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FORT YATES, N. D.

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Professor W.S. Campbell:- Collecting material ended, and writing in progress-- yet must bother you with something learned just this hour.

Ben White (Indian 54) was in taking my census. He is very intelligent. After taking data, he started talking about S.B., and said-- among other things, "Some years ago I run onto a bunch of old Indians talking about Sitting Bull. I said 'Tell me how it happens that Sitting Bull got his fame among Indians; whitemen estimate an Indian as Indians estimate him, so he must have had fame among Indians before he was noted among white people &c?'"

They talked a while about his always being regarded as an unusual boy &c."

I said "What did he do to make fame, that is what I am asking?"

Hona said "He was very merciful. He never would allow any harm to white people or to anyone, unless necessary in fighting an enemy" Went on along this line.

I said "What next?" Charging Thunder said "In his youth he successfully raided Crow Indians 26 times taking more than 30 horses each time. And he immediately gave away all the horses, each time, to those who needed them. He was not wounded in any of these raids, and this was so remarkable that it was holy (wakan). He was successful in every attempted raid. This gave him great fame among the Crows, and everywhere &c."

I said "What next?" Circling Hawk said "He had 26 scalps of Crows to his credit. These scalps were not taken while raiding horses, but on other occasions. All the old Indians know that. That would be sufficient to make any Indian famous. He did not keep these scalps for display, but reverently buried them. That was why he wore on his shirt that big bunch of Indian human hair. It indicated that he was successful beyond what one could suppose in taking scalps of the enemy &c"

I said, "What next?" Kidney (also called Black Shield) said "Twenty times he was on the war path in the winter, and without disaster at any time. This was in case of necessity. This would make a man famous &c."

I said "But white people write it up that Sitting Bull was a coward. I have read this over and over, in newspapers and books &c." They all laughed and one of the old men said "That is because they were jealous of him. The Indians all know better---unless the young ones taught in schools are made to think he was a coward."

White went on saying that these old men considered that Sitting Bull had to his credit more than even Red Cloud with his 89 coups---if things were reckoned up right. That it was as much credit to make a successful raid for 30 houses as to fight in a small battle; that expeditions in winter successfully made was regarded as of special honor &c.

Of course I've heard more or less talk about these things before. But never got it as straight as today. Ben went on mentioning that his fame was so great that most any Indians anywhere would go into battle, or danger crying out "Tatanka Iotanke he miye" (Sitting Bull I an he), believing this would strike fear into the enemy, and would endue the one invoking his name with power and success. Ben went on speaking of the apparent desire here in Fort Yates to crush out the fame of Sitting Bull; but said that the Indians dare to speak their minds now more than formerly.

I gave no suggestion whatever, or any lead whatever; took this matter as Ben White freely gave it.

He said that S.B. was the greatest Indian that ever lived, *and that he realized it now*

Sincerely

*A. McG. Beede*  
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