

4580

Buel

After leaving the cemetery we drove back to Sitting Bull's lodge, and being introduced I conducted a long conversation with him through Charles McLoughlin, a young son of the Indian agent, as Sitting Bull can scarcely speak a word of English, though he signs his name fairly well—as is seen in his autograph.

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I found him sitting upon the ground, within his tent, with six other leading men of his tribe. Captain McDougal asked for a pipe, which being produced and filled with tobacco, was lighted and smoked by the entire party. After this friendly ceremony the Captain announced to Sitting Bull the purpose of my visit, and assuring him of my good intentions toward his people, begged that he tell me, without reserve, everything he might know concerning the Custer Massacre. The cunning prophet made no reply for several minutes, smoking his pipe vigorously in the meantime, evidently debating with himself the advisability of his actions. At length he said:

"I was not in the fight and know nothing about it, save what my warriors have told me."

Again Captain McDougal besought him to abandon his reserve, and, for the sake of history, and that justice might be done his people and himself, to disclose what he knew concerning the battle; how it was conducted, what orders he had given, who killed Custer, and all other information he possessed. His answer I will give in my own language as it was, in effect, interpreted to me:

"I need not tell you how we have been deceived by the white people, for if you are friendly you know the facts, and if you are our enemy you would not believe me. The Black Hills country was set aside for us by the government; it was ours by solemn agreement, and we made the country our home; we realized how our lands had been taken, our reservations circumscribed, my people driven like so many wild beasts toward a common center