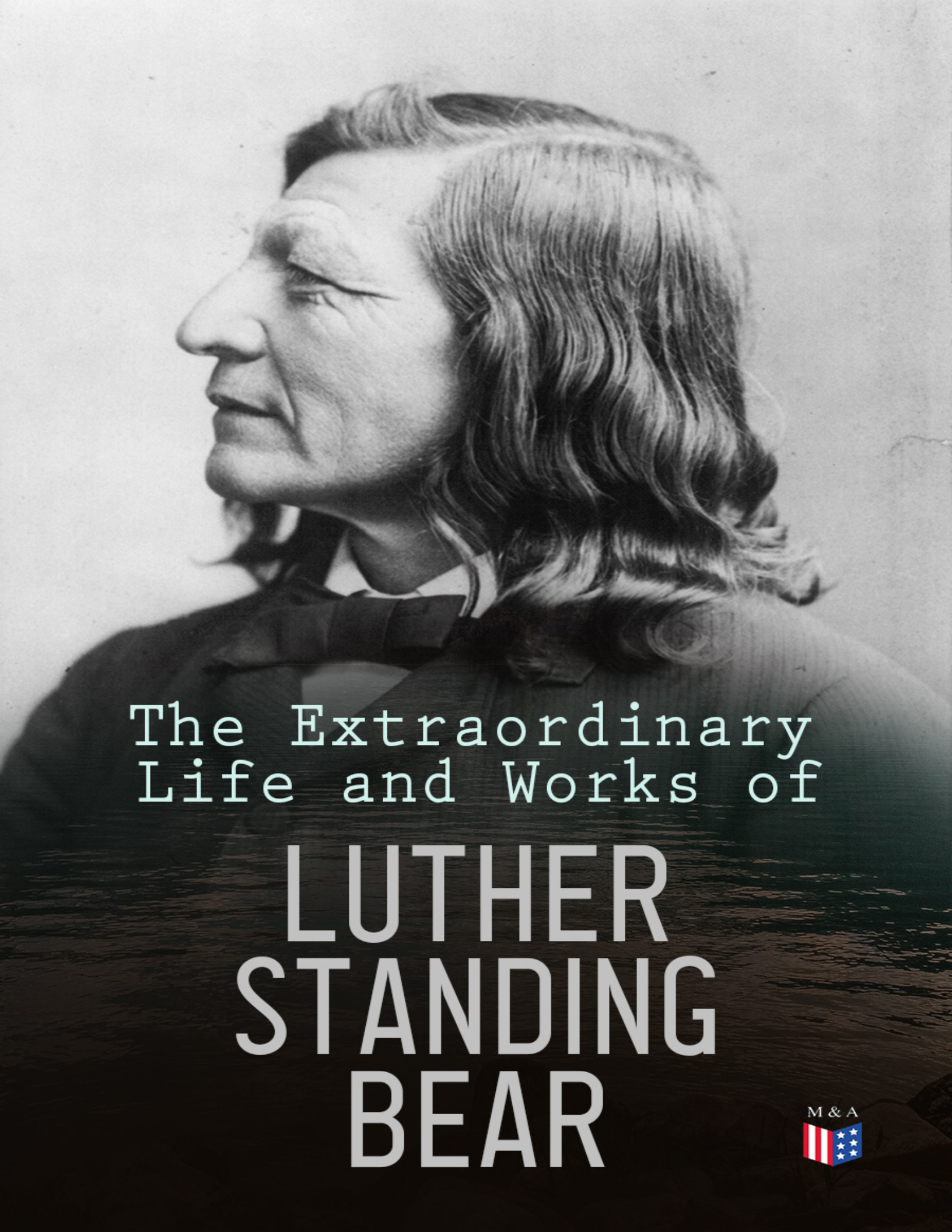

The Extraordinary Life and Works of

LUTHER STANDING BEAR

M & A

Luther Standing Bear

The Extraordinary Life and Works of Luther Standing Bear

My People the Sioux, My Indian Boyhood, The Tragedy of the Sioux

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Table of Contents

My People the Sioux

Table of Contents

CHIEF STANDING BEAR AT COUNCIL

PREFACE

Table of Contents

The preparation of this book has not been with any idea of self-glory. It is just a message to the white race; to bring my people before their eyes in a true and authentic manner. The American Indian has been written about by hundreds of authors of white blood or possibly by an Indian of mixed blood who has spent the greater part of his life away from a reservation. These are not in a position to write accurately about the struggles and disappointments of the Indian.

White men who have tried to write stories about the Indian have either foisted on the public some blood-curdling, impossible ‘thriller’; or, if they have been in sympathy with the Indian, have written from knowledge which was not accurate and reliable. No one is able to understand the Indian race like an Indian.

Therefore, I trust that in reading the contents of this book the public will come to a better understanding of us. I hope they will become better informed as to our principles, our knowledge, and our ability. It is my desire that all people know the truth about the first Americans and their relations with the United States Government.

I hereby express my appreciation for assistance in the preparation of the manuscript of this book and the photographs used, to my good friends Mr. E. A. Brininstool, of Los Angeles, and Mr. Clyde Champion, of Alhambra, California; also to my niece Was-te-win and her husband William Dittmar, whose aid and encouragement have been of the utmost value to me.

Chief Standing Bear

INTRODUCTION

Table of Contents

A painter must know how to mix his paints and he must know how to paint, but whether he reproduces nature or makes a daub depends on his knowledge of the subject he is painting. To write of the West one must know the West.

Being master of all the technique in the world doesn't give a man knowledge of what he is writing—which accounts for much of the blundering, haphazard vaporings that are written of the West. Libelous stuff, material founded on hearsay, or gathered through a smattering of ill-digested reading, which, in turn, is the output of those so full of their own confidence, they must have been bored in the writing.

Here is a story written by a blanket Indian, the first son of a fighting Sioux. Aside from its beauty and naïveté, the book is invaluable. It is history.

The West was so big: even great men that wrote and painted what they loved could not grasp it all.

Theodore Roosevelt, Frederic Remington, Owen Wister, put the old frontier on the map. These men had every attribute to illustrate the West. They were shy on only one thing—KNOWLEDGE GAINED BY ACTUAL EXPERIENCE. What a pity that such men had not lived the life of the West as Chief Standing Bear did or as Charlie Russell did! Russell's work will go down to our children's children's children—for truth looks out of the canvas.

Owen Wister—great scholar, typical American gentleman—could write stories of the West that made the blood leap in the telling. How unfortunate that he had not spent more years on the frontier! Had he done so, he would never have

made ‘The Virginian’ (in his classic of that name), out of simple duty, lead a posse to run down and hang his ‘pardner’ who was wanted for cattle-stealing. Had the Virginian been a real Westerner, had he consented to lead that posse, he would have led them in the opposite direction. And the posse would have loved him for it. The morals of the people of the West seemed to be governed by the altitude, and it is mighty high ground from the old Missouri to where the mountains go down to the sea.

The author of this book may be a bit short on education. I can’t say how short because I do not know enough to judge, but he has a story to tell—one that he learned IN LIFE. The tipis of his people were the first skyscrapers. Trapping and hunting was their calling, but philosophy was their life.

It is a tale told of a people whipped by a stronger race—like dumb animals—for deeds beyond their understanding. I am sure that all men will enjoy and applaud their play and that no man will laugh at their suffering.

General Benteen, of the United States Army, said of the Sioux Indians, ‘They are the greatest warriors that the sun ever shone on.’ We should be proud of these Sioux Indians, for they are Americans, and they come from a country and belong to a day when tongues were seldom hung in the middle, where folks didn’t carry silver in their pockets until it turned black, where, if a gambler took your last dollar, he’d spend it on you, and where lots of small children were not so sure but that some angels wore whiskers and cussed a little bit.

William S. Hart
(Ta-Sunke-Witko)

CHAPTER I
PLENTY KILL

Table of Contents

The Sioux tribe, to which I belong, has always been a very powerful nation. Many years ago they traveled all over the Western country, hunting, camping, and enjoying life to its utmost, in the many beautiful spots where they found the best wood and water.

It was in a cold winter, in the month when the bark of the trees cracked, in the year of ‘breaking up of camp,’ that I was born. I was the first son of Chief Standing Bear the First. In those days we had no calendars, no manner of keeping count of the days; only the month and the year were observed. Something of importance would, naturally, happen every year, and we kept trace of the years in that manner. After I went to school and learned how to ‘count back,’ I learned that that year of ‘breaking camp’ wasA.D. 1868; the month when the bark of the trees cracked was December. Consequently I was born in December, 1868.

My mother was considered the most beautiful young woman among the Sioux at the time she married my father. Her name was ‘Pretty Face.’ My grandfather—my father’s father—was a chief, and accounted a very brave man. He had captured many spotted horses from other tribes in their wars with one another. Therefore, when my father was born, he was given the name of ‘Spotted Horse.’ This he kept until he was old enough to go on the war-path and earn his own name. He once told me how he received the name of ‘Standing Bear.’ His story, as near as I can remember it, was as follows:

‘One of our hunting scouts returned with the news that the Pawnees were on our hunting-grounds and were killing our game; so all the braves prepared themselves for war. We knew we had a hard enemy to face, as the Pawnees were very expert with the bow and arrow. If one of these Pawnees was knocked down, he was just as liable to arise with his bow in hand, or even if lying flat on his back, he would have an arrow in his bow all ready to let drive.

‘We started and traveled quite a long way. When we came up over a hill, we could see the Pawnees down in the valley. They had just finished killing a lot of buffalo, and the game lay scattered here and there. Each man was busy skinning the animal he had killed. Our men rode into them as fast as they were able. I was riding a sorrel horse at this time, and he was a good runner.

‘When the Pawnees saw us coming, they scattered to get their horses and leave. We gave chase after them. I took after some men who went over a hill, but they had too good a start, and I knew there was no use tiring my horse out chasing them, so I turned back. As I was nearing my own people, I observed several of them in a bunch, and I rode in close to see what was the matter.

‘When I got there, the Sioux were all in a circle around one Pawnee. His horse had got away from him in the excitement and he was left on foot. But he had a bow and arrow in his hand and was defying any of the Sioux to come near. He was a big man and very brave. When our men would shoot an arrow at him and it struck, he would break the arrow off and throw it away. If they shot at him and missed, he would pick up the arrows and defy the Sioux to come on.

‘Then I asked the men if any one had yet touched this enemy. They said no; that the man appeared to have such

strength and power that they were afraid of him. I then said that I was going to touch this enemy. So I fixed my shield in front of me, carrying only my lance.

‘The Pawnee stood all ready for me with his arrow fixed in his bow, but I rode right up to him and touched him with my lance. The man did not appear excited as I rode up, but he shot an arrow at me, which struck my shield and glanced off into the muscles of my left arm.

‘Behind me rode Black Crow. The third man was Crow Dog, and the fourth man was One Ear Horse. We four men touched this enemy with our lances, but I was the first. After the Pawnee had wounded me, the other men expected to see him get excited, but he did not lose his nerve. As soon as I had passed him with an arrow through my arm, the Pawnee had a second arrow all ready for the next man.

‘The second man was shot in the shoulder, and the third man in the hip. As the last man touched the enemy, he received an arrow in the back. In this manner the Pawnee shot all the four men who had touched him with their lances. We had all gained an honor, but we were all wounded. Now that four of our men had touched the enemy, he was so brave that we withdrew from the field, sparing his life.

‘We were some distance away when I began to feel very sleepy. Old Chief Two Strikes and Broken Arm, my uncle, got hold of me to keep me from falling off my horse. This was a very peculiar sensation to me, and something I had never experienced before. The last I remembered was as if falling asleep, but in reality I had only fainted.

‘While I was sleeping peacefully (as it appeared to me) I heard an eagle away up in the sky. He seemed to be whistling, and coming nearer and nearer, descending in a circle. Just as the eagle came very close to me, I awoke, and

there I saw the medicine man running around me in a circle with one of the whistles made from the bone of an eagle's wing. It was the medicine man who had awakened me from my seeming sleep. Then Chief Two Strikes (who was a very old man) and Broken Arm helped me home.

'These men all sang my praises as we entered the village. Then a big victory dance was given, and great honor was bestowed upon me. At the next council Chief Two Strikes proposed me as a chief, because I was brave enough to face the enemy, even if that enemy was ready to shoot me. So I was accepted and elected as a chief under the name of "Standing Bear." '

That is how my father's name was changed from 'Spotted Horse' ('Sunkele Ska') to 'Standing Bear' ('Mato Najin'). In those days every warrior had to earn the name he carried.

Before my birth, my father had led his men many times in battle against opposing tribes. He was always in front; he was never known to run away from an enemy, but to face him. Therefore, when I was born, he gave me the name of 'Ota Kte,' or 'Plenty Kill,' because he had killed many enemies.

I would like to state that in those days it was considered a disgrace, not an honor, for a Sioux to kill a white man. Killing a pale-face was not looked upon as a brave act. We were taught that the white man was much weaker than ourselves.

Soon after I was born, one of our scouts came into camp one day, and very excitedly stated that a big snake was crawling across the prairie. This caused much excitement. Close observation revealed the fact that a stream of smoke was following the supposed snake. It was the first railroad train of the Union Pacific Railroad. To the Indians this was a

great curiosity, and they would climb high in the hills to watch the train run along and listen to the funny noises it made. When they saw that the ‘snake’ ran on an iron track and did not leave it, they began to be a little braver, and came in closer to better examine the strange affair.

One day some of a war-party of our tribe were returning home. They were very thirsty, and stopped at the railroad station to get some water. The white man in charge of the station compelled them to leave without giving them any water. He was perhaps afraid of Indians, or possibly had done something to them and thought they had come to punish him. His actions made the Indians very angry. They thought it was strange that the white people would run a railroad train across their land, and now would not even let them have a drink of water.

So the war-party came home and reported the treatment they had received from the white man. A council was called, and it was decided to do something. My mother heard the men talking, and, after leaving me in the care of my grandmother, she took a short-handled axe and followed the men. When they came to the railroad track, it was decided to tear up some of the rails and the pieces of wood to which they were fastened. My mother cut the ties and the men hauled them away, after which the whole band went back a mile or so and waited to see what would happen when the train came along.

When the train crew sighted the Indians in the distance, they began to shoot at them. The Indians then whipped up their ponies and gave chase. The men on the train were so busy jeering at the Indians and making fun of their attempt to catch up with them that they failed to watch the track ahead, not suspecting that the Indians would be smart and cunning enough to lay a trap for them. When the train

reached the broken spot, it ran off the track and was badly wrecked.

My mother had hidden near by, and after the train smash-up she ran to it. It happened to be a freight, carrying supplies of all sorts to the distant West, and among the cargo was quite a quantity of maple sugar, gingham, and beads. My mother obtained from this train wreck the first beads ever seen by the Sioux Nation. Prior to that time, all the fancy work on moccasins or clothing was made with porcupine quills, which were dyed. In using these quills, the women would hold them in their mouths until soft, then, when they were used, the quill was flattened with the finger nail.

Being a very smart woman, my mother conceived the idea of using some of these beads in place of the quills, to see what they would look like. She beaded a strip of buffalo skin, using yellow beads for the background, instead of the white ones which are now used so much. This beaded strip she sewed on a buffalo calf skin, which I wore as a blanket. So I was the first Sioux Indian to wear beads around my body on a blanket.

The summer following my birth, the northern Sioux came to visit us. This must have been about the time of the sun dance, a religious ceremony which brought the entire tribe together. There was a creek running near our camp in the Black Hills which was swollen from the heavy rains. My mother had pitched our tipi near a spot where the water was shallow, and, as it was the best crossing, the visitors splashed through the water on their ponies and came up the hill past our tipi, where my mother had placed me, wrapped in my buffalo skin blanket carrying the beaded strip. She had placed a large basin of ‘wasna,’ or Indian hash, beside me, as a welcome to our guests, and I was the ‘reception

committee.’ All the Indians, as they passed, stopped to pet me and get some hash. My mother did this in honor of my father.

Sometimes the little incidents of our lives stand out more prominently than the more important ones. One of my earliest recollections is of a time when we were moving camp at night. I was asleep in a ‘hunpa wanjila,’ or travois, as it is called to-day. One of the horses turned, causing the poles to cross and pinch me quite severely on the hip. I awoke, crying, and my mother had to come and quiet me. After I had grown up, I mentioned this little incident to my mother, and she said I was about two years of age when it happened.

In those days we knew nothing of Christmas, with its giving and receiving of gifts, as do the children of all nations to-day, but, when boys or girls were old enough to walk alone, they received useful articles. Many games were made for us by our parents. About the first gift I received from my father was a bow and arrows. He made them himself, painting the bow red, which signified that he had been wounded in battle. The arrows were likewise painted red. As I was very young at the time, the arrows were fashioned with knobs on the end, instead of the sharp points, and the bow was not a strong one to pull. That bow and arrows was the beginning of my Indian training. It was to be my weapon in war, and was to get my food for me; so I must always keep it near me. My father taught me how to hold the bow correctly in my left hand, and pull the string back to my body with the right. The arrow was to be placed on the left side of the bow, over my thumb. My father cautioned me always to take good aim, and to be very careful of this bow and arrows. Some day, he said, he would like to see me go on the war-path and earn my own credits. So I kept my bow

and arrows near me all the time, as it told of my father's bravery, of which I was very proud, as every one in camp knew my father had been wounded in battle.

We boys would play around camp and shoot, but we had to find our lost arrows, and sometimes this was not an easy task, but my father taught me how. As soon as I was able to sit on a pony, he gave me one for my own. It was an important event in my young life when I was given my own pony. The Indian ponies were gentle little animals. When they were feeding on the plains, we boys could walk right up to them and they did not seem scared—in fact, they were so gentle that we caught them by hand. The blackbirds always stayed around the pony herd when it was feeding, as they got their own meal through them without any trouble, because the ponies, in walking about through the grass, would scare up myriads of grasshoppers, which the blackbirds eagerly snapped up. So the blackbirds and the Indian ponies always were friends. It was a common sight to see several of the birds perched on a pony's back at the same time.

One day my father took me out to shoot a bird. He instructed me how to crawl along the ground to get near my quarry. We went out to the field where the ponies were grazing. Father and I crawled real near them, but they were not in the least frightened. I used the knob arrows, but, try as I might, I could not shoot a bird, so we went back to camp. This made me feel rather sheepish, as I wanted to please my father.

The following day my cousins and uncles were going out bird-hunting, and I trailed along with them. This day I killed my first bird. The event brought a thrill to me! When we arrived back to camp, my father was so happy that his son had killed a bird! He notified the camp crier to announce

that his son ‘Ota Kte,’ or ‘Plenty Kill,’ had killed his first bird, and that Standing Bear, his father, was giving away a horse in consequence. In all Indian camps there is an old man who acts as a herald to make announcement of importance. On this occasion the horse was given to an old man who was very poor.

This was the beginning of my religious training. When I was born, my father prayed to the Great Spirit to make a warrior of me, and to do this I was compelled to shoot straight. So when I killed my first bird, we believed this was an answer to my father’s prayer, and, when a prayer was answered, we always sacrificed something. Thus, this sacrifice was given to an old man who was too poor ever to return the kindness.

Now I began to feel that I was a very big boy, and the whole camp took notice of me. Soon came the fall of the year and the time to move camp. While the older people were discussing moving, my cousins and uncles were busy planning a deer hunt. I listened to all they had to say. It was planned to start out when the camp broke up and hunt a little to one side. My relatives never dreamed of my following them, and were too busy looking for game to pay any attention to me.

When we started out, my cousins really meant to keep in sight of the moving camp, but we kept drifting away a little farther all the time. As the sun arose high in the heavens, it grew very hot. We had now lost sight of the camp altogether, and could find no water to quench our thirst. I was suffering very much and began to cry. The big boys now took notice of me and began to worry. We were in an unpleasant predicament. Fortunately one of the boys soon killed a deer. One of my uncles caught some of the warm blood in his hands and gave me a drink of it. The blood was

far from cooling, but it quenched my thirst. The boy who had killed the deer cut it up, giving each of us a share, as we had all been hunters together that day. Being the smallest boy in the party, I was given the smallest piece of meat.

The older boys tied up my share of the deer meat and hung it on my back. It was now getting well along toward evening, and we were on foot, walking back to try to locate the camp. I was very tired, but did my best to be brave and keep up with the other boys. Suddenly we saw a solitary horseman ride up against the skyline on a distant hill and come toward us. He was leading an extra pony. We did not know whether he were friend or foe, and the big boys got ready to fight, if necessary.

When the man on the pony saw us, he signaled. It was my father, out searching for us. I was so glad to see him. The extra pony was my own little animal. Father lifted me to its back and placed one of the smaller boys on behind me, taking another little fellow up behind on his own mount. In this way we returned to camp, very tired, and so happy to be home again.

Then father called the old camp crier to announce that his son ‘Ota Kte,’ or ‘Plenty Kill,’ had brought home his first meat, and that Standing Bear was giving away another pony in consequence. This pony was given to another old man. My father felt so proud of me that he was happy to do this.

ONE OF THE AUTHOR’S NIECES, WITH SOME EXCEPTIONALLY FINE BEAD-WORK

CHAPTER II
THE TIPI

Table of Contents

Our home life began in the tipi. It was there we were born, and we loved our home. A tipi would probably seem queer to a white child, but if you ever have a chance to live in one you will find it very comfortable—that is, if you get a *real* tipi; not the kind used by the moving-picture companies.

When I was a boy all my tribe used tipis made of buffalo skins. Some were large; others were quite small; depending upon the wealth of the owner. In my boyhood days a man counted his wealth by the number of horses he owned. If a tipi was large it took a great many poles to set it up; and that called for a great many horses to move it about when camp was broken.

A small tipi required about twelve poles to set up, and they were not very long, so that only about two horses were required when on the move. But a large tipi required from twenty-five to twenty-seven poles, and it was necessary that they be quite a bit longer. It required about six horses to transport properly a large tipi when camp was broken. We were at liberty to move any time we chose. So, if a man wanted a large tipi, he must first be sure he had horses enough to move it.

My father’s tipi was the largest in our tribe. When we made camp, all the rest of the tribe would camp at a distance, as they were afraid the wind might get too strong in the night and knock our tipi over on them.

At the top of the tipi were two flaps which served as wind-breaks. If the wind blew too hard from the north, then

the flap on the north side was raised; if it came from the south, the south flap was raised. Our tipis were always set up facing the east, so we always had the west at our backs.

In case of rain, both flaps were closed down and tied to a stake driven in the ground. If a tipi was set up right, there never was any smoke inside, as the flue was open at the top. If snow fell heavily, it banked up all around the outside of the tipi, which helped keep us warm. On nights when there was a cold, sleeting rain, it was very pleasant to lie in bed and listen to the storm beating on the sides of the tipi. It even put us to sleep.

To erect a tipi properly, three poles were first laid on the ground, one longer than the others. The long one was to serve as the front-door space. These three poles were tied together with a rawhide rope and then were raised up. The tipi covering was then laid on the ground and doubled over. One pole was then laid on the center of the back and tied at the top.

All the other poles were placed around the three poles which were now standing, except two, and they were left for the flaps. After all the poles were in place, the one that supported the tipi was placed. One end of the tipi was now pulled around to the front-door space, and the other end was pulled around to meet it.

A boy would then climb to the top of the tipi and put the pins in the front to hold the tipi together. The women then staked the tipi down with larger pins made of cherry wood. These stakes were about fifteen inches long, and the bark was left on them for about two inches. This kept the tipi from slipping up on them.

In the center of the tipi a large fire was built, and it was nice and warm, regardless of the weather outside.

Doubtless you are wondering what sort of furniture we had in our homes at that time. We did not have very much, but there was sufficient to keep us happy.

We used no high bedsteads. We had a tripod tied together with a buckskin string. Straight branches were also strung to a buckskin thong, and these hung down in front of the tripod. These branches varied in size, and were narrow at the top and wider at the bottom. They were attached to the buckskin thong in such a manner that they could be rolled up when it came time to move camp. On top of these small branches was hung a buffalo skin. This was fastened on top of the tripod by the nose. The branches kept the buffalo skin from sinking in between the two sticks of the tripod and served as a back-rest. These tripods stood about five feet high. The skins were quite long, so that a portion of them trailed on the ground. In the center, another skin was laid. This made a very pretty bed and was fine to sleep in. The beds were made all around the sides of the tipi.

At the rear of the bed, against the tipi wall, a tanned hide was tied to the poles, on which was painted the history of the family. These were to the Indian what pictures were to the white man’s home. This painted robe could be worn as a blanket when attending a dance.

At the back of the bed, and in front of this painted skin, the woman of the house kept all the rawhide bags. These bags were very fancy affairs. They were made by the women. When a buffalo skin was brought in for this purpose, it was first staked to the ground and the women scraped all the meat off. The skin was then washed with water to make sure it was clean. While the skin was yet damp, it was painted. Our paints in those days were made from baked earth and berries. The paint-pots were turtlebacks. The brush used by the artist was not really a brush, but a small

bone, rather ragged on the edge, so it would hold the paint. The straight-edge or ruler was a very straight stick.

Then the woman who was to act as the artist got everything ready to decorate the hide. The paints were mixed with water. The woman kneeled on the skin and designed her patterns, putting in all the colors which she thought pretty and suited her fancy.

The bag had to be painted in such a manner that the two sides, when folded over, met in the center. Holes were made along the edges of these two ends, and a buckskin string was run through to serve as a tie-string. The decorated side of the bag was tied together. The other side also had a buckskin string, which was fastened to the saddle when on the move.

After the big bag was made, the scraps from the hide were used up. Some pieces were cut for moccasin soles. These were not painted; but the pieces which the women expected to make bags from were all painted at the same time as the big bag. The women made one little bag which served as a sort of workbox. In this the woman kept all the tools she needed in her sewing—the awl and sinews. She also made another to hold her comb. In those days a comb was made from the tail of the porcupine. Another bag held paints and brushes; sometimes knife-cases were made from any of the left-over pieces of hide. All these were painted in pretty designs, and this work was always done by the women. The bag that held the war-bonnet was also painted and decorated, but all war articles were painted by men.

Some of these bags held the dried meat for the winter’s supply. Others held sinew and scraps of skin and moccasin soles. In fact, these bags served the Indian just as the white man’s trunk is used by him. The bag that held the war-

bonnet always hung on the tripod of the bed. It never was laid on the ground.

Other bags which held the clothing of the family were made and decorated with dyed porcupine quills. These were made round, from tanned buffalo skins. The woman cut out the size she desired, then sewed it with sinew, with buckskin tie-strings attached.

In those days we used to eat the porcupine. Every portion of the body was utilized. The hair was used in the manufacture of the dancing-headdress; the tail was made into a comb; the quills were dyed by the women and used for a variety of purposes in their fancy work.

This porcupine quill-work was quite an art. The pulling of the quills required some time, and one had to be careful that the quills did not get into one's fingers. The dyeing of these quills was also quite a scientific art.

In decorating a bag, the woman would place several of the dyed quills in her mouth. This dampened them, and she would then flatten them with her finger nails and run them through little holes made with an awl. Several colors would be used in the work, and, when it was finished, the woman had a very pretty design. Several rows of quills were put around the bag. If a fancy bag was desired, a few tassels were added to the sides.

When these round bags were in place on top of the rawhide bags, and the painted skin was hung up behind them, and the beds all made and a fire burning, the tipi looked just as neat as any white man's house.

When we were all settled for winter, our women fixed up the tipi as comfortably and inviting as possible. Not for Thanksgiving Day, for we were taught to give thanks every day. Not for Christmas or New Year's, because we knew nothing of these holidays of the white man. It was solely for

our own pleasure, and the assurance that we were safe for the long winter months.

The entrance to the Black Hills was through a narrow passage known as ‘Buffalo Gap.’ The wild animals came in through this gap for protection from the icy blasts of winter; and the Sioux likewise went there. There were springs of clear water and plenty of wood. Nature seemed to hold us in her arms. And there we were contented to live in our humble tipis all through the rough weather.

After a time, of course, our tipis would begin to get old and worn. The poles would commence to break off. Then was the time to think of getting new ones. The entire tribe was in the Black Hills, where they could get all the poles they wanted. They used fir pines, as they were the straightest, and could be found in all sizes. The men would chop down as many trees as they needed and haul them to camp one at a time. First, the bark was peeled off, with all the small limbs. When all the trees had been brought to camp, one would be leaned against a standing tree for a brace. A block of wood was fastened to the butcher knife to be used as a draw-shave. Before the Indian had steel knives he used a sharp stone to do this work. As most of the poles were cut to about the required size, it was not very hard work to finish them. The Indian had no boss standing over him, and he took his own time.

After the poles were all finished, they were arranged in conical form to dry out. If one began to get crooked during this drying-out process, it was turned around with the crook on the outside. This served to straighten the pole. It required about three days for the poles to dry and ‘season.’

While the stronger of the men were preparing the poles, the old men also found plenty of work to do. They made the stakes which were to hold the tipi down, and prepared the

pins that were to hold the tipi together in front. After they had those finished, they made some other sticks about two feet long, with a hole in one end through which was passed a rawhide thong. These were used in moving camp. All tipi poles had a hole in one end. When it came time to break camp, these small sticks were tied to as many of the tipi poles as a pony could comfortably carry on one side. The rawhide string from the small stick was slipped through the holes in the tipi poles, which kept them from slipping and being lost.

Now that all the poles, sticks, pins, and stakes were prepared for the new tipi, the next and hardest job was to get the skins with which to cover the tipi poles. The entire tribe started to move to northern Nebraska, as they knew this to be a good hunting-ground. Scouts were sent out ahead to locate the buffalo herds. When they returned with the location of a herd, the hunters would prepare to start out on the hunt.

All the relatives now assembled and entered into an agreement that all the skins from the first hunt were to go to the head of the band. If they did not secure enough hides from the first hunt, then the next one was also to go to him. The hunters would kill as many buffalo as possible, and the skins were removed very carefully. As they were to be used for tipi coverings, there must be no holes in them.

As soon as the hides were brought in, the women spread them on the ground and pegged them out while they were yet fresh, with the flesh side up. Three or four women would then commence to remove all superfluous bits of meat from the hide. In this work they used a piece of flint or a sharp stone before steel and iron came into use among them. These ‘fleshers’ were shaped like a crowbar with teeth in the end. The handle was covered with buckskin, with a buckskin

string attached to tie up around the wrist, which helped to hold the instrument.

After all the meat was removed from the skin, and it had dried out, it was turned over with the hair on top. Then, with a tool made of elk-horn, they scraped off all the hair. This instrument, clasped in both hands, was used by the women, who worked it toward them. They were very expert in this work.

When the hair had all been scraped off, it showed a layer of skin which was dark. This was also removed, showing another layer of white. This the women took off carefully in little flakes, and it was used in making a very fine soup. The brains and liver of the buffalo were cooked together, after which this mixture was rubbed all over the skin. It was then folded into a square bundle for four or five days. Several of these bundles of skins would be piled on top of each other.

A frame was now built on which to stretch the skin after it was opened. This frame was made of round poles tied together at the four corners with rawhide thongs. When the skin was opened, it was damp. It was fastened to the frame with rawhide rope run through the peg-holes around the edge of the hide. The mixture of brain and liver was now all scraped off, and the skin washed with water until perfectly clean. The women then went all over the skin with a sandstone, which made the hide very soft.

A braided sinew was then tied to a naturally bent tree, and the other end fastened to a stake driven in the ground. This made the sinew taut, like a bowstring. The skin was then taken off the frame and pulled back and forth on this sinew, by the women, until it was very soft. The effect of this was to produce a beautiful white tan.

At that time our women wore dresses with open sleeves, and, when a person stood behind them as they were pulling

on the skin, they resembled angels flying, as the big sleeves flapped back and forth.

These skins were now ready to be put away until enough more were finished to make the tipi. While some of the women were busy tanning the skins, others were engaged in cooking, making dried meats, and getting all the sinew on the poles to dry. The sinews were the cords in the animals, and were used by the women in lieu of thread. There was no waste, I can assure you. When a sufficient number of skins for one tipi were finished, that part of the skin which had the holes in was trimmed off and the hides were patched together.

To begin to measure a tipi, two poles were laid on the ground and were squared off. All tipis were made to look as if they were sitting down. When the skins were being sewed together, the women put them down on these poles and made a circular bottom, much the same as the white women make a circular bottom skirt. When enough skins were sewed together to fit in between these two poles, then it was put around the back pole. More skins were then sewed on until it came back to the front pole again. A small extra piece of skin was allowed in the center, at the top of the back. It was to this piece that the rawhide rope was tied to fasten the tipi to the pole. This was the last pole to be lifted in erecting the tipi.

In those days our women did not have any ‘sewing circles,’ but, when a tipi was to be made, they all got together with their sinews and awls—the latter made from the wing-bone of an eagle. They would all sit down and laugh and joke as they punched the holes with the awl and threaded the sinews which had been saved from the remains of the buffalo. This did not seem like work to our women.