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In the winter of 1870, Sitting Bull and a large party left the Indian village for a hunt. The village at that time was located north of the mouth of Powder river. It appears that the Crows, who were all the time creating disturbances with the Sioux when the Sioux were not creating disturbances with them had learned that Sitting Bull and party had gone on this hunt, and concluded it would be a good time to get up a pony-stealing expedition against the Sioux. Accordingly a party numbering thirty-one left the Crow reservation and went to the Sioux camp with the intention of running off as many of the ponies of the enemy as they could. In some way or other Sitting Bull and his hunting party ran across the trail of the incoming Crows, and at once suspected what the mission of the enemy was. The Uncapapas concluded to return at once to their village, and prevent the Crows from carrying out their design.

104 Arriving at their village the Sioux drove the Crows westward to the badlands and bottoms, the Crows finally seeking shelter in a basin, the edge of which was formed by a rocky eminence. In this naturally fortified position the Crows stood their pursuers off for two nights and a day, and the end of which time Sitting Bull called a council of his warriors and urged upon them the necessity of charging the enemy's position and driving them out, or being killed in the attempt. Sitting Bull knew that to attack the Crows meant death to some of his party, and in the council which was called, told his followers that it would look very childish if they allowed this band of Crows to escape after they had them penned up among the rocks. He said that he did not want any of his party to join the attack unless they felt the same about it as he did; but he did not believe that any of his men were squaws. He did not ask them to take any risks that he was not willing to assume himself. He proposed to lead the attack, and he expected every one of his men to follow him. They would either drive the Crows out of the rocks, kill them where they were or be killed themselves in making the attempt.

The members of his party signified their willingness to follow their chief, and preparations for the attack were immediately made.

105 Little Assiniboine, who was of the party, told me afterwards that when the start of the Sioux was made for the Crow's position, Sitting Bull was far in advance of all his warriors; that upon reaching the rocks behind which the Crows were secreted, and notwithstanding the heavy fire of the enemy, the chief scaled the wall of rocks, jumped in among the imprisoned Crows and had killed several of them before the remainder of his party arrived to assist him. So far as numbers were concerned the two parties were about even, and the conflict was a hand to hand one. At the end of twenty minutes, however, all of the thirty-one Crows had been killed and scalped. The bodies of the slain were left where they fell, and Sitting Bull and party returned in triumph to the Sioux village where one of the greatest scalp dances I ever witnessed was indulged in. Two of the Sioux were killed during the fight.

Some men who have written of Sitting Bull, claiming that he was a medicine man and not a warrior, are unacquainted with the circumstances surrounding his life among the Indians themselves. No man in the Sioux nation was braver in battle than Sitting Bull, and he asked none of his warriors to take any chances that he was not willing at all times to share. I could recall a hundred different instances coming under my own observation to prove Sitting Bull's bravery, and in the first great sundance that I ever witnessed after my capture by the Sioux, I heard Sitting Bull recount his "coups in action." They numbered sixty-three, most of them being victories over Indian enemies.