

The Editor,
Adventure,
New York City.

Dear Sir:

I was interested to see in the issue for May 15th another contribution from Mr. Wells, of Oregon, in which he questions some of my statements regarding Sitting Bull's career. Most of the points he raises are, I believe, sufficiently disposed of in my book, slated to appear in September (Houghton Mifflin Co., Boston). I do not know whether you favor devoting a lot of space to this subject in your columns, and I am much too busy to write my book again for magazine publication, when Mr. Wells can get the data by waiting ninety days for the book to appear. However, a few of his points can be taken up here, as they fall outside the story in my book.

First, as to killing women and children by the Sioux, and the holier-than-thou attitude taken by Mr. Wells. I believe that a careful count will show that more Indian women and children were killed by white men on the Plains than white women and children by Indians. Slim Buttes and Wounded Knee and Sand Creek and the Fort Robinson killing of Dull Knife's people are cases in point. Barring the Minnesota Massacre (with which Sitting Bull had nothing to do) the Sioux had small chances of killing white women, for there were not enough of them in the country inhabited by the hunting tribes. Nowadays Army aviators think nothing of bombing cities and killing women and children; are these men members of "gangs of cutthroats?" A man is to be judged by the manner in which he lives up to his moral code, whatever it may be; not by the code, for which the individual is not responsible. Sitting Bull, moreover, was noted for sparing captives and whites who fell into his hands: Little Assiniboine, Fakher De Smet, Frank Grouard, Tom Campbell, and a dozen others, including Fanny Kelly.

As to "Medicine Man" and "Chief", every man who could make medicine (in the sense of performing rituals, having visions, and so on) and Sitting Bull was like the rest, having a gift of prophecy, which made him remarkable also. But there was no high degree of specialization among the Sioux. If sitting on a horse and thinking what to do next is "making medicine", then Sitting Bull was a medicine man, and Mr. Wells and I have no quarrel. Sitting Bull was a head-man of a band (the Icira) of Hunkpapa, of about sixty lodges; he was chief of the Strong Hearts, a warrior society, and later of several others; he was made head chief of the Hunkpapa (about 4000 souls) in 1867. Later, when Red Cloud made peace, all the non-agency Sioux gathered about him, and before the Custer fight he was elected chief of all those he had summoned to his camp to fight the troops. A chief, of course, had little authority; a chieftaincy was a post of honor, ~~like~~ rather than of power. White men crave power, but Indians care only for prestige. And a chief had no more power than his personality and his strong arm could enforce. That was why Uncle Sam insisted on 3/4 of the adult male Sioux agreeing to every treaty.

I never supposed that Custer was daunted by four Cheyennes, but the Cheyennes did, and as my book is told from their standpoint, I noted the fact. As to Reno being so secure on his hill, Mr. Wells should consult General Godfrey's well-known account of the business. Godfrey was there, and apparently he did not share Mr. Wells' optimism. As a matter of fact, some of the troops with Reno tried to go to Custer's relief, and were beaten back. The markers on the battlefield show this.

Frank Grouard's father was a white man; his mother a woman of the ~~Sioux~~ Sandwich Islands. Frank was ~~subsequently~~ raised among the whites, and as soon as he could escape from Sioux captivity returned to them, fought with them against the Indians, and lived with them until his death. I have heard that Kanakas from the Sandwich Islands