

Random

The military reader may feel dissatisfied with accounts of Indian warfare, because of the lack of attention strategy receives. But there was no strategy. Indian warfare was all tactics. Indian warriors had practically no interest in the general result of a fight. What they wanted to distinguish themselves individually, and come out alive. And on the rare occasions when a plan of attack was made, impatient young warriors generally delivered a preature attack and spoiled the leader's plans. Altogether too much has been made of the greatness of Indian generals- as if generals could win a war. Sitting Bull is not to be compared with Napoleon, but with Garibaldi.
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Everywhere you read that Gall or Crazy Horse ~~was~~ or Red Cloud was a master strategist, that they adopted the military science of the whites, and so on. The fact is, nothing of the kind is true. If it were, the world is still waiting for some Military expert to explain what this strategy was. There exist no accounts of the strategy of Crazy Horse or Red Cloud or Roman Nose. Surely, if these men had been such wonderful strategists, the Army War College would have studied their arrangements and made them a part of the instruction of their students. But no one has ever given an account of Indian strategy. There was not any. Their wars were all tactics. The fact is, the Indian beat the white man, not because he had better generals, but because he was a better fighter, man for man.

Where there is no military formation, no service of communication, no men detailed for orderleys, no discipline, no penalty for desertion, no pay, how could there be any strategy? The function of a leader was to lead the charge, or to hearten the men. Nothing more was expected of him; nothing more could be accomplished by him. An amateur village fire department is the closest parallel to an Indian fight..everyone giving orders..nobody obeying them..and every man doing what he could do best and felt most like doing.

Moreover, Indian fighting was characterized by their swift changes. There was no immediate action of the kind that we see in our regular wars.

It is amusing to note that writers who went to one Indian for their information always came away with the impression that that particular Indian was a great chief and the real leader of the battle. It was so with those who interviewed Red Cloud, with those who interviewed Rain-in-the-Face (who never was a chief of any sort), with those who interviewed Gall, and Crazy Horse. This was inevitable. For the Indian warrior was interested only in his own exploits, and when he was pressed for information as to who was leader, he naturally said that he was in front (as every brave man was at some time in the fight)..~~There was~~ Moreover, it was considered bad form in old days to talk of another man's exploits- besides being a bore--and so a questioned warrior talked chiefly of himself. Anyone without experience in talking with old Indians will invariably get the impression that the speaker was the leader in the fight of which he talked..

And if any one wishes a clinching proof of the fact that strategy was of no importance in Indian warfare, I offer this fact: no war honors, no feathers, no citations of any sort were awarded for staff work. Only the man who touched his enemy could count a coup or wear a feather.

The giving of medals to noncombatant generals-- so prevalent in the Great War-- would have aroused inextinguishable laughter among the Sioux.