

# The CAMP-FIRE



*A free-to-all meeting place for  
readers, writers and adventurers*

**J**UDGING by the communications printed in these columns and other letters received, there seems to be quite a divergence of opinion about the facts of Sitting Bull's Canadian adventure. We are, therefore, glad to have with us in this issue a man who is doubtless closer to the subject than any one else, Major Harwood Steele, son of the late Inspector "Sam" Steele of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Our thanks are hereby extended to Major Steele for his forthright exposition on the subject.

Montreal, Canada

As to the statements of Inspector Parsons (*Adventure*, November 1st, 1932): My father was regimental sergeant-major with Colonel Macleod, officer commanding the North-West Mounted Police, when they met Generals Terry and Lawrence, the American officers sent to treat with Sitting Bull, at Fort Walsh, in 1877, soon after the arrival of the Sioux in Canada. And, as Inspector (in which rank he was commissioned in 1878), he remained in almost constant contact with the chief till he left the country in 1881.

But he was not the man who "arrested" Sitting Bull and escorted him to the border, as stated by Inspector Parsons. Nor was he, then or at any other time, what the Inspector picturesquely calls a "grizzled old frontiersman", for these very simple reasons: When he joined, in 1873, he was only 22 (the youngest sergeant-major the Force ever had); he said "Goodby" to Sitting Bull when only 30; and, till a few months before his death in 1919, at the comparatively early age of 68, there was not a grey hair in his head.

Next, he did not indulge in a drinking bout with Terry and Lawrence. British non-commissioned officers aren't allowed, and have no chance, to do any such thing with commissioned officers. Then Generals Terry and Lawrence, in my father's own words, were "smart soldiers, very punctilious in their bearing towards us," and, therefore, not likely to engage in a drinking bout with foreign soldiers of any rank or age, least of all with very young foreign N.C.O.'s, like my father. Furthermore, heavy drinking was so taboo in the Force that my father could not have held his job or gained his subsequent ad-

vancement if inclined that way. Sam Steele was no prude, but was dead against immoderation in any form, severely punished drunkenness, never over-indulged, and for the last 16 years of his life totally abstained from alcohol and tobacco.

**I**N SHORT, all Inspector Parsons' very nice little paragraph is based on misinformation.

What, then, is true? Just this: During those four years of contact with Sitting Bull, my father shared with his comrades (notably Colonels Macleod and Irvine, Superintendents Walsh and Crozier) the hard work of watching the Sioux and gradually preparing them to return to the United States. The credit for this—a truly great feat, of which more later—belongs to no individual but to the Force as a whole. Then, at the time of Sitting Bull's call at Fort Qu'appelle, to make his final effort to secure a Canadian reserve, my father told the chief that his only course was to surrender, and passed him on to the late Inspector A. R. Macdonnell.

This last scene is still glossed over by historians, either because they read only the official reports, prefer to dwell on the apparently more exciting phases of Sitting Bull's Canadian visit or have a tomahawk to grind. Yet it is well worth preservation. In "Forty Years in Canada", my father describes it thus:

"When the pow-wow (at Qu'appelle) was over, a messenger was sent to Mr. Dewdney, the Indian commissioner, to let him know that Sitting Bull was with us. He came up and saw him and arranged to feed his band as far as Wood Mountain, and I provided an escort to go with them and issue the rations as required.

"**T**HEY departed at once and when they reached Wood Mountain the supplies were exhausted. Sitting Bull went to Inspector A. R. Macdonnell and demanded more food, which was refused him. The chief threatened to take it by force but he was reckoning with the wrong man. Macdonnell told him that he would ration him and his men with bullets. The chief exclaimed—

"I am thrown away!"

"No," said Macdonnell, 'you are not thrown away; you are given good advice, which is that if you require food you must return to your own reservation in the United States, where you will be well treated.'

"This was the last of it; the chief accepted the situation and the next day accompanied Macdonnell to Poplar River, where he handed over his rifle to Major Brotherton, United States