Native Nations

Sioux. It is a word that, for people unfamiliar with Native America, conjures up the Hollywood image of an "Indian;" a stern man in a long warbonnet, his face painted, his horse painted. He lives on the Great Plains, where he hunts bison or fights the cavalry. If we do not see him doing these things, we see him all alone, on a tired horse, disappearing into the sunset. This is an unchanging, monolithic notion of what Native America was, in the long ago.

In fact, "Sioux" describes an association of many Native nations, nations that existed before European horses replaced the dogs that once aided the people in transport and hunting. "Sioux" describes nations that continue to exist today, nations that continue to define themselves as other than, and sovereign from, the settler colonial nation of the United States.

The Dakota, Nakota, and Lakota, each also divided into smaller bands, form the three main branches of the Sioux. The term "Sioux" should conjure up an image of diverse communities of men and women in constant movement, constant negotiation with changing circumstances. It should conjure up an image of an affiliation of nations, linked to one another by story, tradition, and culture, but also different from one another, not always in agreement, and not always responding to change in the same way.

The Siouxan peoples were originally from around the headwaters of the Mississippi. They had horses by the early eighteenth century and moved west onto the Great Plains by the late eighteenth century, in response to the pressures of other Native nations being pushed further west by white settlement. When Lewis and Clark met them in the early nineteenth century, they met people who could curse in both French and English, wore wool, had guns, and were perfectly aware of and in adaptive relation to white cultural presence. By the middle of the nineteenth century, these nations stretched from Minnesota to the Dakotas and Wyoming. Dakotas lived in the upper Mississippi and western Minnesota. Nakotas lived between the Mississippi and the Missouri. Lakotas lived west of the Missouri.

The Great Plains, figured often as a desert landscape by white writers, became, across the nineteenth century, an arena of intense competition for hunting territory and resources among Native people. With the pressure for territory always increasing, warfare became a constant of High Plains life. Prestige as a warrior was essential for masculine power in the community. Warrior societies were the basis of government, but acts of bravery, witnessed by others and recounted at home, were the most important feature of war. Raids that brought back many horses, or striking an enemy harmlessly—"counting coup"—were more honored than killing.

Women's work changed, too. Bison had once been hunted on foot and with dogs. Few animals were killed. However, horses and guns made the killing of bison easier, and with increased demand for bison robes in the east, bison hunting

became essential for trade with whites and other Native nations. Women's place in the community consequently became tied to the laborious preparation of the skins for trade.

Pressure continued to grow among competing Native nations, however. The railroad came, and the vast bison herds were systematically brought to the brink of extinction under the aegis of the U.S. government. Genocide became the goal of U.S. military encounters with High Plains people. The reservation system crushed Native mobility, gender roles, and cultural and political sovereignty. Children were taken away to boarding school, and they returned—if they returned—forever different.

This so-called "education" was in fact part of a plan of assimilation hailed by Richard Henry Pratt, the mastermind of Indian boarding school education, as a means to "kill the Indian . . . and save the man." Children arrived at school as young as five years old. Their hair was cut—for them, this was a sign of cowardice and mourning. They were punished if they spoke their language. They were forced to conform to white gender norms, and they weren't allowed to go home for years on end. Meanwhile, at home on the reservation, sickness, starvation, and suicide were rampant. In the selections by Zitkala-Sa, we have a portrayal of school life. Born in 1876, the year of the Battle of Greasy Grass Creek, Zitkala-Sa was enticed away to boarding school at the age of eight. She eventually taught at Carlisle Indian School, but the experience disgusted her and she published her memoir in 1900 in an attempt to reveal to white America the cultural genocide perpetrated by the boarding school system.

In 1887 the Dawes Act authorized the surveying of Indian land for the purpose of dividing it into allotments. The Great Sioux Reservation was broken up, and vast acreage was lost. Families were reorganized and gender roles redefined. In the wake of allotment, the Ghost Dance religion sparked anxiety in white America; would it erupt in violence and prompt a return to the Indian wars? Newspapers called on the army to put a stop to the singing and dancing. Sitting Bull, who was sympathetic to the Ghost Dancers, was seen as a threat. It was feared that he would join them, and lend his strength to the movement. Reservation police were sent to arrest him on December 14, 1870; instead, they killed him. A group of his followers fled and met up with another band under the leadership of Big Foot. On the evening of December 28, at Wounded Knee creek, they were surrounded by the 7th Cavalry and surrendered. In the morning, during a search for weapons, shooting began, and the army proceeded to indiscriminately kill men, women, and children.

The massacre at Wounded Knee marks the end of nineteenth century armed resistance to white colonialism. New kinds of resistance and adaptation had to be found. Charles Eastman and Zitkala-Sa (Gertrude Bonnin) are each the child of a white and a Native parent, and they each represent the struggles of their generation to account for the transition from traditional to reservation life. Eastman, whose mother was a white woman, was educated in white schools and became a physician. He returned to the reservation, where he witnessed both the Ghost Dance religion and the aftermath of the Wounded Knee massacre, both of which are described by him here.

Across the decades covered by this volume, Native peoples were faced with reinterpreting and rebuilding their cultures under terrible conditions. The losses

were huge and the violence unremitting. However, they came and continue to come through. "Survivance", a neologism coined by Anishinaanbe scholar Gerald Vizenor, is a word that aims to move us past an understanding of Native cultures as always in a state of disappearance, crushed by genocidal machineries of colonialism. Instead, seeing Native cultures as always engaging in a practice of "survivance" is to see Native cultures in dynamic, creative, and enduring modes of generation. Devastation, loss, and grief must not be minimized, but survivance—which combines an understanding of survival, resistance, and active futurity—repudiates disappearance. Loss is certainly threaded through, but it is neither the beginning, the middle, nor the end of the story.

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Ghost Dance Songs

In 1871 Congress terminated the U.S. policy of making treaties with Native peoples as sovereign nations, thus making the tribes subject to the will of Congress and the administrative rulings of the president. The pace of Anglo-American expansion and expropriation of Native lands quickened, culminating within a decade in the destruction of the vast buffalo herds and the forcible confinement of many tribes to unproductive reservation land, where starvation threatened their lives and acculturation threatened their traditional cultures with extinction. The response of many Native people to threats to their way of life was a powerful apocalyptic dream of a future time when enemies would be overthrown and the world returned to the divine order established in the beginning.

The Ghost Dance, the most dramatic and widespread manifestation of this phenomenon, began when the Paiute prophet Wovoka experienced such a vision. He prophesied that the crow would bring whirlwinds and earthquakes to cleanse the earth and destroy the white invaders, and that the Native dead (the "ghosts") and the slaughtered buffalo would return to reclaim the land. The vision and the trance-inducing round dance and songs accompanying it spread like wildfire among reservation communities from California to the Dakotas.

Among the Sioux, facing a desperate struggle for both physical and cultural survival, the Ghost Dance became especially powerful, catching up men like Sitting Bull in its fervor and persuading others of their invulnerability to the white man's bullets. Fear swept over whites living on and near the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, provoking confrontations. In 1890, when Sitting Bull was killed while being arrested, others like Big Foot and his band saw no future and left the reservation. They made it into the Dakota Badlands as far as a place called Wounded Knee, where members of the U.S. cavalry armed with machine guns surrounded and searched them for weapons. A few shots were heard, then many from the machine guns. When silence settled, around 200 Native American men, women, and children were dead, and so was the hope awakened by Wovoka's dream. The Ghost Dance songs that follow should be read with the account of Charles Eastman, a Dakota trained in medicine, who returned to the Pine Ridge Reservation in time to witness the calamity at Wounded Knee.

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Ghost Dance Songs

I

My children,[1] when at first I liked the whites,
My children, when at first I liked the whites,
I gave them fruits,
I gave them fruits.

II

Father, have pity on me, 5
Father, have pity on me;
I am crying for thirst,
I am crying for thirst;
All is gone—I have nothing to eat.
All is gone—I have nothing to eat. 10

III

My son, let me grasp your hand,
My son, let me grasp your hand,
Says the father,
Says the father.
You shall live, 15
You shall live,
Says the father,
Says the father.
I bring you a pipe,[2]
I bring you a pipe, 20
Says the father,
Says the father.
By means of it you shall live,
By means of it you shall live,

[1]The songs are sung as a dialogue, with the Sun ("Our Father") addressing the Indians ("my children").

[2]*I.e.*, "a vision." The pipe was smoked to put one in prayerful contact with the sacred. Here "a pipe" functions as symbol for the vision that smoking the pipe would induce.

Says the father,
Says the father. 25

IV

My children, my children,
I take pity on those who have been taught,
I take pity on those who have been taught,
Because they push on hard, 30
Because they push on hard.
Says our father,
Says our father.

V

The whole world is coming,
A nation is coming, a nation is coming, 35
The Eagle has brought the message to the tribe.
The father says so, the father says so.
Over the whole earth they are coming.
The buffalo are coming, the buffalo are coming.
The Crow has brought the message to his tribe, 40
The father says so, the father says so.

VI

The spirit host is advancing, they say,
The spirit host is advancing, they say,
They are coming with the buffalo, they say,
They are coming with the buffalo, they say.
They are coming with the new earth, they say, 45
They are coming with the new earth, they say.

VII

He' yoho' ho! He' yoho' ho![3]
The yellow-hide, the white skin
I have now put him aside—
I have now put him aside— 50
I have no more sympathy with him,

[3] The words are vocables, with no referential significance.

I have no more sympathy with him,
He' yoho' ho! he' yoho' ho!

VIII

I' yehe! my children—*Uhi 'yeye 'heye!*
I' yehe! my children—*Uhi 'yeye 'heye!* 55
I' yehe! we have rendered them desolate—*Eye' ae 'yuhe' yu!*
I' yehe! we have rendered them desolate—*Eye' ae 'yuhe' yu!*
The whites are crazy—*Ahe 'yuhe' yu!*

1893

■ Charles Alexander Eastman (Sioux) ■ 1858–1939

What's in a name? In the case of Charles Eastman, a complicated story of cross cultural relations. Born in 1858, he was given the name Hakadah ("Pitiful Last"), because his mother soon died. Raised in the culture of the Santee Sioux, at the age of four he was given a new name, Ohiyesa ("The Winner"), after his village won a game of lacrosse. Eastman was in more ways than one a champion, but he would also face more than his share of losses.

Tensions between encroaching whites and Native people in Minnesota were mounting, and the failure of the U.S. government to adhere to its treaty obligations created a desperate situation. In 1862 some Sioux rebelled, killing a number of settlers. When the U.S. Army put down the insurrection, some three hundred Sioux were imprisoned and sentenced to die—including Eastman's father, Many Lightnings. His uncle and grandmother escaped with other Santee into the "deep woods" of Canada. His uncle gave Ohiyesa a warrior's education, preparing him to take revenge.

In 1873, however, Ohiyesa's father reappeared, as if back from the dead. Abraham Lincoln had commuted his sentence to a term in prison, where he had converted to Christianity. The elder Eastman now read the Bible and took up the plow, following a model that reformers had advocated for hunting-and-gathering Natives. To symbolize the change, he adopted the last name of his deceased wife Mary Eastman, whose father was a white soldier. He expected his son to follow in his footsteps along this new path, and thus Ohiyesa journeyed with him to his farm in South Dakota and was there christened Charles Eastman.

Eastman began his cultural reeducation by going to a nearby missionary-run school, where he soon excelled. Reversing the westward route of manifest destiny, he then traveled ever eastward from school to school—Beloit in Wisconsin, Knox in Illinois, Dartmouth in New Hampshire, and finally Boston University,

where he earned a medical degree in 1890. He was then ready to go back to the West to serve his people at the Pine Ridge Agency in South Dakota, where he became known as the "white doctor who is an Indian."

In 1890 the Ghost Dance religion was spreading among the Sioux. Following the vision of the prophet Wovoka, some Sioux believed that if the Ghost Dance was performed, whites would vanish, the buffalo would return, and Native land, life, and culture would be restored. Attempting to quell this millenarian movement, the army ended up massacring approximately 200 men, women, and children at Wounded Knee. Although Eastman had adopted much of what the white world offered, the sight of so many brutalized bodies shattered the idea that white society represented only light and progress.

Many reformers of his day clung to this idea and tried to convince both Native people and whites that Native cultures were inferior and backward. They espoused a "Kill the Indian and save the man" philosophy, believing that the only way Natives could survive in modern America was to wash their hands of the old ways and completely assimilate. Reformers often held up educated Native people like Eastman as confirmation of their views. While Eastman's life proved that Native people could succeed on the white man's terms, he himself insisted that Native cultures were valuable in their own right and, further, that they had much to offer modern America. While the missionaries believed that Christianity would civilize the "savage," Eastman held that Native people could educate white Americans on how to become truly civilized and spiritual. His motto could have been "Save the Indian and save the American."

Interestingly, he found a receptive audience among white Americans. As the country stepped up the pace of industrialization, many people became unsettled in the increasingly urbanized landscape. Seeking a kind of therapy for the anxieties of the machine age, many turned to Native peoples to try to reconnect with nature and recover a soul seemingly being exhausted by smokestack America.

Much of what Eastman wrote responded to this desire. His wife, Elaine Goodale, a poet and writer whom he had met at Pine Ridge in 1890 when she was serving as a supervisor of Native education, encouraged his literary efforts. In 1902, in *Indian Boyhood*, he told the story of the years before his introduction to white education. With the editorial help of his wife he wrote several other popular works, becoming a leading light in the Boy Scout movement and lecturing widely. In books such as *The Soul of an Indian* (1911) and his autobiographical *From Deep Woods to Civilization* (1916), Eastman acted as a spokesperson, explaining Native cultures to white America. In the process of explaining, though, he was also creating, for, as he well knew, there was no single Native culture. Eastman was helping forge a pan-Native identity that could both command the respect of whites and offer a vantage point from which to criticize the materialism and other drawbacks of mainstream American culture. The traditional ways and wisdom he celebrated were thus reinvented for a new audience, a new time, and a new purpose.

Eastman's legacy is perhaps best illustrated by the work he did between 1903 and 1909 to standardize the family names of the Sioux. This project involved more than simple translation from Lakota into English, because the Sioux followed a different cultural logic in their naming than did the dominant

society. Eastman had to negotiate between two cultures in order to create a synthesis that was somehow true to both sides. This was the sort of challenge Eastman faced his whole life, and because he met this particular one, his people gave him a new and most appropriate appellation: Name Giver. Through his writing and other work, Eastman made a name both for himself and for Native peoples at a time when they otherwise might have been deleted from the rolls of the nation.

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from From the Deep Woods to Civilization

VII. The Ghost Dance War[1]

A religious craze such as that of 1890–91 was a thing foreign to the Indian philosophy.[2] I recalled that a hundred years before, on the overthrow of the Algonquin nations, a somewhat similar faith was evolved by the astute Delaware prophet, brother to Tecumseh.[3] It meant that the last hope of race entity had departed, and my people were groping blindly after spiritual relief in their bewilderment and misery. I believe that the first prophets of the "Red Christ" were innocent enough and that the people generally were sincere, but there were doubtless some who went into it for self-advertisement, and who introduced new and fantastic features to attract the crowd.[4]

The ghost dancers had gradually concentrated on the Medicine Root creek and the edge of the "Bad Lands,"[5] and they were still further isolated by a new order from the agent, calling in all those who had not adhered to the new religion.[6] Several thousand of these "friendlies" were soon

[1]In earlier chapters, Eastman describes his life as a student at Santee Normal Training School, Dartmouth College, and Boston University Medical School. Subsequent chapters relate his career as a government physician, as a lecturer and writer, and as a leader in the Indian Y.M.C.A. His final chapter contains his estimation of how well Indians have fared in the assimilation process.

[2]The Ghost Dance and the messianic religion with which it was associated. See headnote to *Ghost Dance Songs*.

[3]Tenskwatawa rose to prominence in 1805 when, in a vision, the Master of Life announced to him a new mode of action, which his people must take in order to regain divine favor. They must reject witchcraft and the white man's whiskey, dress, and technology, and Indian women must no longer marry whites. Only when they returned to their former life ways would they find the happiness that they had known in aboriginal days. Tenskwatawa's teachings, like Wovoka's, were a response to the cultural discontinuity that came with white contact. Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh were Shawnees, not Delawares as Eastman says.

[4]Eastman may refer here to the trances common among dancers and their belief that bullets could not penetrate the Ghost Dance shirts they wore.

[5]An area of rough, broken land just off the reservation, about fifty miles northwest of the Pine Ridge agency, South Dakota.

[6]Agency officials, Washington bureaucrats, and military officers considered the Ghost Dance movement a serious threat to their authority and control over the Indians. As Eastman indicates below, the excitement at the time of the so-called Ghost Dance War was heightened by political differences among the Indians, personal ambitions, and real grievances against the federal government.

encamped on the White Clay creek, close by the agency.[7] It was near the middle of December, with weather unusually mild for that season. The dancers held that there would be no snow so long as their rites continued.

An Indian called Little[8] had been guilty of some minor offense on the reservation and had hitherto evaded arrest. Suddenly he appeared at the agency on an issue day, for the express purpose, as it seemed, of defying the authorities. The assembly room of the Indian police, used also as a council room, opened out of my dispensary[9] and on this particular morning a council was in progress. I heard some loud talking, but was too busy to pay particular attention, though my assistant had gone in to listen to the speeches. Suddenly the place was in an uproar, and George[10] burst into the inner office, crying excitedly "Look out for yourself, friend! They are going to fight!"

I went around to see what was going on. A crowd had gathered just outside the council room, and the police were surrounded by wild Indians with guns and drawn knives in their hands. "Hurry up with them!" one shouted, while another held his stone war-club over a policeman's head. The attempt to arrest Little had met with a stubborn resistance.

At this critical moment, a fine-looking Indian in citizen's clothes faced the excited throng, and spoke in a clear, steady, almost sarcastic voice.

"Stop! Think! What are you going to do? Kill these men of our own race? Then what? Kill all these helpless white men, women and children? And what then? What will these brave words, brave deeds lead to in the end? How long can you hold out? Your country is surrounded with a network of railroads; thousands of white soldiers will be here within three days. What ammunition have you? what provisions? What will become of your families? Think, think, my brothers! this is a child's madness."

It was the "friendly" chief, American Horse,[11] and it seems to me as I recall the incident that this man's voice had almost magic power. It is likely that he saved us all from massacre, for the murder of the police, who represented the authority of the Government, would surely have been followed by a general massacre. It is a fact that those Indians who upheld the agent were in quite as much danger from their wilder brethren as were the whites, indeed it was said that the feeling against them was even stronger. Jack Red Cloud, son of the chief,[12] thrust the muzzle of a cocked revolver almost into

[7] The agency was located near the Nebraska border, southwest of the Wounded Knee massacre site.

[8] Little had been arrested and brought to the agency, but had been rescued by his friends a few weeks earlier.

[9] Eastman had been appointed government physician at Pine Ridge only weeks earlier, after graduation from medical school at Boston University.

[10] Perhaps George Sword, captain of the agency's Indian police squad.

[11] American Horse, an Oglala, had signed a treaty in 1887 by which the Sioux reservation was reduced by one half. Objections to the treaty added to the discontent of the Ghost Dance adherents and led them to their so-called "hostile" state in 1890. American Horse worked to resolve differences and to convince the "hostiles" to relent.

[12] Red Cloud (1822–1909), an Oglala, had been one of the most famous and powerful chiefs and since 1867 had been on peaceful terms with the United States. Old and partially blind, he took no part in the events of 1890. Jack Red Cloud was one of the Ghost Dancers who had earlier been induced to leave the Bad Lands and come to the agency.

the face of American Horse. "It is you and your kind," he shouted, "who have brought us to this pass!" That brave man never flinched. Ignoring his rash accuser, he quietly reentered the office; the door closed behind him; the mob dispersed, and for the moment the danger seemed over.

I scarcely knew at the time, but gradually learned afterward, that the Sioux had many grievances and causes for profound discontent, which lay back of and were more or less closely related to the ghost dance craze and the prevailing restlessness and excitement. Rations had been cut from time to time; the people were insufficiently fed, and their protests and appeals were disregarded. Never was more ruthless fraud and graft practiced upon a defenseless people than upon these poor natives by the politicians! Never were there more worthless "scraps of paper" anywhere in the world than many of the Indian treaties and Government documents! Sickness was prevalent and the death rate alarming, especially among the children. Trouble from all these causes had for some time been developing, but might have been checked by humane and conciliatory measures. The "Messiah craze" in itself was scarcely a source of danger, and one might almost as well call upon the army to suppress Billy Sunday[13] and his hysterical followers. Other tribes than the Sioux who adopted the new religion were let alone, and the craze died a natural death in the course of a few months.

Among the leaders of the malcontents at this time were Jack Red Cloud, No Water, He Dog, Four Bears, Yellow Bear, and Kicking Bear.[14] Friendly leaders included American Horse, Young Man Afraid of His Horses, Bad Wound, Three Stars.[15] There was still another set whose attitude was not clearly defined, and among these men was Red Cloud, the greatest of them all. He who had led his people so brilliantly and with such remarkable results, both in battle and diplomacy, was now an old man of over seventy years, living in a frame house which had been built for him within a half mile of the agency. He would come to council, but said little or nothing. No one knew exactly where he stood, but it seemed that he was broken in spirit as in body and convinced of the hopelessness of his people's cause.

It was Red Cloud who asked the historic question, at a great council held in the Black Hills region with a Government commission, and after good Bishop Whipple[16] had finished the invocation, "Which God is our brother praying to now? Is it the same God whom they have twice deceived, when they made treaties with us which they afterward broke?"

[13] William Ashley Sunday (1862–1935), a well-known American evangelist.

[14] No Water's camp on the White River near Pine Ridge was the site of much Ghost Dance activity. In 1891, He Dog served as one of the Sioux delegates to Washington, sent to try to resolve tribal differences. Kicking Bear, from the Cheyenne River reservation, was a Ghost Dance priest who had organized the first dance at Sitting Bull's camp on the Standing Rock reservation. Four Bears and Yellow Bear have not been identified.

[15] Young Man Afraid of His Horses, an Oglala, had made his reputation in the wars of the 1860s but, like Red Cloud, had lived peaceably since 1867 and counseled peace during the crisis. Bad Wound and Three Stars have not been identified.

[16] Episcopal Bishop Henry Benjamin Whipple.

Early in the morning after the attempted arrest of Little, George rushed into my quarters and awakened me. "Come quick!" he shouted, "the soldiers are here!" I looked along the White Clay creek toward the little railroad town of Rushville, Nebraska, twenty-five miles away, and just as the sun rose above the knife-edged ridges black with stunted pine, I perceived a moving cloud of dust that marked the trail of the Ninth Cavalry. There was instant commotion among the camps of friendly Indians. Many women and children were coming in to the agency for refuge, evidently fearing that the dreaded soldiers might attack their villages by mistake. Some who had not heard of their impending arrival hurried to the offices to ask what it meant. I assured those who appealed to me that the troops were here only to preserve order, but their suspicions were not easily allayed.

As the cavalry came nearer, we saw that they were colored troopers, wearing buffalo overcoats and muskrat caps; the Indians with their quick wit called them "buffalo soldiers." They halted, and established their temporary camp in the open space before the agency enclosure. The news had already gone out through the length and breadth of the reservation, and the wildest rumors were in circulation. Indian scouts might be seen upon every hill top, closely watching the military encampment.

At this juncture came the startling news from Fort Yates, some two hundred and fifty miles to the north of us, that Sitting Bull had been killed by Indian police while resisting arrest, and a number of his men with him, as well as several of the police. We next heard that the remnant of his band had fled in our direction, and soon afterward, that they had been joined by Big Foot's band from the western part of Cheyenne River agency, which lay directly in their road.[17] United States troops continued to gather at strategic points, and of course the press seized upon the opportunity to enlarge upon the strained situation and predict an "Indian uprising." The reporters were among us, and managed to secure much "news" that no one else ever heard of. Border towns were fortified and cowboys and militia gathered in readiness to protect them against the "red devils." Certain classes of the frontier population industriously fomented the excitement for what there was in it for them, since much money is apt to be spent at such times. As for the poor Indians, they were quite as badly scared as the whites and perhaps with more reason.

General Brooke[18] undertook negotiations with the ghost dancers, and finally induced them to come within reach. They camped on a flat about a mile north of us and in full view, while the more tractable bands were still gathered on the south and west. The large boarding school had locked its doors and succeeded in holding its hundreds of Indian children, partly for their own sakes, and partly as hostages for the good behavior of their

[17]After Sitting Bull's death, the Hunkpapa Ghost Dancers fled from the Standing Rock reservation. The group Eastman refers to fled to the camp of Big Foot, a Minneconjou. Big Foot, gravely ill, yet considered dangerous by the authorities, started with his people toward the Pine Ridge reservation, where he hoped to find refuge.

[18]General J. R. Brooke, commander of the troops sent to Pine Ridge.

fathers. At the agency were now gathered all the government employees and their families, except such as had taken flight, together with traders, missionaries, and ranchmen, army officers, and newspaper men. It was a conglomerate population.

During this time of grave anxiety and nervous tension, the cooler heads among us went about our business, and still refused to believe in the tragic possibility of an Indian war. It may be imagined that I was more than busy, though I had not such long distances to cover, for since many Indians accustomed to comfortable log houses were compelled to pass the winter in tents, there was even more sickness than usual. I had access and welcome to the camps of all the various groups and factions, a privilege shared by my good friend Father Jutz,[19] the Catholic missionary, who was completely trusted by his people.

Three days later, we learned that Big Foot's band of ghost dancers from the Cheyenne river reservation north of us was approaching the agency, and that Major Whiteside[20] was in command of troops with orders to intercept them.

Late that afternoon, the Seventh Cavalry under Colonel Forsythe[21] was called to the saddle and rode off toward Wounded Knee creek, eighteen miles away. Father Craft,[22] a Catholic priest with some Indian blood, who knew Sitting Bull and his people, followed an hour or so later, and I was much inclined to go too, but my fiancée[23] pointed out that my duty lay rather at home with our Indians, and I stayed.

The morning of December 29th was sunny and pleasant. We were all straining our ears toward Wounded Knee, and about the middle of the forenoon we distinctly heard the reports of the Hotchkiss guns. Two hours later, a rider was seen approaching at full speed, and in a few minutes he had dismounted from his exhausted horse and handed his message to General Brooke's orderly. The Indians were watching their own messenger, who ran on foot along the northern ridges and carried the news to the so-called "hostile" camp. It was said that he delivered his message at almost the same time as the mounted officer.

The resulting confusion and excitement was unmistakable. The white teepees disappeared as if by magic and soon the caravans were in motion, going toward the natural fortress of the "Bad Lands." In the "friendly" camp there was almost as much turmoil, and crowds of frightened women and children poured into the agency. Big Foot's band had been wiped out by the

[19]Father John Jutz.

[20]Major Samuel Whiteside, with a detachment of the Seventh Cavalry, intercepted Big Foot on December 28 and convinced him to encamp for the night at Wounded Knee.

[21]Colonel James W. Forsyth, commander of the Seventh Cavalry, joined Whiteside at Wounded Knee on the night of December 28.

[22]Father Craft was at the massacre and was wounded.

[23]Elaine Goodale, who had taught for a number of years on the Great Sioux Reservation, was then superintendent for Indian education in the Dakotas. She and Eastman married in 1891. In later years, an author in her own right, she encouraged Eastman to write and lecture and collaborated with him on many works. The extent of her influence on his writing may never be known, but it was certainly great.

troops, and reprisals were naturally looked for. The enclosure was not barricaded in any way and we had but a small detachment of troops for our protection. Sentinels were placed, and machine guns trained on the various approaches.

A few hot-headed young braves fired on the sentinels and wounded two of them. The Indian police began to answer by shooting at several braves who were apparently about to set fire to some of the outlying buildings. Every married employee was seeking a place of safety for his family, the interpreter among them. Just then General Brooke ran out into the open, shouting at the top of his voice to the police: "Stop, stop! Doctor, tell them they must not fire until ordered!" I did so, as the bullets whistled by us, and the General's coolness perhaps saved all our lives, for we were in no position to repel a large attacking force. Since we did not reply, the scattered shots soon ceased, but the situation remained critical for several days and nights.

My office was full of refugees. I called one of my good friends aside and asked him to saddle my two horses and stay by them. "When general fighting begins, take them to Miss Goodale and see her to the railroad if you can," I told him. Then I went over to the rectory. Mrs. Cook refused to go without her husband,[24] and Miss Goodale would not leave while there was a chance of being of service. The house was crowded with terrified people, most of them Christian Indians, whom our friends were doing their best to pacify.

At dusk, the Seventh Cavalry returned with their twenty-five dead and I believe thirty-four wounded, most of them by their own comrades, who had encircled the Indians, while few of the latter had guns.[25] A majority of the thirty or more Indian wounded were women and children, including babies in arms. As there were not tents enough for all, Mr. Cook offered us the mission chapel, in which the Christmas tree still stood, for a temporary hospital. We tore out the pews and covered the floor with hay and quilts. There we laid the poor creatures side by side in rows, and the night was devoted to caring for them as best we could. Many were frightfully torn by pieces of shells, and the suffering was terrible. General Brooke placed me in charge and I had to do nearly all the work, for although the army surgeons were more than ready to help as soon as their own men had been cared for, the tortured Indians would scarcely allow a man in uniform to touch them. Mrs. Cook, Miss Goodale, and several of Mr. Cook's Indian helpers acted as volunteer nurses. In spite of all our efforts, we lost the greater part of them, but a few recovered, including several children who had lost all their relatives and who were adopted into kind Christian families.

[24]The Reverend Charles Smith Cook, an Oglala, was an 1881 graduate of Trinity College and had studied theology at Seabury Divinity School. He was ordained and served as a teacher and minister on the Pine Ridge reservation. Cook died in 1892.

[25]The few Indians who had weapons had been disarmed, except one, when the firing commenced.

On the day following the Wounded Knee massacre there was a blizzard, in the midst of which I was ordered out with several Indian police, to look for a policeman who was reported to have been wounded and left some two miles from the agency. We did not find him. This was the only time during the whole affair that I carried a weapon; a friend lent me a revolver which I put in my overcoat pocket, and it was lost on the ride. On the third day it cleared, and the ground was covered with an inch or two of fresh snow. We had feared that some of the Indian wounded might have been left on the field, and a number of us volunteered to go and see. I was placed in charge of the expedition of about a hundred civilians, ten or fifteen of whom were white men. We were supplied with wagons in which to convey any of whom we might find still alive. Of course a photographer and several reporters were of the party.

Fully three miles from the scene of the massacre we found the body of a woman completely covered with a blanket of snow, and from this point on we found them scattered along as they had been relentlessly hunted down and slaughtered while fleeing for their lives. Some of our people discovered relatives or friends among the dead, and there was much wailing and mourning. When we reached the spot where the Indian camp had stood, among the fragments of burned tents and other belongings we saw the frozen bodies lying close together or piled one upon another. I counted eighty bodies of men who had been in the council and who were almost as helpless as the women and babes when the deadly fire began, for nearly all their guns had been taken from them. A reckless and desperate young Indian fired the first shot when the search for weapons was well under way,[26] and immediately the troops opened fire from all sides, killing not only unarmed men, women, and children, but their own comrades who stood opposite them, for the camp was entirely surrounded.

It took all of my nerve to keep my composure in the face of this spectacle, and of the excitement and grief of my Indian companions, nearly every one of whom was crying aloud or singing his death song. The white men became very nervous, but I set them to examining and uncovering every body to see if one were living. Although they had been lying untended in the snow and cold for two days and nights, a number had survived. Among them I found a baby of about a year old warmly wrapped and entirely unhurt. I brought her in, and she was afterward adopted and educated by an army officer. One man who was severely wounded begged me to fill his pipe. When we brought him into the chapel he was welcomed by his wife and daughters with cries of joy, but he died a day or two later.

Under a wagon I discovered an old woman, totally blind and entirely helpless. A few had managed to crawl away to some place of shelter, and we found in a log store near by several who were badly hurt and others who had died after reaching there. After we had dispatched several wagon loads

[26]The young man who fired the first shot was Black Coyote, alleged to have been deaf.

to the agency, we observed groups of warriors watching us from adjacent buttes; probably friends of the victims who had come there for the same purpose as ourselves. A majority of our party, fearing an attack, insisted that some one ride back to the agency for an escort of soldiers, and as mine was the best horse, it fell to me to go. I covered the eighteen miles in quick time and was not interfered with in any way, although if the Indians had meant mischief they could easily have picked me off from any of the ravines and gulches.

All this was a severe ordeal for one who had so lately put all his faith in the Christian love and lofty ideals of the white man. Yet I passed no hasty judgment, and was thankful that I might be of some service and relieve even a small part of the suffering. An appeal published in a Boston paper brought us liberal supplies of much needed clothing, and linen for dressings. We worked on. Bishop Hare of South Dakota[27] visited us, and was overcome by faintness when he entered his mission chapel, thus transformed into a rude hospital.

After some days of extreme tension, and weeks of anxiety, the "hostiles," so called, were at last induced to come in and submit to a general disarmament. Father Jutz, the Catholic missionary, had gone bravely among them and used all his influence toward a peaceful settlement. The troops were all recalled and took part in a grand review before General Miles,[28] no doubt intended to impress the Indians with their superior force.

1916

■ GERTRUDE BONNIN (ZITKALA-SA) (SIOUX) ■
1876–1938

In her writings as well as her work as an Indian rights activist, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, or Zitkala-Sa (Red Bird), is a vital link between the oral culture of tribal America in conflict with its colonizers and the literate culture of contemporary American Indians. A Yankton, born on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, she was the third child of Ellen Tate 'Iyohiwin Simmons, a full-blood Sioux. Little is known of her father, a white man. Her mother brought up the children in traditional ways. At the age of eight, Zitkala-Sa left the reservation to attend a Quaker missionary school in Wabash, Indiana. She returned to the reservation but was culturally unhinged, "neither a wild Indian nor a tame one," as she described herself later in "The Schooldays of an Indian Girl." After four unhappy years she returned to her school, graduated, and at age nineteen enrolled—against her mother's wish—at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. She later taught at Carlisle Indian School for about two years. Having become an accomplished violinist, she also studied at the Boston Conservatory of Music.

[27]Bishop W. D. Hare, long-time Episcopal missionary bishop among the Sioux.

[28]General Nelson A. Miles, commander of the Army Department of the Missouri, who had ordered the arrest of Sitting Bull.

Meanwhile, the estrangement from her mother and the old ways of the reservation had grown, as had her indignation over the treatment of American Indians by the state, church, and population at large. Around 1900 she began to express her feelings publicly in writing. In articles in the *Atlantic Monthly* and other journals, she struggled with the issues of cultural dislocation and injustice that brought suffering to her people. Her authorial voice was not merely critical, however. She was earnestly committed to being a bridge builder between cultures, for example, by writing *Old Indian Legends*, published in 1901. "I have tried," she says in the introduction to that work, "to transplant the native spirit of these tales—root and all—into the English language, since America in the last few centuries has acquired a second tongue."

In the following decades, Zitkala-Sa's writing efforts were increasingly part of, and finally supplanted by, her work as an Indian rights activist. She had accepted a clerkship at the Standing Rock Reservation, where she met and married Raymond T. Bonnin, another Sioux employee of the Indian service. The Bonnins then transferred to a reservation in Utah where they became affiliated with the Society of American Indians. Zitkala-Sa was elected secretary of the Society in 1916, and the Bonnins moved to Washington, D.C., where she worked with the Society and edited the *American Indian Magazine*. In 1926 she founded the National Council of American Indians and continued to pursue reforms through public speaking and lobbying efforts. She was instrumental in the passage of the Indian Citizenship Bill and secured powerful outside interests in Indian reform. Zitkala-Sa died in Washington, D.C., in 1938 and was buried in Arlington Cemetery.

Although her output was limited, her artistic accomplishment is noteworthy. In addition to her earlier works, in 1913 she collaborated with William P. Hanson in producing an Indian opera, "Sundance." In 1921 her collection of *American Indian Stories* was published, combining her previously printed work with some new essays and merging autobiography and fiction in a unique way. In her writings, Zitkala-Sa anticipated some aspects of the work of present-day American Indian fiction writers like N. Scott Momaday and Leslie Silko and advocates of the Indian cause like Vine Deloria, Jr. As her collection of *Old Indian Legends* proves, she realized that political rights would be fruitless unless they were rooted in a recovery of cultural identity through a revitalization of the oral tradition.

Zitkala-Sa's autobiographical work makes her perhaps the first American Indian woman to write her own story without the aid of an editor, interpreter, or ethnographer. Her essay, "Why I am a Pagan," merits special attention because at the time it was published it was popular for American Indians to describe their conversions to Christianity.

Kristin Herzog
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

The School Days of an Indian Girl[1]

I. The Land of Red Apples

There were eight in our party of bronzed children who were going East with the missionaries. Among us were three young braves, two tall girls, and we three little ones, Judéwin, Thowin, and I.

We had been very impatient to start on our journey to the Red Apple Country,[2] which, we were told, lay a little beyond the great circular horizon of the Western prairie. Under a sky of rosy apples we dreamt of roaming as freely and happily as we had chased the cloud shadows on the Dakota plains. We had anticipated much pleasure from a ride on the iron horse, but the throngs of staring palefaces disturbed and troubled us.

On the train, fair women, with tottering babies on each arm, stopped their haste and scrutinized the children of absent mothers. Large men, with heavy bundles in their hands, halted near by, and riveted their glassy blue eyes upon us.

I sank deep into the corner of my seat, for I resented being watched. Directly in front of me, children who were no larger than I hung themselves upon the backs of their seats, with their bold white faces toward me. Sometimes they took their forefingers out of their mouths and pointed at my moccasined feet. Their mothers, instead of reproving such rude curiosity, looked closely at me, and attracted their children's further notice to my blanket. This embarrassed me, and kept me constantly on the verge of tears.

I sat perfectly still, with my eyes downcast, daring only now and then to shoot long glances around me. Chancing to turn to the window at my side, I was quite breathless upon seeing one familiar object. It was the telegraph pole which strode by at short paces. Very near my mother's dwelling, along the edge of a road thickly bordered with wild sunflowers, some poles like these had been planted by white men. Often I had stopped, on my way down the road, to hold my ear against the pole, and, hearing its low moaning, I used to wonder what the paleface had done to hurt it. Now I sat watching for each pole that glided by to be the last one.

In this way I had forgotten my uncomfortable surroundings, when I heard one of my comrades call out my name. I saw the missionary standing very near, tossing candies and gums into our midst. This amused us all, and we tried to see who could catch the most of the sweet-meats. The missionary's generous distribution of candies was impressed upon my memory by a disastrous result which followed. I had caught more than my share of candies and gums, and soon after our arrival at the school I had a chance to disgrace myself, which, I am ashamed to say, I did.

[1] "The School Days of an Indian Girl" appeared in *Atlantic*, 85 (February, 1900), 185–194. It was reprinted in Zitkala-Sa's *American Indian Stories* (1921).

[2] *I.e.*, Indiana.

Though we rode several days inside of the iron horse, I do not recall a single thing about our luncheons.

It was night when we reached the school grounds. The lights from the windows of the large buildings fell upon some of the icicled trees that stood beneath them. We were led toward an open door, where the brightness of the lights within flooded out over the heads of the excited palefaces who blocked the way. My body trembled more from fear than from the snow I trod upon.

Entering the house, I stood close against the wall. The strong glaring light in the large whitewashed room dazzled my eyes. The noisy hurrying of hard shoes upon a bare wooden floor increased the whirring in my ears. My only safety seemed to be in keeping next to the wall. As I was wondering in which direction to escape from all this confusion, two warm hands grasped me firmly, and in the same moment I was tossed high in midair. A rosy-cheeked paleface woman caught me in her arms. I was both frightened and insulted by such trifling. I stared into her eyes, wishing her to let me stand on my own feet, but she jumped me up and down with increasing enthusiasm. My mother had never made a plaything of her wee daughter. Remembering this I began to cry aloud.

They misunderstood the cause of my tears, and placed me at a white table loaded with food. There our party were united again. As I did not hush my crying, one of the older ones whispered to me, "Wait until you are alone in the night."

It was very little I could swallow besides my sobs, that evening.

"Oh, I want my mother and my brother Dawée! I want to go to my aunt!" I pleaded; but the ears of the palefaces could not hear me.

From the table we were taken along an upward incline of wooden boxes, which I learned afterward to call a stairway. At the top was a quiet hall, dimly lighted. Many narrow beds were in one straight line down the entire length of the wall. In them lay sleeping brown faces, which peeped just out of the coverings. I was tucked into bed with one of the tall girls, because she talked to me in my mother tongue and seemed to soothe me.

I had arrived in the wonderful land of rosy skies, but I was not happy, as I had thought I should be. My long travel and the bewildering sights had exhausted me. I fell asleep, heaving deep, tired sobs. My tears were left to dry themselves in streaks, because neither my aunt nor my mother was near to wipe them away.

II. The Cutting of My Long Hair

The first day in the land of apples was a bitter-cold one; for the snow still covered the ground, and the trees were bare. A large bell rang for breakfast, its loud metallic voice crashing through the belfry overhead and into our sensitive ears. The annoying clatter of shoes on bare floors gave us no peace. The constant clash of harsh noises, with an undercurrent of many voices murmuring an unknown tongue, made a bedlam within which I was securely

tied. And though my spirit tore itself in struggling for its lost freedom, all was useless.

A paleface woman, with white hair, came up after us. We were placed in a line of girls who were marching into the dining room. These were Indian girls, in stiff shoes and closely clinging dresses. The small girls wore sleeved aprons and shingled hair. As I walked noiselessly in my soft moccasins, I felt like sinking to the floor, for my blanket had been stripped from my shoulders. I looked hard at the Indian girls, who seemed not to care that they were even more immodestly dressed than I, in their tightly fitting clothes. While we marched in, the boys entered at an opposite door. I watched for the three young braves who came in our party. I spied them in the rear ranks, looking as uncomfortable as I felt.

A small bell was tapped, and each of the pupils drew a chair from under the table. Supposing this act meant they were to be seated, I pulled out mine and at once slipped into it from one side. But when I turned my head, I saw that I was the only one seated, and all the rest at our table remained standing. Just as I began to rise, looking shyly around to see how chairs were to be used, a second bell was sounded. All were seated at last, and I had to crawl back into my chair again. I heard a man's voice at one end of the hall, and I looked around to see him. But all the others hung their heads over their plates. As I glanced at the long chain of tables, I caught the eyes of a paleface woman upon me. Immediately I dropped my eyes, wondering why I was so keenly watched by the strange woman. The man ceased his mutterings, and then a third bell was tapped. Every one picked up his knife and fork and began eating. I began crying instead, for by this time I was afraid to venture anything more.

But this eating by formula was not the hardest trial in that first day. Late in the morning, my friend Judéwin gave me a terrible warning. Judéwin knew a few words of English; and she had overheard the paleface woman talk about cutting our long, heavy hair. Our mothers had taught us that only unskilled warriors who were captured had their hair shingled by the enemy. Among our people, short hair was worn by mourners, and shingled hair by cowards!

We discussed our fate some moments, and when Judéwin said, "We have to submit, because they are strong," I rebelled.

"No, I will not submit! I will struggle first!" I answered.

I watched my chance, and when no one noticed I disappeared. I crept up the stairs as quietly as I could in my squeaking shoes,—my moccasins had been exchanged for shoes. Along the hall I passed, without knowing whither I was going. Turning aside to an open door, I found a large room with three white beds in it. The windows were covered with dark green curtains, which made the room very dim. Thankful that no one was there, I directed my steps toward the corner farthest from the door. On my hands and knees I crawled under the bed, and cuddled myself in the dark corner.

From my hiding place I peered out, shuddering with fear whenever I heard footsteps near by. Though in the hall loud voices were calling my

name, and I knew that even Judéwin was searching for me, I did not open my mouth to answer. Then the steps were quickened and the voices became excited. The sounds came nearer and nearer. Women and girls entered the room. I held my breath, and watched them open closet doors and peep behind large trunks. Some one threw up the curtains, and the room was filled with sudden light. What caused them to stoop and look under the bed I do not know. I remember being dragged out, though I resisted by kicking and scratching wildly. In spite of myself, I was carried downstairs and tied fast in a chair.

I cried aloud, shaking my head all the while until I felt the cold blades of the scissors against my neck, and heard them gnaw off one of my thick braids. Then I lost my spirit. Since the day I was taken from my mother I had suffered extreme indignities. People had stared at me. I had been tossed about in the air like a wooden puppet. And now my long hair was shingled like a coward's! In my anguish I moaned for my mother, but no one came to comfort me. Not a soul reasoned quietly with me, as my own mother used to do: for now I was only one of many little animals driven by a herder.

III. The Snow Episode

A short time after our arrival we three Dakotas were playing in the snowdrifts. We were all still deaf to the English language, excepting Judéwin, who always heard such puzzling things. One morning we learned through her ears that we were forbidden to fall lengthwise in the snow, as we had been doing, to see our own impressions. However, before many hours we had forgotten the order, and were having great sport in the snow, when a shrill voice called us. Looking up, we saw an imperative hand beckoning us into the house. We shook the snow off ourselves, and started toward the woman as slowly as we dared.

Judéwin said: "Now the paleface is angry with us. She is going to punish us for falling into the snow. If she looks straight into your eyes and talks loudly, you must wait until she stops. Then, after a tiny pause, say, 'No.'" The rest of the way we practiced upon the little word "no."

As it happened, Thowin was summoned to judgment first. The door shut behind her with a click.

Judéwin and I stood silently listening at the keyhole. The paleface woman talked in very severe tones. Her words fell from her lips like crackling embers, and her inflection ran up like the small end of a switch. I understood her voice better than the things she was saying. I was certain we had made her very impatient with us. Judéwin heard enough of the words to realize all too late that she had taught us the wrong reply.

"Oh, poor Thowin!" she gasped, as she put both hands over her ears.

Just then I heard Thowin's tremulous answer, "No."

With an angry exclamation, the woman gave her a hard spanking. Then she stopped to say something. Judéwin said it was this: "Are you going to obey my word the next time?"

Thowin answered again with the only word at her command, "No."

This time the woman meant her blows to smart, for the poor frightened girl shrieked at the top of her voice. In the midst of the whipping the blows ceased abruptly, and the woman asked another question: "Are you going to fall in the snow again?"

Thowin gave her bad password another trial. We heard her say feebly, "No! No!"

With this the woman hid away her half-worn slipper, and led the child out, stroking her black shorn head. Perhaps it occurred to her that brute force is not the solution for such a problem. She did nothing to Judéwin nor to me. She only returned to us our unhappy comrade, and left us alone in the room.

During the first two or three seasons misunderstandings as ridiculous as this one of the snow episode frequently took place, bringing unjustifiable frights and punishments into our little lives.

Within a year I was able to express myself somewhat in broken English. As soon as I comprehended a part of what was said and done, a mischievous spirit of revenge possessed me. One day I was called in from my play for some misconduct. I had disregarded a rule which seemed to me very needlessly binding. I was sent into the kitchen to mash the turnips for dinner. It was noon, and steaming dishes were hastily carried into the dining room. I hated turnips, and their odor which came from the brown jar was offensive to me. With fire in my heart, I took the wooden tool that the paleface woman held out to me. I stood upon a step, and, grasping the handle with both hands, I bent in hot rage over the turnips. I worked my vengeance upon them. All were so busily occupied that no one noticed me. I saw that the turnips were in a pulp, and that further beating could not improve them; but the order was, "Mash these turnips," and mash them I would! I renewed my energy; and as I sent the masher into the bottom of the jar, I felt a satisfying sensation that the weight of my body had gone into it.

Just here a paleface woman came up to my table. As she looked into the jar, she shoved my hands roughly aside. I stood fearless and angry. She placed her red hands upon the rim of the jar. Then she gave one lift and a stride away from the table. But lo! the pulpy contents fell through the crumbled bottom to the floor! She spared me no scolding phrases that I had earned. I did not heed them. I felt triumphant in my revenge, though deep within me I was a wee bit sorry to have broken the jar.

As I sat eating my dinner, and saw that no turnips were served, I whooped in my heart for having once asserted the rebellion within me. . . .

VI. Four Strange Summers

After my first three years of school, I roamed again in the Western country through four strange summers.

During this time I seemed to hang in the heart of chaos, beyond the touch or voice of human aid. My brother, being almost ten years my senior, did not quite understand my feelings. My mother had never gone inside of a

schoolhouse, and so she was not capable of comforting her daughter who could read and write. Even nature seemed to have no place for me. I was neither a wee girl nor a tall one; neither a wild Indian nor a tame one. This deplorable situation was the effect of my brief course in the East, and the unsatisfactory "teenth" in a girl's years.

It was under these trying conditions that, one bright afternoon, as I sat restless and unhappy in my mother's cabin, I caught the sound of the spirited step of my brother's pony on the road which passed by our dwelling. Soon I heard the wheels of a light buckboard, and Dawée's familiar "Ho!" to his pony. He alighted upon the bare ground in front of our house. Tying his pony to one of the projecting corner logs of the low-roofed cottage, he stepped upon the wooden doorstep.

I met him there with a hurried greeting, and, as I passed by, he looked a quiet "What?" into my eyes.

When he began talking with my mother, I slipped the rope from the pony's bridle. Seizing the reins and bracing my feet against the dashboard, I wheeled around in an instant. The pony was ever ready to try his speed. Looking backward, I saw Dawée waving his hand to me. I turned with the curve in the road and disappeared. I followed the winding road which crawled upward between the bases of little hillocks. Deep water-worn ditches ran parallel on either side. A strong wind blew against my cheeks and fluttered my sleeves. The pony reached the top of the highest hill, and began an even race on the level lands. There was nothing moving within that great circular horizon of the Dakota prairies save the tall grasses, over which the wind blew and rolled off in long, shadowy waves.

Within this vast wigwam of blue and green I rode reckless and insignificant. It satisfied my small consciousness to see the white foam fly from the pony's mouth.

Suddenly, out of the earth a coyote came forth at a swinging trot that was taking the cunning thief toward the hills and the village beyond. Upon the moment's impulse, I gave him a long chase and a wholesome fright. As I turned away to go back to the village, the wolf sank down upon his haunches for rest, for it was a hot summer day; and as I drove slowly homeward, I saw his sharp nose still pointed at me, until I vanished below the margin of the hilltops.

In a little while I came in sight of my mother's house. Dawée stood in the yard, laughing at an old warrior who was pointing his forefinger, and again waving his whole hand, toward the hills. With his blanket drawn over one shoulder, he talked and motioned excitedly. Dawée turned the old man by the shoulder and pointed me out to him.

"Oh, han!" (Oh, yes) the warrior muttered, and went his way. He had climbed the top of his favorite barren hill to survey the surrounding prairies, when he spied my chase after the coyote. His keen eyes recognized the pony and driver. At once uneasy for my safety, he had come running to my mother's cabin to give her warning. I did not appreciate his kindly interest, for there was an unrest gnawing at my heart.

As soon as he went away, I asked Dawée about something else.

"No, my baby sister. I cannot take you with me to the party to-night," he replied. Though I was not far from fifteen, and I felt that before long I should enjoy all the privileges of my tall cousin, Dawée persisted in calling me his baby sister.

That moonlight night, I cried in my mother's presence when I heard the jolly young people pass by our cottage. They were no more young braves in blankets and eagle plumes, nor Indian maids with prettily painted cheeks. They had gone three years to school in the East, and had become civilized. The young men wore the white man's coat and trousers, with bright neckties. The girls wore tight muslin dresses, with ribbons at neck and waist. At these gatherings they talked English. I could speak English almost as well as my brother, but I was not properly dressed to be taken along. I had no hat, no ribbons, and no close-fitting gown. Since my return from school I had thrown away my shoes, and wore again the soft moccasins.

While Dawée was busily preparing to go I controlled my tears. But when I heard him bounding away on his pony, I buried my face in my arms and cried hot tears.

My mother was troubled by my unhappiness. Coming to my side, she offered me the only printed matter we had in our home. It was an Indian Bible,[3] given her some years ago by a missionary. She tried to console me. "Here, my child, are the white man's papers. Read a little from them," she said most piously.

I took it from her hand, for her sake; but my enraged spirit felt more like burning the book, which afforded me no help, and was a perfect delusion to my mother. I did not read it, but laid it unopened on the floor, where I sat on my feet. The dim yellow light of the braided muslin burning in a small vessel of oil flickered and sizzled in the awful silent storm which followed my rejection of the Bible.

Now my wrath against the fates consumed my tears before they reached my eyes. I sat stony, with a bowed head. My mother threw a shawl over her head and shoulders, and stepped out into the night.

After an uncertain solitude, I was suddenly aroused by a loud cry piercing the night. It was my mother's voice wailing among the barren hills which held the bones of buried warriors. She called aloud for her brothers' spirits to support her in her helpless misery. My fingers grew icy cold, as I realized that my unrestrained tears had betrayed my suffering to her, and she was grieving for me.

Before she returned, though I knew she was on her way, for she had ceased her weeping, I extinguished the light, and leaned my head on the window sill.

Many schemes of running away from my surroundings hovered about in my mind. A few more moons of such a turmoil drove me away to the Eastern school. I rode on the white man's iron steed, thinking it would bring me back to my mother in a few winters, when I should be grown tall, and there would be congenial friends awaiting me.

[3] Selections from the Bible had been published in Dakota as early as 1839. The reference is probably to *Dakota Wowapi Wakan*, translated by Thomas S. Williamson and Stephen R. Riggs and published in 1879.

VII. Incurring My Mother's Displeasure

In the second journey to the East I had not come without some precautions. I had a secret interview with one of our best medicine men, and when I left his wigwam I carried securely in my sleeve a tiny bunch of magic roots. This possession assured me of friends wherever I should go. So absolutely did I believe in its charms that I wore it through all the school routine for more than a year. Then, before I lost my faith in the dead roots, I lost the little buckskin bag containing all my good luck.

At the close of this second term of three years I was the proud owner of my first diploma. The following autumn I ventured upon a college career against my mother's will.

I had written for her approval, but in her reply I found no encouragement. She called my notice to her neighbors' children, who had completed their education in three years. They had returned to their homes, and were then talking English with the frontier settlers. Her few words hinted that I had better give up my slow attempt to learn the white man's ways, and be content to roam over the prairies and find my living upon wild roots. I silenced her by deliberate disobedience.

Thus, homeless and heavy-hearted, I began anew my life among strangers.

As I hid myself in my little room in the college dormitory, away from the scornful and yet curious eyes of the students, I pined for sympathy. Often I wept in secret, wishing I had gone West, to be nourished by my mother's love, instead of remaining among a cold race whose hearts were frozen hard with prejudice.

During the fall and winter seasons I scarcely had a real friend, though by that time several of my classmates were courteous to me at a safe distance.

My mother had not yet forgiven my rudeness to her, and I had no moment for letterwriting. By daylight and lamplight, I spun with reeds and thistles, until my hands were tired from their weaving, the magic design which promised me the white man's respect.

At length, in the spring term, I entered an oratorical contest among the various classes. As the day of competition approached, it did not seem possible that the event was so near at hand, but it came. In the chapel the classes assembled together, with their invited guests. The high platform was carpeted, and gayly festooned with college colors. A bright white light illumined the room, and outlined clearly the great polished beams that arched the domed ceiling. The assembled crowds filled the air with pulsating murmurs. When the hour for speaking arrived all were hushed. But on the wall the old clock which pointed out the trying moment ticked calmly on.

One after another I saw and heard the orators. Still, I could not realize that they longed for the favorable decision of the judges as much as I did.

Each contestant received a loud burst of applause, and some were cheered heartily. Too soon my turn came, and I paused a moment behind the curtains for a deep breath. After my concluding words, I heard the same applause that the others had called out.

Upon my retreating steps, I was astounded to receive from my fellow-students a large bouquet of roses tied with flowing ribbons. With the lovely flowers I fled from the stage. This friendly token was a rebuke to me for the hard feelings I had borne them.

Later, the decision of the judges awarded me the first place. Then there was a mad uproar in the hall, where my classmates sang and shouted my name at the top of their lungs; and the disappointed students howled and brayed in fearfully dissonant tin trumpets. In this excitement, happy students rushed forward to offer their congratulations. And I could not conceal a smile when they wished to escort me in a procession to the students' parlor, where all were going to calm themselves. Thanking them for the kind spirit which prompted them to make such a proposition, I walked alone with the night to my own little room.

A few weeks afterward, I appeared as the college representative in another contest. This time the competition was among orators from different colleges in our State. It was held at the State capital, in one of the largest opera houses.

Here again was a strong prejudice against my people. In the evening, as the great audience filled the house, the student bodies began warring among themselves. Fortunately, I was spared witnessing any of the noisy wrangling before the contest began. The slurs against the Indian that stained the lips of our opponents were already burning like a dry fever within my breast.

But after the orations were delivered a deeper burn awaited me. There, before that vast ocean of eyes, some college rowdies threw out a large white flag, with a drawing of a most forlorn Indian girl on it. Under this they had printed in bold black letters words that ridiculed the college which was represented by a "squaw." Such worse than barbarian rudeness embittered me. While we waited for the verdict of the judges, I gleamed fiercely upon the throngs of palefaces. My teeth were hard set, as I saw the white flag still floating insolently in the air.

Then anxiously we watched the man carry toward the stage the envelope containing the final decision.

There were two prizes given, that night, and one of them was mine!

The evil spirit laughed within me when the white flag dropped out of sight, and the hands which hurled it hung limp in defeat.

Leaving the crowd as quickly as possible, I was soon in my room. The rest of the night I sat in an armchair and gazed into the crackling fire. I laughed no more in triumph when thus alone. The little taste of victory did not satisfy a hunger in my heart. In my mind I saw my mother far away on the Western plains, and she was holding a charge against me.

1900

Why I Am a Pagan[1]

When the spirit swells my breast I love to roam leisurely among the green hills; or sometimes, sitting on the brink of the murmuring Missouri, I marvel at the great blue overhead. With half closed eyes I watch the huge cloud shadows in their noiseless play upon the high bluffs opposite me, while into my ear ripple the sweet, soft cadences of the river's song. Folded hands lie in my lap, for the time forgot. My heart and I lie small upon the earth like a grain of throbbing sand. Drifting clouds and tinkling waters, together with the warmth of a genial summer day, bespeak with eloquence the loving Mystery round about us. During the idle while I sat upon the sunny river brink, I grew somewhat, though my response be not so clearly manifest as in the green grass fringing the edge of the high bluff back of me.

At length retracing the uncertain footpath scaling the precipitous embankment, I seek the level lands where grow the wild prairie flowers. And they, the lovely little folk, soothe my soul with their perfumed breath.

Their quaint round faces of varied hue convince the heart which leaps with glad surprise that they, too, are living symbols of omnipotent thought. With a child's eager eye I drink in the myriad star shapes wrought in luxuriant color upon the green. Beautiful is the spiritual essence they embody.

I leave them nodding in the breeze, but take along with me their impress upon my heart. I pause to rest me upon a rock embedded on the side of a foothill facing the low river bottom. Here the Stone-Boy,[2] of whom the American aborigine tells, frolics about, shooting his baby arrows and shouting aloud with glee at the tiny shafts of lightning that flash from the flying arrow-beaks. What an ideal warrior he became, baffling the siege of the pests of all the land till he triumphed over their united attack. And here he lay,—Inyan our great-great-grandfather, older than the hill he rested on, older than the race of men who love to tell of his wonderful career.

Interwoven with the thread of this Indian legend of the rock, I fain would trace a subtle knowledge of the native folk which enabled them to recognize a kinship to any and all parts of this vast universe. By the leading of an ancient trail I move toward the Indian village.

With the strong, happy sense that both great and small are so surely enfolded in His magnitude that, without a miss, each has his allotted individual ground of opportunities, I am buoyant with good nature.

Yellow Breast, swaying upon the slender stem of a wild sunflower, warbles a sweet assurance of this as I pass near by. Breaking off the clear crystal song, he turns his wee head from side to side eyeing me wisely as slowly I plod with moccasined feet. Then again he yields himself to his song of joy. Flit, flit hither and yon, he fills the summer sky with his swift, sweet melody. And truly does it seem his vigorous freedom lies more in his little spirit than in his wing.

[1] This essay appeared in *Atlantic*, 90 (December, 1902), 801–803.

[2] Stone Boy, or Inyanhoksila, possessed of supernatural powers, was a popular figure in Dakota lore.

With these thoughts I reach the log cabin whither I am strongly drawn by the tie of a child to an aged mother. Out bounds my four-footed friend to meet me, frisking about my path with unmistakable delight. Chän is a black shaggy dog, "a thorough bred little mongrel" of whom I am very fond. Chän seems to understand many words in Sioux, and will go to her mat even when I whisper the word, though generally I think she is guided by the tone of the voice. Often she tries to imitate the sliding inflection and long drawn out voice to the amusement of our guests, but her articulation is quite beyond my ear. In both my hands I hold her shaggy head and gaze into her large brown eyes. At once the dilated pupils contract into tiny black dots, as if the roguish spirit within would evade my questioning.

Finally resuming the chair at my desk I feel in keen sympathy with my fellow creatures, for I seem to see clearly again that all are akin.

The racial lines, which once were bitterly real, now serve nothing more than marking out a living mosaic of human beings. And even here men of the same color are like the ivory keys of one instrument where each resembles all the rest, yet varies from them in pitch and quality of voice. And those creatures who are for a time mere echoes of another's note are not unlike the fable of the thin sick man whose distorted shadow, dressed like a real creature, came to the old master to make him follow as a shadow. Thus with a compassion for all echoes in human guise, I greet the solemn-faced "native preacher" whom I find awaiting me. I listen with respect for God's creature, though he mouth most strangely the jangling phrases of a bigoted creed.

As our tribe is one large family, where every person is related to all the others, he addressed me:—

"Cousin, I came from the morning church service to talk with you."

"Yes?" I said interrogatively, as he paused for some word from me.

Shifting uneasily about in the straight-backed chair he sat upon, he began: "Every holy day (Sunday) I look about our little God's house, and not seeing you there, I am disappointed. This is why I come to-day. Cousin, as I watch you from afar, I see no unbecoming behavior and hear only good reports of you, which all the more burns me with the wish that you were a church member. Cousin, I was taught long years ago by kind missionaries to read the holy book. These godly men taught me also the folly of our old beliefs.

"There is one God who gives reward or punishment to the race of dead men. In the upper region the Christian dead are gathered in unceasing song and prayer. In the deep pit below, the sinful ones dance in torturing flames.

"Think upon these things, my cousin, and choose now to avoid the after-doom of hell fire!" Then followed a long silence in which he clasped tighter and unclasped again his interlocked fingers.

Like instantaneous lightning flashes came pictures of my own mother's making, for she, too, is now a follower of the new superstition.

"Knocking out the chinking of our log cabin, some evil hand thrust in a burning taper of braided dry grass, but failed of his intent, for the fire died out and the half burned brand fell inward to the floor. Directly above it, on a shelf, lay the holy book. This is what we found after our return from a several days' visit. Surely some great power is hid in the sacred book!"

Brushing away from my eyes many like pictures, I offered midday meal to the converted Indian sitting wordless and with downcast face. No sooner had he risen from the table with "Cousin, I have relished it," than the church bell rang.

Thither he hurried forth with his afternoon sermon. I watched him as he hastened along, his eyes bent fast upon the dusty road till he disappeared at the end of a quarter of a mile.

The little incident recalled to mind the copy of a missionary paper brought to my notice a few days ago, in which a "Christian" pugilist commented upon a recent article of mine, grossly perverting the spirit of my pen. Still I would not forget that the pale-faced missionary and the hoodooed aborigine are both God's creatures, though small indeed their own conceptions of Infinite Love. A wee child toddling in a wonder world, I prefer to their dogma my excursions into the natural gardens where the voice of the Great Spirit is heard in the twittering of birds, the rippling of mighty waters, and the sweet breathing of flowers. If this is Paganism, then at present, at least, I am a Pagan.

1902