

Separating Fact From Legend on Sitting Bull

SITTING BULL, CHAMPION OF THE SIOUX, by Stanley Vestal (350 pages; University of Oklahoma Press, Norman; \$5).

THE importance of this contribution to Western history long has been recognized and the book has for many years been out of print.

In the 25 years since its first publication much new material has been made available and is included in this, the definitive edition on the great leader of the Sioux. Students of Indian history who are seeking information, especially on the struggle of the Sioux nation to maintain its integrity and existence, should find it a valuable guide.

Parallel with and part of that struggle was Sitting Bull's own unrelenting efforts to retain leadership of his tribe. He is described as "a many-sided man, a soldier, diplomat, organizer, patriot, statesman and prophet."

Stanley Vestal is the pen name for Walter S. Campbell, a prolific writer on Western themes. Research professor of English at the University of Oklahoma, he has for 18 years conducted courses there in professional writing. He was graduated from the Oxford



Sitting Bull.

university as the first Rhodes scholar from Oklahoma. Some of his better known books in the field of Western history are "Warpath and Council Fire," "Jim Bridger," and "Dodge City."

None can quarrel with the author's scholarship or competency in presenting his material, but there will be those to differ at many points of his work; as to the underlying causes of the fight at Killdeer mountain; as to the events at the Little Big Horn, where Custer made his last stand; as to his courage, and as to his leadership.

All these differences stem from acceptance of traditions and legends about Sitting Bull which the author declares to be without foundation in fact. One of these tales, that Sitting Bull himself killed Custer, is denied unequivocally; the slayer was White Bull, a nephew of the chief.

John Edward Hicks.