

CHAPTER XII

THE GHOST DANCE EAST OF THE ROCKIES—AMONG THE SIOUX

In 1889 the Ogalala heard that the son of God had come upon earth in the west. They said the Messiah was there, but he had come to help the Indians and not the whites, and it made the Indians happy to hear this.—*George Sword*.

They signed away a valuable portion of their reservation, and it is now occupied by white people, ~~for which they have received nothing~~. They understood that ample provision would be made for their support; instead, their supplies have been reduced and much of the time they have been living on half and two-thirds rations. Their crops, as well as the crops of white people, for two years have been almost a total failure. The disaffection is widespread, especially among the Sioux, while the Cheyennes have been on the verge of starvation and were forced to ~~commit depredations to sustain life~~. These facts are beyond question, and the evidence is positive and sustained by thousands of witnesses.—*General Miles*.

Among the tribes east of the mountains and north of Oklahoma, it appears from official documents in the Indian Office and from other obtainable information that the Ghost dance and the doctrine, if known at all, were never accepted by the Blackfeet of Montana; the Ojibwa of Turtle mountain and Devils lake in North Dakota, or by the rest of the tribe farther to the east in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan; the Omaha, Winnebago, and Ponka in Nebraska; the small band of Sauk and Fox in Iowa; the still smaller band of Sauk and Fox, the Potawatomi, Kickapoo, Iowa, and Ojibwa in northeastern Kansas; or by the Sioux of Devils lake in North Dakota, Lake Traverse (Sisseton agency) and Flandreau in South Dakota, and Santee agency in Nebraska. All or most of these Sioux belong to the Santee or eastern division of the tribe, and have long been under civilizing influences. According to official statements the dance was not taken up by any of the Sioux of Crow Creek or Yankton agencies in South Dakota, but they were certainly more or less affected by it, as they knew all about it and are in constant communication with the wilder bands of Sioux which were concerned in the outbreak. I was informed by the Omaha and Winnebago in 1891 that they had been told of the new messiah by visiting Sioux from Pine Ridge agency in April, 1890, and later on by other Sioux from Yankton agency, but had put no faith in the story, and had never organized a Ghost dance. According to the agent in charge, the Crow of Montana were not affected. This, if true, is remarkable, in view of the fact that the Crow are a large tribe and comparatively primitive, and have living near them the wildest of the Ghost-dancing tribes, the northern Cheyenne especially occupying practically the same reservation. It is possible that their experience in the Sword-bearer affair in 1887, already mentioned, had a tendency