

For sixteen months Grouard was closely guarded in the Sioux village. With his better understanding of the Sioux tongue he found himself taking a lively interest in Indian traditions, manners, and customs, and he also discovered that the Indians grew more and more friendly and confidential as they witnessed his eagerness to enter into all the minor details of their mode of living. Little Assiniboine and White Eagle, the latter a cousin of Sitting Bull, were Grouard's sole male companions. In reality they were his guard, and were as constant in their devotion to the orders of Sitting Bull regarding the captive as it were possible for human beings to be.

90 It was customary in the early spring to move the village toward the north to meet the vast herds of buffalo that came down, and from that time on to the last of September of the first of October the village would be almost constantly on the move. In the fall the Sioux generally, if not always, made it a point to locate their village on the Belle Fourche or Little Missouri rivers, where small game was found in abundance. It was during one of these village-moving times that Grouard * made a ten-strike and established his reputation as a marksman.

The Indian, as everybody knows, is nothing if not a gambler, and one day a large number of the Sioux were engaged in the enjoyment of their ruling passion, while the others went ahead to establish the village at a more favorable point for game. Grouard was with the loitering crowd. The Indians had begun to realize that the pale-face was really one of their own number, and Sitting Bull, in a burst of generosity, had given the scout an old flint-lock gun. Grouard says no one knows with what emotion he hugged this old muzzle-loading shooting horn to his breast. It was the first fire-arm that he had been allowed to even grasp in his hands for nearly a year and a half, and he cleaned it up as well as possible, preparatory to taking a shot.

While the gambling was at its height, a big, fine deer came running over the brow of an adjacent hill, and made straight for the place where the Indians were squatted. Nearly all of them saw the animal at the same time, but having laid their arms aside, they were taken at a disadvantage for shooting. As soon as the deer got within what Grouard considered the range of his old flintlock, and with the eyes of half the village upon him, he drew a quick bead and fired. The deer fell dead in its tracks.

91 At first there was an exclamation of surprise, then an outburst of admiration. The Indians, including Sitting Bull himself, had not believed the gun capable of killing a jack rabbit at a distance of ten paces, while Grouard*had used it to great advantage at two hundred yards and made a remarkable running shot.

When Sitting Bull heard of the incident, he was very much pleased, and immediately presented his adopted brother Standing Bear with a powder-and-lead muzzle-loading Hawkins gun. All the bucks were thereafter anxious to have Grouard accompany them on their hunting trips, and in this way he developed into one of the best shots the country has ever produced.

Once the ice was broken, Grouard found no further bar to his outgoings and incomings. He roamed the wilds at will, and being a natural plainsman, acquired a thorough and intimate knowledge of every mountain pass, crag, ravine and canyon in the great stretch of country now known as Wyoming, Dakota and Montana.