

As to the interviews referred to on the preceding page, I am of the opinion that Miles' book is correct in every word. He might, however, have gone more into detail. The dates of these interviews were October 20 and 21, about 11 o'clock in the morning. If I remember correctly, Sitting Bull was dressed, when I saw him, in regular Indian costume, wrapped in a blanket, and with one feather in his hair.

"Did the Indians stand off the troops or attempt to? Can you say what part Sitting Bull took in this action. I find that white men generally take a slighting view of his abilities as a warrior. But the Indians hold a very different opinion, I find. The fact seems to be that the history of the Indians at that time was largely written in war time, and has never been rewritten. I am not trying to make a case for Sitting Bull. But if the balance has been loaded against him, I want to straighten it. So far, the Indians have not had much to say in print about their side of the affair. I have questioned many of them--half a dozen--who were present there and could give the words of the council verbatim. I used different interpreters and talked to them separately on different occasions. They all say Miles made peace, talked of putting them on reservations, and then--after they started home to camp--began to fire at them. Evidence so taken from eye-witnesses would stand in a court of law, I think. That is why I wish to get this straight. For from all I can learn Miles was extremely fair to the Indians--at least in his writings. In his memoirs, however, he gives a very sketchy account of these councils, much less elaborate than that of the Indians. If you can help me, please do."

The Indians did not in the slightest degree "stand off" the troops. As per agreement, the first day, the troops went into camp to allow Sitting Bull and the other chiefs a chance to confer. The next morning, the troops were ready to advance. They did so. There was another meeting, which was not satisfactory, and the fight began.

Sitting Bull was not a fighting man--no more were Woodrow Wilson or Champ Clark or Elihu Root. Sitting Bull was an orator, an adviser, an Indian statesman, but not a warrior. This is given for what it is worth, as my opinion, after having heard of him, and been against the Indians in the field from 1876 to 1880. I never saw Sitting Bull close by until his surrender in 1881 to Major Brotherton at Buford.

The claim of the Indians you have interviewed about Miles' firing on them after they had started home, is false. We went into camp on the afternoon of October 20 as promised. They went to their camp, ten or more miles away, and began at once to pack up and move north. After the conference the next morning, (October 21) the Indians themselves began the firing, for one of our soldiers made the remark in my hearing, "Now there'll be fighting and no more talking," or words to that effect.

All those who were present with Miles at those conferences are dead. But Miles' book is better evidence