Great Sioux Leader and the Custer Massacre.

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In the early '70's Sitting Bull set up a claim to all the land for forty rods on both sides of the Yellowstone and all its tributaries. In the latter part of 1875 a party of white men from Montana invaded Sitting Bull's territory and built a fort. The Indians were determined that the party should evacuate, and during the months of December 1875 and January 1876 there were daily attacks upon the fort. A strong force of United States regulars and Montana militia was sent to the relief of the place, and occupants of the forts were taken away, and Sitting Bull promptly fired the place. Sitting Bull reached the zenith of his fame and power the succeeding summer.

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There was a great rush of miners and prospectors to the country immediately, and it was one of these parties that established the fort which Sitting Bull had caused the evacuation of. Several great Indian chiefs visited Washington to protest against the invasion of the prospectors, which they pointed out was a clear violation of existing treaties between the Indians and the United States Government. The Washington officials agreed to keep the prospectors out but failed to do so, and by the autumn of 1875 there were a thousand miners at work in the Black Hills.

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For some weeks the United States troops supposed that Sitting Bull had been killed in the fight with Custer's force, but in course of time reports from the wild country in the north of the state near the Canadian frontier showed that he was alive, and military operations were resumed. In May, 1877, reports from Canada, through the North-West Mounted Police, announced that the old leader, with many of his warriors, had taken refuge across the International frontier.

As early as May, 1876, the Mounted Police had been keeping a sharp lookout for bands of fugitive Indians from across the line. The Assistant Commissioner, Lieut.-Col. Irvin in temporary command of the Force during the Commissioner's absence in the east, in the summer, instructed Inspector Crozier, in command at Cypress Hills, to even gather all information he could regarding the movements of the Sioux Indians on the United States side of the line.

During December, 1876, United States Indians, under Black Moon, an Unapapa Sioux chief, numbering about 500 men, 1,000 women, and 1,400 children, with about 3,500 horses