

stretched out toward the west, the direction from which the messiah was to appear.

At the beginning the performers, men and women, sat on the ground in a large circle around the tree. A plaintive chant was then sung, after which a vessel of some sacred food was passed around the circle until everyone had partaken, when, at a signal by the priests, the dancers rose to their feet, joined hands, and began to chant the opening song and move slowly around the circle from right to left. The rest of the performance, with its frenzies, trances, and recitals of visions, was the same as with the southern tribes, as will be described in detail hereafter. Like these tribes also, the Sioux usually selected Sunday, the great medicine day of the white man, for the ceremony.

We come now to the Sioux outbreak of 1890, but before going into the history of this short but costly war it is appropriate to state briefly the causes of the outbreak. In the documentary appendix to this chapter these causes are fully set forth by competent authorities—civilian, military, missionary, and Indian. They may be summarized as (1) unrest of the conservative element under the decay of the old life, (2) repeated neglect of promises made by the government, and (3) hunger.

The Sioux are the largest and strongest tribe within the United States. In spite of wars, removals, and diminished food supply since the advent of the white man, they still number nearly 26,000. In addition to these there are about 600 more residing in Canada. They formerly held the headwaters of the Mississippi, extending eastward almost to Lake Superior, but were driven into the prairie about two centuries ago by their enemies, the Ojibwa, after the latter had obtained firearms from the French. On coming out on the buffalo plains they became possessed of the horse, by means of which reinforcement to their own overpowering numbers the Sioux were soon enabled to assume the offensive, and in a short time had made themselves the undisputed masters of an immense territory extending, in a general way, from Minnesota to the Rocky mountains and from the Yellowstone to the Platte. A few small tribes were able to maintain their position within these limits, but only by keeping close to their strongly built permanent villages on the Missouri. Millions of buffalo to furnish unlimited food supply, thousands of horses, and hundreds of miles of free range made the Sioux, up to the year 1868, the richest and most prosperous, the proudest, and withal, perhaps, the wildest of all the tribes of the plains.

In that year, in pursuance of a policy inaugurated for bringing all the plains tribes under the direct control of the government, a treaty was negotiated with the Sioux living west of the Missouri by which they renounced their claims to a great part of their territory and had "set apart for their absolute and undisturbed use and occupation"—so the treaty states—a reservation which embraced all of the present state of South Dakota west of Missouri river. At the same time agents were appointed and agencies established for them; annuities and rations,