

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE WASHINGTON CONFERENCE.

THE INDIAN LEADERS VISIT SECRETARY NOBLE.—THE STORY OF THEIR SUFFERINGS DUE TO THEIR OWN SPOILS AND GREAT MASSACRE.—PLEASURES AND MARRIAGES AMONG THE INDIANS.—INDIAN CHIEFS DECLARE THAT THERE WAS DECISIVE DEFEAT AT THE BATTLE OF WOUNDED KNEE.—A VISIT TO THE PRESIDENT AT THE WHITE HOUSE.

Early in February, 1891, an important delegation from the Sioux reached Washington for the purpose of conferring with the Secretary of the Interior regarding the interests of their people. The conference was opened on February 7th. The Secretary of War and Mrs. Proctor and Miss Proctor were present, and also the wife of Secretary Noble and Miss Halstead and Miss Dawes. Miss Kate Foote, Miss Alice Fletcher, and others prominent in the work for the Indians were interested spectators. The conference was opened by Secretary Noble, who said:

SECRETARY NOBLE'S ADDRESS.

"You were represented here just after the agreement with General Crook was made. You made certain requests and complaints at that time, and you

received certain promises from me. There has been trouble since then, and you have come again to say what you think proper as to the cause of the trouble, and to make any further complaints you see fit. The Secretary is here to tell you that he has kept his word, but if there is anything more he can do, through friendship for the Sioux, he is ready to do it. He is your friend, and the Great Father has told him to be your friend. He wants you to talk to him as a friend and he will meet you in the same spirit."

The Secretary then asked if the Indians had made any arrangements about speakers. He could not hear them all, but he would listen to a few, and he desired them to speak briefly. He added that if no objection was made, he would hear from John Grass, Hollow Horn Bear, American Horse, Two-Strike, Hump, and Man Afraid-of-His-Horses.

Louis Recoutre said that this arrangement was not satisfactory, as it was desired that each agency should be represented in the speakers.

The Secretary replied that he would hear John Grass and American Horse, and then advise with them as to who should follow.

SPEECH BY JOHN GRASS.

John Grass then came forward. The Rev. C. S. Cook, the Episcopal minister at Pine Ridge, acted as interpreter. Grass at once began to speak of the recent trouble among the Indians, the origin of which he did not know. They had come for the pur-

pose of conferring with the Secretary in regard to the matter. The Indians, he said, did not desire to be driven back to their wild life, but wished to consult with the President so as to determine upon the future. They wished, he said, to speak on certain matters talked over when the Indians were here last, and the promises in regard to which were not carried out. He protested against the practice of blaming all Indians for what was the fault of a few. The Indians believe that if they are honest in trying to put their children into schools, and if they follow the teachings of Christianity they would be going in the right road. The Indians regarded these as important factors, and they also thought it desirable that the agents should be civilians rather than military. They desired a continuance of the present system in this respect. In the past, he said, the Indian agents had opportunities to steal, but now the good people in the East maintained such a close watch that it was difficult to adopt such practices. The agents in late years, he said, were good men. In speaking of his own reservation, that of Standing Rock, the threatened trouble had been put down by the Indian police. They believed in the Indian police and he was requested to ask for an increase of fifty men. Grass then shook hands with the Secretary and took his seat.

A GRACEFUL ORATOR.

American Horse was the next speaker. He displayed considerable natural ability, and made a graceful preface to his remarks, referring in compli-

mentary terms to the Secretary and the ladies present. He then asked if the Secretary thought it was good to curtail the speech of a man who had something to say, so that he did not have the chance to say all he intended.

This question created some laughter, and the Secretary replied that he thought short speeches were the best, but he desired him to say all he wished to say.

WANTING A LONG TALK

American Horse further inquired whether they would have another conference with the Secretary. He said that they had a good deal of business to transact, which might require three or four months. The Secretary said he was willing to see them as often as necessary, but said that their business here must be brought to a close in a short time. If this could not be done, they must attend to the rest of it at the agencies. He asked that they proceed to address themselves to the subject of the conference.

American Horse further protested against haste.

He said that he had endeavored to learn the origin of the late trouble, and in his search and investigation he found himself in Washington. He then went on to speak of the importance of this city as a treaty-making centre, and gradually drifted into a discussion of the subject proper. He protested against being classed as a hostile, and the Secretary assured him that he was not so classed.

American Horse said that the Indians at Pine Ridge, through the destruction of their property,

had been put back fifteen years, and that the Indians desired to have these losses made good. The Gov-

INDIAN LOSSSES

ernment, he said, had made mistakes in their attempts to civilize the Indians. He enumerated their mistakes. Instead of the places at the agencies being filled by Indians, white men crowded them out and took the places. This was one reason why the Indians were called lazy. At the agencies, he said, the white men were so numerous that they fairly trampled on the Indians. What his people wanted was a chance to rise and fill the places of trust and consequence that were within the reach. He desired that some attention should be paid to the wishes of the Indians in regard to the men to be agents.

ELOPEMENTS AND MARRIAGES.

The Indians were able to tell as well as white men what men were competent. The agents, he said, naturally selected their own relations to fill places under them. He thought that the Indians would receive these appointments, if justice were done. He then spoke of religious matters, and said that there were three religious bodies on their reservation who were trying to teach them to live better lives, and especially to bring about religious marriages; but they did not want to be compelled to marry certain persons.

The Secretary inquired who had sought to compel them to marry. American Horse replied that he referred more particularly to persons who eloped.

When the couple were brought back the agent obliged them to get married. He asked that the losses suffered by the Indians in the late disturbance be made good by the Government. He urged that a remedy for a good many of the present troubles would be for the Government to go back to the treaty of 1868, and redeem some of the promises then made. The money bags, as he called the money which had been promised then, must by this time, he thought, have reached a good age and have grown, and the distribution of the sums due would be of great service. He favored the removal of the Carlisle School to the West, as the Indians' children would not then suffer in consequence of a change of climate and their modes of life. He said that the contract with the Indians was that their children be sent to the schools in the East, and upon their return, places would be given them on the reservations. This he said, had not been done.

A PEACEMAKER'S STORY.

Young Man-Afraid-of-His-Horses said he was very much pleased to meet everybody, and then went on to relate his services in the interest of harmony during the late trouble. In the course of his introductory remarks he said he had brought his people into camp and had turned in their arms.

"How many?" queried the Secretary, and the orator was somewhat nonplussed. He knew the total was small, and he did not care to say. The Secretary removed the embarrassment by bidding

him proceed in his own way, and then Young Man-Afraid-of-His-Horses said he hoped the Government would not only educate the children, but would also give them something to do when they finished at school. The Government had always said that if Indians worked they would get rich. They wanted to get rich, and the only way that was possible was the giving of employment to the young men when they left school.

"LET US HAVE PEACE"

Two-Strike was next called for. The wily old warrior did not want to say much, but his manner was quite vigorous. He acknowledged that there had been trouble, but that was gone. He had made peace with General Miles, and turned in his arms, and now came to report to the Great Father. He was always going to do what he could to maintain peace.

The next speaker was Hump. He called attention to the fact that he had farmed at Cheyenne River for three years and had no crop, and for that reason he wanted the rations increased and continued. Cheyenne River Agency had suffered much in this trouble—about 300 of the people had been killed—and there should be some consideration shown the survivors.

High Hawk, an Ogallala, told with a loud voice how earnest he had always been for peace. His principal complaint was as to the dividing line between the Pine Ridge and Rosebud Agencies. The

line had caused much trouble, and he hoped it would be removed.

HOW THE WOUNDED KNEE FIGHT BEGAN.

Then Hollow Horn Bear, a Brule from Rosebud Agency, took the floor. He said that one man (referring to the affair at Wounded Knee) wanted to fight; the others did not. That man fired his gun, and then the soldiers shot men, women and children. He was somewhat lost, but he was going to try to do right, as he had always done, but he had to say that only the white man had broken the mutual promises. He told of some of his people who were badly wounded, and characterized the conduct of the military as cruel. The soldiers were the cause of the trouble.

Hollow Horn Bear then asked that those Indians who had lost property during the late trouble might be reimbursed, and went into financial matters in connection with old and unfulfilled treaties. Cows had been promised long ago, but they had not been given. Crops were failures in his country, and only cattle raising was a success. The cows ought to be sent out right away. There was money due the Indians, and he hoped that would be used in the purchase of cows and mares. The money was to have been used to buy beef. He would rather see it spent for something that would bring in increase. He asked that sub-issue houses be established in the various camps, so that men who desired to work be not taken away from their farms or cattle. The

agency was many miles from many camps. There was no line and there ought not to be. It had caused much trouble. More schoolhouses had been promised, and he hoped they would soon be built. He wanted the children to have an opportunity to learn something.

Medicine Bull then talked through Interpreter Cook. From his utterances it was evident that he always had been, was now, and ever would be in perfect accord with the Indian policy of the Government.

THE SECRETARY SPEAKS AGAIN.

Secretary Noble then spoke to the Indians. The Indian must not be discouraged. He would be supported as long as he endeavored to do well. There were two sides to the question of what is due the Indian and what is due from the Indian. "I wish to speak about these things in a friendly spirit," said he. "I wish to tell the Sioux what the Government has done for them, and I wish to tell them from a book written by their friend, Miss Fletcher, as to what has been done for them. Up to 1884, \$42,000,000 has been given the Sioux by the Government. The Government acknowledges its treaties and agreements with the Sioux. Since 1884, when this money was paid, there has been much more money paid, according the treaty. One of the speakers complained that no cows have been issued within the last two years. I wish to tell what has been issued in the way of horses and stock cattle

under the treaty. (The Secretary then quoted statistics as to the issues to Indians.) The schools that the Indians want have been kept up at all of these agencies, and industrial schools such as they want have also been established at Pierre, and another school will be put up at Flandreau. Farmers have been kept at the different agencies to show the Sioux how to farm the land. The Great Father asked Congress to do these things according to the recommendations of General Crook and the Commissioner. Congress has acted as rapidly as other public business would permit, and the Sioux will next get the benefit. The bill was approved January 19th, 1891. It was a mere accident that \$1,000,000 should have been cut off the Sioux appropriation immediately after the agreement with General Crook. It would have been the same if there had been no agreement. These things should convince the Sioux that the Government has been trying to do what was right for the Indians."

In conclusion, the Secretary advised the Indians to think over the many things the Government had done for them; to look at the promises made by General Crook, and to have confidence in what he said. The Secretary said he wanted the Indians to make up their minds to do the best they could to educate or to have educated their children, and never let their young men dream that they could ever get anything by force from the United States. The Secretary's speech closed with renewed assurances of friendship.

General Morgan, the Commissioner of Indian affairs gave another hearing to the delegation on February 9th. He told the Indians that he had called

ANOTHER HEARING.

them together that he might explain some things and that he might hear from them in regard to some matters of administration. He reminded them that he had no power to make laws and had no food or money to give them, except what Congress provides. He said he thought they had already heard all that was necessary in regard to the past. What was wanted now was to hear their plans for the future.

The first speaker from the Indian delegation was White Ghost, of the Crow Creek Reservation, who spoke of the encroachments of the whites upon the lands of the Indians.

The Commissioner assured him that he would have the matter fully investigated and remedied.

SCANTY RATIONS.

White Ghost spoke of the rations of coffee, and said that it amounted to only one hundred grains a week to each person. He referred to the small rations of bacon issued, and said that at a meeting of the delegation the unanimous decision was reached that they did not want military agents.

Big Mane, of the Lower Brule Agency, told the Commissioner that the white people had squatted on their lands and prevented the Indians from getting fuel and hay. He wanted the agency moved nearer to the lands occupied by the Indians and said

they needed better school facilities. He complained of the small size of the beef cattle given them for food, and humorously attributed it to the defective eyesight of the agent.

Little No Heart, from the Cheyenne River Agency, said that the Christian people on the reservation were doing a good work in civilizing his people, and that their influence was always on the side of peace and good government. He said that his people wanted more and larger schools, where their children could learn the white man's ways. He protested against the appointment of military agents. His people were peacefully disposed, and in his opinion civil agents would better suit the Sioux, and that the good of all concerned required the appointment of civil agents.

In answer to his request for information as to what the Government proposed to do for his people, the Commissioner said that he would furnish to the delegation copies of the Sioux agreement of 1889, and said that the purpose of the Government was to fulfil every promise made in that agreement.

Little No Heart also complained of the delay in establishing the boundary lines between the two reservations. As the matter now stands, white squatters are undoubtedly trespassing yet, and, as there is no well-defined line, they cannot demand their removal.

The Commissioner said that he had already given instructions to have the trespassers removed, and to have all others warned not to enter the reservation.

Little No Heart having again said that his people did not want military agents, the Commissioner said

MILITARY AGENTS.

that, inasmuch as nearly all who had spoken had expressed the same desire, he wished to learn how many of the members of the delegation were in favor of civil agents and how many in favor of military agents, and for that purpose he instructed the interpreter to ask such of the Indians as preferred civil agents to stand up. With a single exception, they all stood up. The only one who preferred military agents was Major Swords, the chief of the Indian police at Pine Ridge. The Commissioner explained his vote by saying that a place in the army had been offered him by General Miles. This remark elicited considerable laughter among the spectators.

Mad Bear, from Standing Rock, said that the chiefs of the several bands on his reservation had had a meeting, at which they asked him to insist upon more reservation schools. His people preferred reservation schools to distant schools. If the schools were located on the reservation their influence would be felt not only by the pupils but by the parents as well. In this way the greatest possible good could be accomplished.

A SENSATIONAL STORY.

The final session of the conference was held on February 11, and it was made memorable by a sensational story of the fight at Wounded Knee, which

was told by Turning Hawk and American Horse. In beginning his story, Turning Hawk said that a certain falsehood came to his agency from the West, which had the effect of fire upon the Indians.

"When the fire came upon our people," he said, "those who had a certain far-sightedness, and could see into the matter, made up their minds to stand up against it and fight it. The reason we took this hostile attitude to this fire was because we believed that you yourself would not be in favor of this particular mischief making thing; but, just as we expected, the people in authority did not like this thing, and we were quietly told that we must give up or have nothing to do with this certain movement. Though this was the advice from our good friends of the East, there were, of course, many silly young men who were longing to become identified with the movement, although they knew that there was absolutely nothing bad, nor did they know there was anything absolutely good in connection with the movement, and in the course of time we heard that the soldiers were moving toward the scene of the trouble.

PANIC-STRICKEN INDIANS.

"Frightened at the approach of the soldiers, and hearing all manner of rumors as to what the soldiers were going to do with them, they fled into the Bad Lands. Their friends and relatives left behind at the agency became very anxious about them, and sent parties to them to try and induce them to return. Finally they succeeded. When our people

who had been frightened away were returning to Pine Ridge, and when they had almost reached the agency, they were met by the soldiers and surrounded, and finally taken to the Wounded Knee Creek, and there, at a given time, their guns were demanded, and when they had delivered them up the men were separated from their families, from their tepees, and taken to a certain spot, their guns having been given up. When the guns were thus taken and the men thus separated, there was a crazy man, a young man of very bad influence, and in fact a nobody among that bunch of Indians, fired his gun; and of course the firing of a gun must have been the breaking of a military rule of some sort, for immediately the soldiers returned the fire, and the indiscriminate killing followed.

BEGINNING THE FIGHT.

The Commissioner—Did this man fire at the soldiers, or did he simply shoot in the air?

Spotted Horse—He shot an officer in the army. The first shot killed this officer. I was a volunteer scout at that encounter, and I had just asserted that I saw exactly what was done, and that was what I noticed—that the first shot killed an officer.

The Commissioner—Did the soldiers return the fire immediately or did the Indians keep up their firing?

Spotted Horse—As soon as the first shot was fired the Indians immediately began drawing their knives, and they were exhorted from all sides to

desist, but this was not obeyed; consequently the firing began immediately on the part of the soldiers.

Turning Hawk—All the men who were in the bunch were killed right there, and those who escaped that first fire got into the ravine, and as they went along up the ravine for a long distance they were pursued on both sides by the soldiers and shot down, as the dead bodies showed afterward.

DID THE WOMEN FIGHT?

The Commissioner—In this fight did the women take any part?

Turning Hawk—They had no firearms to fight with.

The Commissioner—The statement has been made in the public press that the women fought with butcherknives, and this has been given as a reason why the women were shot.

Turning Hawk—When the men were separated and were bunched together at a given place, of course only the men were there; the women were at a different place entirely, some distance off.

The Commissioner—Was it impossible for a soldier to tell the difference between an Indian man and an Indian woman? The statement has been made in the public press that the soldiers shot the women because they dressed in such a way that they could not tell they were women.

Turning Hawk—I think a man would be very blind if he could not tell the difference between a man and a woman. I have told you that the women

were standing off at a different place from that where the men were stationed, and when the firing began those of the men who escaped the first onslaught went in one direction up the ravine and then the women, who were bunched together at another place, went entirely in a different direction through an open field, and the women fared the same fate as the men who went up the deep ravine.

FIRING ON A FLAG OF TRUCE.

The Commissioner (to the interpreter)—Tell these men that are present that I would like if he (Turning Hawk) makes any statement which they do not accept that they will correct it. I want to get at the truth.

American Horse—The men were separated, as has already been said, from the women, and they were surrounded by the soldiers, who then came next the village of the Indians, and that was entirely surrounded by the soldiers also. When the firing began, of course, the people who were standing immediately around the young man who fired the first shot were killed right together, and then they turned their guns, Hotchkiss guns, etc., upon the women, who were in the lodges standing there under a flag of truce, and, of course, as soon as they were fired upon they fled, the men fleeing in one direction and the women running in two different directions. So that there were three general directions in which they took flight.

The Commissioner—Do you mean to say that
KILLING WOMEN AND CHILDREN.
there was a white flag in sight over the women when they were fired upon?

American Horse—Yes, sir; they were fired upon, and there was a woman with her infant in her arms who was killed as she almost touched the flag of truce, and the women and children, of course, were strewn all along the circular village until they were despatched. Right near the flag of truce another was shot down with her infant. The child, not knowing that its mother was dead, was still nursing, and that was especially a very sad sight. The women, as they were fleeing with their babes on their backs, were killed together, shot right through, and the women who were very heavy with child were also killed. All the Indians fled in these three directions. After most of them had all been killed a cry was made that all those who were not killed or wounded should come forth and they would be safe, and little boys who were not wounded came out of their places of refuge, and as soon as they came in sight a number of soldiers surrounded them and butchered them there.

VERY SERIOUS CHARGES.

The Commissioner (to the interpreter)—I wish you would say to him that these are serious charges to make against the United States Army. I do not want any statements made that are not absolutely true, and I want any one here that feels

that the statements are too strong, to correct them.

American Horse—Of course we all feel very sad about this affair. I stood very loyal to the Government all through those troublesome days, and believing so much in the Government and being so loyal to it, my disappointment was very strong, and I have come to Washington with a very great blame against the Government on my heart. Of course, it would have been all right if only the men were killed; we would feel almost grateful for it. But the fact of the killing of the women, and more especially the killing of the young boys and girls, who are to go to make up the future strength of the Indian people—those being killed is the saddest part of the whole affair, and we feel it very sorely. This is all I know about that part of the story, and my good friend here (pointing to Turning Hawk) will continue his narrative.

The Commissioner—Does American Horse know these things of his own knowledge, or has he been told them?

American Horse—I was not there at the time before the burial of the bodies, but I did go there with some of the police and the Indian doctor and a great many of the people, men from the Agency, and we went through the battlefield and saw where the bodies were from the track of the blood.

After several others had spoken, the Commissioner declared the conference at an end