"And Thus It Was That Tatanka i-Yotanka, (Sitting Bull) Chief of the Sioux, Died"

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON
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THE scene was Soldier Field on Chicago's lake front, but on this particular occasion that huge stadium had been temporarily transformed into the "circus lot."

We sat in the shade of a dressing tent a little distance away from the "big top" while all around us surged and eddied the multifarious activities of the "world's greatest show" getting ready for an afternoon performance. And in that setting—which in time, distance and atmosphere was far, far removed from the Indian fighting days of the old Wild West—I took part in one of the most unusual interviews in all my experience as a newspaper man.

It was an interview with an Indian, and all of my questions and all of his answers were translated through the medium of that universal language of the Plains tribes, the "sign talk." The Indian was John Sitting Bull, the deaf-mute son of Tatanka i-Yotanka (Sitting Bull), famous chief of the Hunkpapa Sioux, and my finger - flipping, hand - waving "translator" was Col. Tim McCoy, adopted member of the Arapaho tribe and protege of Gen. Hugh L. Scott (in his time the white man best versed in the sign language). Today McCoy is one of the few white men who can carry on an extended conversation in that language.

I had brought with me a number of photographs, taken back in the eighties and nineties by D. F. Barry, famous for his pictures of the old-time Sioux. The eyes of John Sitting Bull lighted up when I showed him the picture of the four women standing in front of the log cabin, for one of these women was his mother. I asked him many questions about them and about his early life and one of these questions was answered in a singularly dramatic fashion.

"Do you have any recollection of the big fight on the Greasy Grass (Little Big Horn river in Montana) when Long Hair (General Custer) attacked your father's camp and he and all of his pony soldiers were killed?"

With a grim smile on his face, John Sitting Bull reached down and pulled up one of his buckflin company in 1932) comments on that particular one as follows:

They said he was making medicine during the battle, "skulking in the hills" . . . They said he ran away from the fight . . . that he was so excited that he forgot to take his small son with him, and that the child was therefore named The-One-Who-Was-Left. All this is poppycock.

The boy's name, properly translated, means Left-on-the-Battle-Field. It was given him by Four Horns, Sitting Bull's uncle, in commemoration of the time when he himself had been left for dead on the field during a fight with the Crows, an event so famous that it was used to mark the year 1843 in the Hunkpapa calendar.

John Sitting Bull "sign talks" with Col. Tim McCoy.

The One-Who-Was-Left grew up to bear the name of his father, Sitting Bull. According to his story, told in the sign talk and translated for me by Tim McCoy, it was the "men with red coats" (Royal North-West Mounted Police of Canada), who "live north of the boundary line" (indicated by reaching down as though putting stones on the ground at regular intervals, i. e., boundary stones) who conferred his father's name upon him. Later someone added "John" to that name, so he is now commonly known as John Sitting Bull.

Willing as he was to "talk" about his childhood days with his brother, Crowfoot, and his sister, Standing Holy, his attitude quickly changed when one event in his life was mentioned. His reluctance to recall it is quite understandable. For that event was the death of his father which took place just 50 years ago.

So one must turn to the pages of Stanley Vestal's biography of Sitting Bull for the true story of that tragic affair. It is told by a historian free from the usual white man's prejudices against the Indian, especially those prejudices which existed while Sitting Bull was alive. It is the story of an Indian patriot, made distrust-

14, 1890, a detachment of Indian police, led by Lieutenant Bullhead and Sergeants Eagle Man, Shave Head and Red Tomahawk, quietly entered Sitting Bull's camp and surrounded the log cabin in which he, his wife and his son, The One-Who-Was-Left, were sleeping. Just before dawn they forced open the door, dragged the chief, naked, out of his bed and, none too gently, tried to help him get dressed.

At first Sitting Bull made no effort to resist. But he soon became angry at the indignities he was suffering and refused to budge from the cabin, whereupon the policemen picked him up and, half-carrying, half-pushing, started him toward the door. By this time the whole camp had been alarmed and an angry throng of Sitting Bull's warriors came running from their tents with guns in their hands to resist the attempt of the "Metal Breasts" (police) to take their chief away. Of the scene outside the door Vestal writes:

Sergeant Eagle Man, unusually noisy that night, kept shouting "Stand back! Make way! Get out of here!" and shoving against Sitting Bull's deaf-mute son, who—very much excited—pulled and shoved Eagle Man, making horrible noises in the darkness. And as the police forged slowly forward, the terrible wailing of women was mingled with the deaf-mute's unearthly gibberings.

A moment later Sitting Bull shouted to his followers, "Come on! Come on! Take action! Let's go!" Instantly Catch-the-Bear, chief soldier of the camp and commander of Sitting Bull's bodyguard, threw up his rifle and shot Lieutenant Bullhead in the leg. As the policeman went down, he twisted around and shot upward at Sitting Bull, who was trying to pull loose from his captors. As the chief reeled from the impact of the bullet, Sergeant Red Tomahawk shot him from behind and Sitting Bull dropped dead in