

The Great West and the Agricultural Revolution, 1865–1896

Many, if not most, of our Indian wars have had their origin in broken promises and acts of injustice upon our part.

President Hayes, 1877

Prologue: The fence-erecting white men inevitably clashed with the wide-roaming Indians of the plains. As land greed undermined ethical standards, many settlers acted as though the Indians had no more rights than the buffalo, which were also ruthlessly slaughtered. The seemingly endless frontier wars ended finally when the Native Americans, cooped up in reservations, were forced to adopt in part the economic life of their conquerors. The honest farmer and the fraudulent speculator were now free to open the Far West under the Homestead Act of 1862—the United States' first big giveaway program. Much of the settlement occurred in areas with only scanty rainfall, and when crops failed, or when overproduction came, the farmer was trapped. Agitation for relief vented itself most spectacularly in 1892, when the Populist party waged a colorful campaign for the presidency under General James B. Weaver. Although he carried six western states, he ran well behind the second-place Republicans as the Democrats again swept Grover Cleveland to victory.

A. The Plight of the Indian

1. The U.S. Army Negotiates a Treaty with the Sioux (1868)

In the pre-Civil War years, the U.S. government had signed treaties with the Native Americans of the Great Plains, guaranteeing them huge northern and southern "reservation" areas on either side of a relatively narrow corridor of white settlement that generally followed the course of the Platte River across the central Plains. But the uncontrollable advance of the whites onto the Plains after the Civil War, especially

¹From Vine V. Deloria, Jr., and Ramond DeMallie, eds., *Proceedings of the Great Peace Commission, 1867–1868*, pp. 106–109. Copyright © 1975. Reprinted by permission of Vine V. Deloria, Jr.

along the "Bozeman Trail" to newly discovered gold fields in present-day Montana, sparked repeated clashes with the native peoples. The government built a series of forts along the Bozeman Trail, but following a series of successful Native American attacks, agreed in 1868 to abandon them, and reaffirmed its intentions to establish peaceful relations with the Indians. (Just six years later, George Armstrong Custer was to violate these agreements when he led an armed party into Sioux territory in the Black Hills of South Dakota, a provocation that led to the fateful clash on the Little Big Horn River in 1876 that cost Custer his life.) In the negotiations of April 28, 1868, recorded here, what do the U.S. Army representatives cite as their principal difficulty in maintaining peace between the whites and the Native Americans? What arguments do they use to persuade the Native Americans to sign the new treaty? What appears to be their attitude toward the Native Americans? How do the Native Americans regard the whites?

General Sanborn. We . . . offer you peace to save your nations from destruction. We speak the truth. But the truth is often unwelcome and grates harshly upon the ear. You will not believe me when I tell you that you can not protect yourselves from the white people. You will not believe me when I tell you that this military officer now here, a commissioner to meet you, had to use his authority to keep a great body of whites out of your country last year. You will not believe me when I tell you that the white soldiers whom you were killing and trying to kill last year were driving back the whites from your country and trying to save the country for you and to prevent your destruction. But all this is true, and you must have the protection of the President of the United States and his white soldiers or disappear from the earth.

We want you to see this yourselves, and not be compelled to believe it because we say so. That you may see how the case stands we request you to send some of your chiefs and braves to Washington now. Any of your friends among the whites that you desire may go along with you. You will then see and know what we know, and can determine what course it is best for your nations to take. You do not see the white soldiers when they are fighting the whites and keeping them out of your country, but only when they resist your attacks made upon them when marching along the road. The questions between you and the whites must soon be finally and forever settled.

If you continue to fight the whites you can not expect the President nor your friends among them to protect you in your country from those who are waiting to go there in large numbers. If you continue at war your country will soon be all overrun by white people. Military posts will be located on all the rivers. Your game and yourselves will be destroyed. This is the last effort of the President to make peace with you and save for you a country and home.

We therefore propose that you now make a treaty by which you can and will abide. By this treaty we will agree to protect you from the inroads of our people and keep them out of a portion of your present country described in the treaty. We shall agree to furnish you supplies in clothing and other useful articles while you continue to roam and hunt. We shall agree to furnish cattle, horses, cows, and implements to work the ground to each of your people as

sent-day Montana, mt built a series of ul Native American tentions to establish e Armstrong Custer to Sioux territory in zful clash on the Lit tiations of April 28, te as their principal 've Americans? What sign the new treaty? ;? How do the Native

from destruction. We tes harshly upon the ot protect yourselves l you that this military his authority to keep 1 will not believe me lling and trying to kill and trying to save the l this is true, and you ates and his white sol-

pelled to believe it be- ve request you to send of your friends among vill then see and know est for your nations to ighting the whites and esist your attacks made is between you and the

spect the President an- try from those who an- ie at war your countr- osts will be located on oyed. This is the last e- e for you a country and

7 by which you can and from the inroads of m- country described in t- ing and other useful an- l agree to furnish can- , each of your people-

may at any time settle down and build a home and wish to live like the whites. Under this treaty you can roam and hunt while you remain at peace and game lasts; and when the game is gone you will have a home and means of supporting yourselves and your children. But you must understand that if peace is not now made all efforts on our part to make it are at an end.

We ask you now to consider this matter with the understanding of men and not with the malice of children; and when you reply speak your whole thoughts and feelings. If there are any here who do not design to remain at peace, we do not want them to sign any treaty. If there are any here who design to disturb the railroads or any of the ranches or white people south of the Platte River, we do not want them to sign any treaty, for such acts repeated will force the President to send soldiers into your country and to make war. But all who now conclude to make peace and abide by it, who intend to meet the whites in a friendly manner, and receive aid and protection from the President, we now request to sign the treaty tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock. This is all that we have been told to say to you.

General Harney. I am afraid you do not understand why we want to make peace. Perhaps you think we are afraid. You can not be such fools as that, I hope. We do not want to go to war with you because you are a small nation, a handful compared with us, and we want you to live. If we go to war we shall send out to meet you a large army. Suppose you kill the whole army, we have another to send in its place. A great many of you will be killed and you have nobody to take their places. We are kind to you here. You have true hearts and we want you to live. We have not been making war with you. You are at war with us. We have not commenced yet. I hope you will not drive us to war.

Iron Shell (Brulé). I am getting to be an old man. The talk you have just made is what I have always gone by since I was a young man. When I was about 30 years old I joined the sensible men and have been with them ever since. When I was a young man I looked for nothing good, but everything that was bad. I was out hunting buffalo, and I heard that there were some good men here waiting to see me and I came in. I heard that General Harney had left the warpath and was ready for peace, so I came in.

My father and grandfather used to be with the whites, and I have been with them, too. We used to treat them well, I do not recollect that there was any war while we were with the whites. We used to take pity on one another and did nothing bad to each other while we were together. I know that the whites are like the grass on the prairie. Anybody that takes anything from the whites must pay for it. You have come into my country without my consent and spread your soldiers all over it. I have looked around for the cause of the trouble and I can not see that my young men were the cause of it. All the bad things that have been done, you have made the road for it. That is my truth. I love the whites. You whites went all over my country, killing my young men, and disturbing everything in my country. My heart is not made out of rock, but of flesh, but I have a strong heart. All the bad deeds that have been done I have had no hand in, neither have any of our young men. I want to hear you give us good advice. I came here for that purpose. We helped you to stop this war between us and the whites. You have put us in misery; also these old traders whom the war has

stopped. We want you to set us all right and put us back the same as in old times.

We want you to take away the forts from the country. That will leave big room for the Indians to live in. If you succeed about the forests all the game will come back and we will have plenty to eat. If you want the Indian to live do that and we will have a chance to live. One above us has created all of us, the whites the same as the Indians, and he will take pity on us. Our God has put us on earth to live in the way we do, to live on game. Our great father we depend on at Washington. We do not deliberate for ourselves, and we want him to take pity on us. Do you think that our God is for us the same as for the whites? I have prayed to God and asked him to make me succeed, and He has allowed it to me. I succeeded often. Your commissioners want to make peace and take pity on the Indians. Take away all these things if you intend to make peace, and we will live happy and be at peace. All we have is the land and the sky above. This war has set an example to our young men to make war on the whites. If it had not been for that we should have been at peace all the time.

You generally pick on bad white men to give them office which is the cause of our being put in trouble. From this our young men have learned all these bad things and we are in misery and have a hard time. Me and some others of the sensible men have been put in trouble by you. I have listened to your advice, General Sanborn, and I told the others to listen to you. You sent messengers to us last winter and we have come in to you. A few of us are inclined to do well out of way that are for war, and we have pushed for you to make peace with you. The Single Horn [a chief, probably Lone Horn or One Horn] went to the Missouri. I brought a chief of the Sans Arcs to you, and I want you to send word by him to the Sans Arcs when he goes away.

You are passing over the foolish acts of our young men, and we are pleased at that. Try to get all the Indians in and give them good advice and it will be all right. Push, push as hard as you can, and in that way you will take great pity on me. I want to live. It goes slow, and there are a great many Indians who are pushing for peace. Go slow yourselves and you will succeed. Get through with the Brulés at once. I want to go home. You will have plenty of Indians in and will have enough to do. You will hear pretty much the same from the different tribes of Indians as you have heard from me. Three moons is too long in which to move the forts. I would like them to be moved before. Winter will come before that time.

General Sanborn. The forts will be removed as soon as possible.

Iron Shell. Those forts are all that is in the way—wagons coming backward and forward. You have taken Spotted Tail away from me and have him to go around with you. That is good. I expect you will listen to him when he talks with you. You are right in bringing him here. There are a very few who are out yet. Often when you are persecuting me and the Indians with papers we do not get well thought of. I have one recommendation which I take good care of. I always talk to the whites in a good way and they generally listen to me. Today you tell us you will take pity on us. I have listened to it all. I will recollect all you have to say.

Our country is filling up with whites. Our great father has no sense; he lets our country be filled up. That is the way I think sometimes. Our great father is

shutting up on us and making us a very small country. That is bad. For all that I have a strong heart. I have patience and pass over it, although you come over here and get all our gold, minerals, and skins. I pass over it all and do not get mad. I have always given the whites more than they have given me.

Yesterday you tell us we would have a council and last night I did not sleep; I was so glad. Now, I would like you to pick some good sensible young men, from one to four, and send them out, men who can be depended upon. I name Blue Horse, myself, and I want him to pick the others. We have been speaking very well together, and I am glad we get along so smoothly. The last thing I have to ask you about are the forts. This is sufficient and all right. We have got through talking. Give us our share of the goods and send them over to our village. We want to get back immediately as our children are crying for food. What you are doing with the Brulés will be a good example to the others. It will encourage them. We do not want to stay here and loaf upon you.

General Harney. We know very well that you have been treated very badly for years past. You have been cheated by everybody, and everybody has told lies to you, but now we want to commence anew. You have killed our people and have taken enough of our property and you ought to be satisfied. It is not the fault of your great father in Washington. He sends people out here that he thinks are honest, but they are people who cheat you and treat you badly. We will take care that you shall not be treated so any more. We will begin to move the forts as soon as possible. They will be removed as soon as the treaty is made with all the Indians. . . .

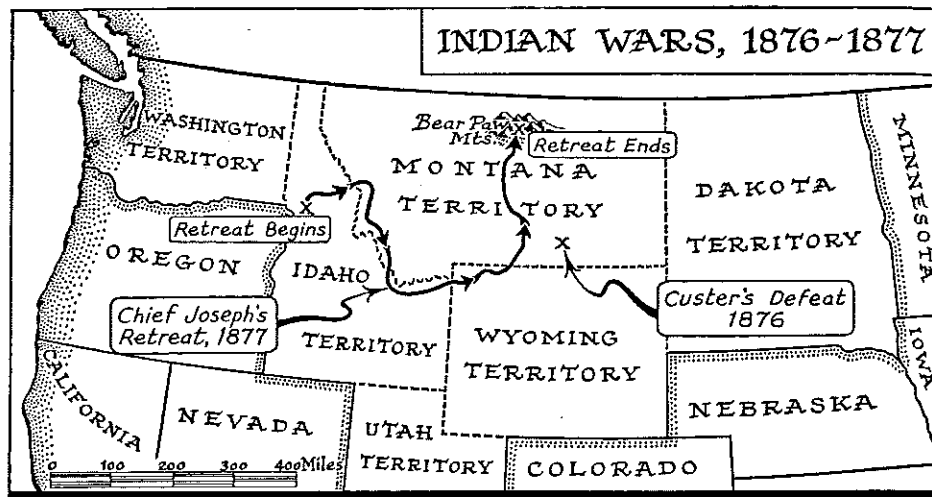
Iron Shell. I will always sign any treaty you ask me to do, but you have always made away with them, broke them. The whites always break them, and that is the way that war has come up.

(The treaty was here signed by the chiefs and head soldiers of the Brulés.)

2. *Harper's Weekly* Decries the Battle of Little Big Horn (1876)

As the white men closed in, the western Indians were forced to make numerous treaties with Washington that confined them to reservations and guaranteed needed supplies. But rascally government contractors cheated them with moldy flour, rotten beef, and moth-eaten blankets. In 1875 the discovery of gold on the Sioux reservation in the Dakotas brought stampeding thousands of miners, who brutally ignored treaty guarantees. The Indians fled the reservation (many had never agreed to live there in the first place), and the U.S. Army was sent to bring them back. The dashing General George Custer with only 264 men rashly attacked a hostile force that turned out to number several thousand. In 1876 Custer and his entire command were wiped out near the Little Big Horn River (Montana), in what the white men call a "massacre" and the Indians a "battle," and legend has long described as "Custer's last stand." What does this account in the reformist Harper's Weekly see as the

²*Harper's Weekly* 20 (August 5, 1876): 630-631.



principal mistake in dealing with Native Americans? Who was basically responsible for the situation that had developed?

The fate of the brave and gallant Custer had deeply touched the public heart, which sees only a fearless soldier leading a charge against an ambushed [lurking] foe, and falling at the head of his men and in the thick of the fray. A monument is proposed, and subscriptions have been made. But a truer monument, more enduring than brass or marble, would be an Indian policy intelligent, moral, and efficient. Custer would not have fallen in vain if such a policy should be the result of his death.

It is a permanent accusation of our humanity and ability that over the Canadian line the relations between Indians and whites are so tranquil, while upon our side they are summed up in perpetual treachery, waste, and war. When he was a young lieutenant on the frontier, General Grant saw this, and watching attentively, he came to the conclusion that the reason of the difference was that the English respected the rights of the Indians and kept faith with them, while we make solemn treaties with them as if they were civilized and powerful nations, and then practically regard them as vermin to be exterminated.

The folly of making treaties with the Indian tribes may be as great as treating with a herd of buffaloes. But the infamy of violating treaties when we have made them is undeniable, and we are guilty both of the folly and the infamy.

We make treaties—that is, we pledge our faith—and then leave swindlers and knaves of all kinds to execute them. We maintain and breed pauper colonies. The savages, who know us, and who will neither be pauperized nor trust our word, we pursue, and slay if we can, at an incredible expense. The flower of our young officers is lost in inglorious forays, and one of the intelligent students of the whole subject rises in Congress and says, "The fact is that these Indians, with whom we have made a solemn treaty that their territory should not be invaded, and that they should receive supplies upon their reservations, have seen from one thousand to fifteen

hundred [gold] miners during the present season entering and occupying their territory, while the Indians, owing to the failure of this and the last Congress to make adequate appropriations for their subsistence, instead of being fattened, as the gentleman says, by the support of this government, have simply been starved." . . .

It is plain that so long as we undertake to support the Indians as paupers, and then fail to supply the food; to respect their rights to reservations, and then permit the reservations to be overrun; to give them the best weapons and ammunition, and then furnish the pretense of their using them against us; to treat with them as men, and then hunt them like skunks—so long we shall have the most costly and bloody Indian wars, and the most tragical ambushes, slaughters, and assassinations.

The Indian is undoubtedly a savage, and a savage greatly spoiled by the kind of contact with civilization which he gets at the West. There is no romance, there is generally no interest whatever, in him or his fate. But there should be some interest in our own good faith and humanity, in the lives of our soldiers and frontier settlers, and in the taxation to support our Indian policy. All this should certainly be enough to arouse a public demand for a thorough consideration of the subject, and the adoption of a system which should neither be puerile nor disgraceful, and which would tend to spare us the constant repetition of such sorrowful events as the slaughter of Custer and his brave men.

3. *She Walks with Her Shawl Remembers the Battle of the Little Big Horn (1876)*

The Indian encampment that Custer attacked on June 25, 1876, composed one of the largest gatherings of Indians ever to assemble on the Great Plains—including Hunkpapas, Oglalás, Minneconjous, Brulés, Blackfeet, Two Kettles, Sans Arcs, and Northern Cheyennes, among others. She Walks with Her Shawl was a young Hunkpapa woman who witnessed the Battle of Little Big Horn and gave the following account to an interviewer fifty-five years later, in 1931. In what ways might the Indians' account of the battle have differed from the whites' account? How reliable is testimony that has been filtered through more than a half-century of memory?

I was born seventy-seven winters ago, near Grand River, [in present] South Dakota. My father, Slohan, was the bravest man among our people. Fifty-five years ago we packed our tents and went with other Indians to Peji-sla-wakpa (Greasy Grass). We were then living on the Standing Rock Indian reservation [Great Sioux Reservation, Standing Rock Agency]. I belonged to Sitting Bull's band. They were great fighters. We called ourselves Hunkpapa. This means confederated bands. When I was still a young girl (about seventeen) I accompanied a Sioux war party which made war against the Crow Indians in Montana. My father went to war 70 times. He was wounded nearly a dozen times.

But I am going to tell you of the greatest battle. This was a fight against Pehin-hanska (General Custer). I was several miles from the Hunkpapa camp when I saw a cloud of dust rise beyond a ridge of bluffs in the east. The morning was hot and

³From Jerome A. Greene, ed., *Lakota and Cheyenne: Indian Views of the Great Sioux Wars, 1876-1877*, 1994, pp. 42-46. Reprinted by permission of the University of Oklahoma Press.

sultry. Several of us Indian girls were digging wild turnips. I was then 23 years old. We girls looked towards the camp and saw a warrior ride swiftly, shouting that the soldiers were only a few miles away and that the women and children including old men should run for the hills in an opposite direction.

I dropped the pointed ash stick which I had used in digging turnips and ran towards my tipi. I saw my father running towards the horses. When I got to my tent, mother told me that news was brought to her that my brother had been killed by the soldiers. My brother had gone early that morning in search for a horse that strayed from our herd. In a few moments we saw soldiers on horseback on a bluff just across the Greasy Grass (Little Big Horn) river. I knew that there would be a battle because I saw warriors getting their horses and tomahawks.

I heard Hawkman shout, Ho-ka-he! Ho-ka-he! (Charge.) The soldiers began firing into our camp. Then they ceased firing. I saw my father preparing to go to battle. I sang a death song for my brother who had been killed.

My heart was bad. Revenge! Revenge! For my brother's death. I thought of the death of my young brother, One Hawk. Brown Eagle, my brother's companion on that morning had escaped and gave the alarm to the camp that the soldiers were coming. I ran to a nearby thicket and got my black horse. I painted my face with crimson and unbraided my black hair. I was mourning. I was a woman, but I was not afraid.

By this time the soldiers (Reno's men) were forming a battle line in the bottom about a half mile away. In another moment I heard a terrific volley of carbines. The bullets shattered the tipi poles. Women and children were running away from the gunfire. In the tumult I heard old men and women singing death songs for their warriors who were now ready to attack the soldiers. The chanting of death songs made me brave, although I was a woman. I saw a warrior adjusting his quiver and grasping his tomahawk. He started running towards his horse when he suddenly recoiled and dropped dead. He was killed near his tipi.

Warriors were given orders by Hawkman to mount their horses and follow the fringe of a forest and wait until commands were given to charge. The soldiers kept on firing. Some women were also killed. Horses and dogs too! The camp was in great commotion.

Father led my black horse up to me and I mounted. We galloped towards the soldiers. Other warriors joined in with us. When we were nearing the fringe of the woods an order was given by Hawkman to charge. Ho-ka-he! Ho-ka-he! Charge! Charge! The warriors were now near the soldiers. The troopers were all on foot. They shot straight, because I saw our leader killed as he rode with his warriors.

The charge was so stubborn that the soldiers ran to their horses and, mounting them, rode swiftly towards the river. The Greasy Grass river was very deep. Their horses had to swim to get across. Some of the warriors rode into the water and tomahawked the soldiers. In the charge the Indians rode among the troopers and with tomahawks unhorsed several of them. The soldiers were very excited. Some of them shot into the air. The Indians chased the soldiers across the river and up over a bluff.

Then the warriors returned to the bottom where the first battle took place. We heard a commotion far down the valley. The warriors rode in a column of fives.

They sang a victory song. Someone said that another body of soldiers were attacking the lower end of the village. I heard afterwards that the soldiers were under the command of Long Hair (Custer). With my father and other youthful warriors I rode in that direction.

We crossed the Greasy Grass below a beaver dam (the water is not so deep there) and came upon many horses. One soldier was holding the reins of eight or ten horses. An Indian waved his blanket and scared all the horses. They got away from the men (troopers). On the ridge just north of us I saw blue-clad men running up a ravine, firing as they ran.

The dust created from the stampeding horses and powder smoke made everything dark and black. Flashes from carbines could be seen. The valley was dense with powder smoke. I never heard such whooping and shouting. "There was never a better day to die," shouted Red Horse. In the battle I heard cries from troopers, but could not understand what they were saying. I do not speak English.

Long Hair's troopers were trapped in an enclosure. There were Indians everywhere. The Cheyennes attacked the soldiers from the north and Crow King from the South. The Sioux Indians encircled the troopers. Not one got away! The Sioux used tomahawks. It was not a massacre, but [a] hotly contested battle between two armed forces. Very few soldiers were mutilated, as oft has been said by the whites. Not a single soldier was burned at the stake. Sioux Indians do not torture their victims.

After the battle the Indians took all the equipment and horses belonging to the soldiers. The brave men who came to punish us that morning were defeated; but in the end, the Indians lost. We saw the body of Long Hair. Of course, we did not know who the soldiers were until an interpreter told us that the men came from Fort Lincoln, then [in] Dakota Territory. On the saddle blankets were the cross saber insignia and the letter seven.

The victorious warriors returned to the camp, as did the women and children who could see the battle from where they took refuge. Over sixty Indians were killed and they were also brought back to the camp for scaffold-burial.* The Indians did not stage a victory dance that night. They were mourning for their own dead. . . .

4. Chief Joseph's Lament (1879)

Chief Joseph, a noble-featured and humane Nez Percé (Pierced Nose) Indian, resisted being removed from his ancestral lands in Oregon and penned up on a reservation in Idaho. After an amazing flight of about a thousand miles, he was finally captured in 1877 near the Canadian border. The miserable remnants of his band were deported to Indian Territory (now Oklahoma), where many died of malaria and other afflictions. Chief Joseph appealed personally to the president, and subsequently the Nez Percés were returned to the Pacific Northwest. In the following narrative, what formula does he offer for ending white-Indian wars?

*Native Americans often buried their dead not in the ground, but by laying them out on aerial scaffoldings.

⁴North American Review 128 (April 1879): 431-432.

At last I was granted permission to come to Washington and bring my friend Yellow Bull and our interpreter with me. I am glad I came. I have shaken hands with a good many friends, but there are some things I want to know which no one seems able to explain. I cannot understand how the government sends a man out to fight us, as it did General Miles, and then breaks his word. Such a government has something wrong about it. . . .

I have heard talk and talk, but nothing is done. Good words do not last long unless they amount to something. Words do not pay for my dead people. They do not pay for my country, now overrun by white men. They do not protect my father's grave. They do not pay for my horses and cattle.

Good words do not give me back my children. Good words will not make good the promise of your war chief, General Miles. Good words will not give my people good health and stop them from dying. Good words will not get my people a home where they can live in peace and take care of themselves.

I am tired of talk that comes to nothing. It makes my heart sick when I remember all the good words and all the broken promises. There has been too much talking by men who had no right to talk. Too many misinterpretations have been made; too many misunderstandings have come up between the white men and the Indians.

If the white man wants to live in peace with the Indian, he can live in peace. There need be no trouble. Treat all men alike. Give them the same laws. Give them all an even chance to live and grow.

All men are made by the same Great Spirit Chief. They are all brothers. The earth is the mother of all people, and all people should have equal rights upon it. You might as well expect all rivers to run backward as that any man who was born a free man should be contented penned up and denied liberty to go where he pleases. If you tie a horse to a stake, do you expect he will grow fat? If you pen an Indian up on a small spot of earth and compel him to stay there, he will not be contented nor will he grow and prosper.

I have asked some of the Great White Chiefs where they get their authority to say to the Indian that he shall stay in one place, while he sees white men going where they please. They cannot tell me.

I only ask of the government to be treated as all other men are treated. If I cannot go to my own home, let me have a home in a country where my people will not die so fast. I would like to go to Bitter Root Valley [western Montana]. There my people would be healthy; where they are now, they are dying. Three have died since I left my camp to come to Washington. When I think of our condition, my heart is heavy. I see men of my own race treated as outlaws and driven from country to country, or shot down like animals.

I know that my race must change. We cannot hold our own with the white men as we are. We only ask an even chance to live as other men live. We ask to be recognized as men. We ask that the same law shall work alike on all men. If an Indian breaks the law, punish him by the law. If a white man breaks the law, punish him also.

Let me be a free man—free to travel, free to stop, free to work, free to trade where I choose, free to choose my own teachers, free to follow the religion of my

fathers, free to think and talk and act for myself—and I will obey every law or submit to the penalty.

Whenever the white man treats the Indian as they treat each other, then we shall have no more wars. We shall all be alike—brothers of one father and mother, with one sky above us and one country around us and one government for all. Then the Great Spirit Chief who rules above will smile upon this land and send rain to wash out the bloody spots made by brothers' hands upon the face of the earth. For this time the Indian race are waiting and praying. I hope no more groans of wounded men and women will ever go to the ear of the Great Spirit Chief above, and that all people may be one people.

5. Theodore Roosevelt Downgrades the Indians (1885)

Sickly and bespectacled young Theodore Roosevelt, the future president, invested more than \$50,000 of his patrimony in ranch lands in Dakota Territory. He lost most of his investment but gained robust health and valuable experience. With little sympathy for Native Americans, he felt that the government had "erred quite as often on the side of too much leniency as on the side of too much severity." The following account, based in part on firsthand observations, appears in one of his earliest books. What light do his observations cast on the allegation that whites robbed Native Americans of their lands? What is his proposed solution to the problem?

There are now no Indians left in my immediate neighborhood, though a small party of harmless Grosventres occasionally passes through. Yet it is but six years since the Sioux surprised and killed five men in a log station just south of me, where the Fort Keogh trail crosses the river; and, two years ago, when I went down on the prairies toward the Black Hills, there was still danger from Indians. That summer the buffalo hunters had killed a couple of Crows, and while we were on the prairie a long-range skirmish occurred near us between some Cheyennes and a number of cowboys. In fact, we ourselves were one day scared by what we thought to be a party of Sioux; but on riding toward them they proved to be half-breed Crees, who were more afraid of us than we were of them.

During the past century a good deal of sentimental nonsense has been talked about our taking the Indians' land. Now, I do not mean to say for a moment that gross wrong has not been done the Indians, both by government and individuals, again and again. The government makes promises impossible to perform, and then fails to do even what it might toward their fulfilment; and where brutal and reckless frontiersmen are brought into contact with a set of treacherous, revengeful, and fiendishly cruel savages a long series of outrages by both sides is sure to follow.

But as regards taking the land, at least from the Western Indians, the simple truth is that the latter never had any real ownership in it at all. Where the game was plenty, there they hunted; they followed it when it moved away to new hunting-

⁵Theodore Roosevelt, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1885), pp. 17-19.

grounds, unless they were prevented by stronger rivals; and to most of the land on which we found them they had no stronger claim than that of having a few years previously butchered the original occupants.

When my cattle came to the Little Missouri the region was only inhabited by a score or so of white hunters; their title to it was quite as good as that of most Indian tribes to the lands they claim; yet nobody dreamed of saying that these hunters owned the country. Each could eventually have kept his own claim of 160 acres, and no more.

The Indians should be treated in just the same way that we treat the white settlers. Give each his little claim; if, as would generally happen, he declined this, why then let him share the fate of the thousands of white hunters and trappers who have lived on the game that the settlement of the country has exterminated, and let him, like these whites, who will not work, perish from the face of the earth which he cumber.*

The doctrine seems merciless, and so it is; but it is just and rational for all that. It does not do to be merciful to a few, at the cost of justice to the many. The cattlemen at least keep herds and build houses on the land; yet I would not for a moment debar settlers from the right of entry to the cattle country, though their coming in means in the end the destruction of us and our industry.

6. Carl Schurz Proposes to "Civilize" the Indians (1881)

Carl Schurz, a notable "forty-eighter," or liberal refugee from the failed German revolution of 1848, had a prominent military career on the Union side in the Civil War and in 1877 became secretary of the interior. A lifelong reformer, he fought against slavery and political corruption and considered himself a friend to the Indians. What is his preferred solution to the "Indian problem"? Is he condescending to Native Americans or simply realistic? In what ways do his comments reveal attitudes about gender roles in nineteenth-century America?

... I am profoundly convinced that a stubborn maintenance of the system of large Indian reservations must eventually result in the destruction of the red men, however faithfully the Government may endeavor to protect their rights. It is only a question of time. . . . What we can and should do is, in general terms, to fit the Indians, as much as possible, for the habits and occupations of civilized life, by work and education; to individualize them in the possession and appreciation of property, by allotting to them lands in severalty, giving them a fee simple title individually to the parcels of land they cultivate, inalienable for a certain period, and to obtain their consent to a disposition of that part of their lands which they cannot use, for a fair

*In the Dawes Act of 1887, Congress made provision for granting the Indians individual allotments, as Roosevelt here suggests.

⁶Carl Schurz, "Present Aspects of the Indian Problem," *North American Review* 133 (July 1881), pp. 6-10, 12-14, 16-18, 20-24.

compensation, in such a manner that they no longer stand in the way of the development of the country as an obstacle, but from part of it and are benefited by it.

The circumstances surrounding them place before the Indians this stern alternative: extermination or civilization. The thought of exterminating a race, once the only occupant of the soil upon which so many millions of our own people have grown prosperous and happy, must be revolting to every American who is not devoid of all sentiments of justice and humanity. To civilize them, which was once only a benevolent fancy, has now become an absolute necessity, if we mean to save them.

Can Indians be civilized? This question is answered in the negative only by those who do not want to civilize them. My experience in the management of Indian affairs, which enabled me to witness the progress made even among the wildest tribes, confirms me in the belief that it is not only possible but easy to introduce civilized habits and occupations among Indians, if only the proper means are employed. We are frequently told that Indians will not work. True, it is difficult to make them work as long as they can live upon hunting. But they will work when their living depends upon it, or when sufficient inducements are offered to them. Of this there is an abundance of proof. To be sure, as to Indian civilization, we must not expect too rapid progress or the attainment of too lofty a standard. We can certainly not transform them at once into great statesmen, or philosophers, or manufacturers, or merchants; but we can make them small farmers and herders. Some of them show even remarkable aptitude for mercantile pursuits on a small scale. I see no reason why the degree of civilization attained by the Indians in the States of New York, Indiana, Michigan, and some tribes in the Indian Territory, should not be attained in the course of time by all. I have no doubt that they can be sufficiently civilized to support themselves, to maintain relations of good neighborship with the people surrounding them, and altogether to cease being a disturbing element in society. The accomplishment of this end, however, will require much considerate care and wise guidance. That care and guidance is necessarily the task of the Government which, as to the Indians at least, must exercise paternal functions until they are sufficiently advanced to take care of themselves. . . .

. . . The failure of Sitting Bull's attempt to maintain himself and a large number of followers on our northern frontier in the old wild ways of Indian life will undoubtedly strengthen the tendency among the wild Indians of the North-west to recognize the situation and to act accordingly. The general state of feeling among the red men is therefore now exceedingly favorable to the civilizing process. . . .

The Indian, in order to be civilized, must not only learn how to read and write, but how to live. . . . Such considerations led the Government, under the last administration, largely to increase the number of Indian pupils at the Normal School at Hampton, Va., and to establish an institution for the education of Indian children at Carlisle, in Pennsylvania, where the young Indians would no longer be under the influence of the Indian camp or village, but in immediate contact with the towns, farms, and factories of civilized people, living and working in the atmosphere of civilization. In these institutions, the Indian children, among whom a large number of tribes are represented, receive the ordinary English education, while there are various shops and a farm for the instruction of the boys, and the girls are kept busy in

*German review
of the Civil War
ought against
the Indians
going to Native
attitudes about*

the system of
the red men
is. It is only
to fit the Indi-
life, by work-
ing of property
individually to
to obtain their
use, for a fair

allotments
(1881), pp. 6-10

the kitchen, dining-room, sewing-room, and with other domestic work. In the summer, as many as possible of the boys are placed in the care of intelligent and philanthropic farmers and their families, mostly in Pennsylvania and New England, where they find instructive employment in the field and barn-yard. The pupils are, under proper regulations, permitted to see as much as possible of the country and its inhabitants in the vicinity of the schools. . . .

Especial attention is given in the Indian schools to the education of Indian girls, and at Hampton a new building is being erected for that purpose. This is of peculiar importance. The Indian woman has so far been only a beast of burden. The girl, when arrived at maturity, was disposed of like an article of trade. The Indian wife was treated by her husband alternately with animal fondness, and with the cruel brutality of the slave-driver. Nothing will be more apt to raise the Indians in the scale of civilization than to stimulate their attachment to permanent homes, and it is the woman that must make the atmosphere and form the attraction of the home. She must be recognized, with affection and respect, as the center of domestic life. If we want the Indians to respect their women, we must lift up the Indian women to respect themselves. This is the purpose and work of education. If we educate the girls of to-day, we educate the mothers of to-morrow, and in educating those mothers we prepare the ground for the education of generations to come. Every effort made in that direction is, therefore, entitled to especial sympathy and encouragement. . . .

As the third thing necessary for the absorption of the Indians in the great body of American citizenship, I mentioned their individualization in the possession of property by their settlement in severalty upon small farm tracts with a fee simple title. When the Indians are so settled, and have become individual property-owners, holding their farms by the same title under the law by which white men hold theirs, they will feel more readily inclined to part with such of their lands as they cannot themselves cultivate, and from which they can derive profit only if they sell them, either in lots or in bulk, for a fair equivalent in money or in annuities. This done, the Indians will occupy no more ground than so many white people; the large reservations will gradually be opened to general settlement and enterprise, and the Indians, with their possessions, will cease to stand in the way of the "development of the country." The difficulty which has provoked so many encroachments and conflicts will then no longer exist. When the Indians are individual owners of real property, and as individuals enjoy the protection of the laws, their tribal cohesion will necessarily relax, and gradually disappear. They will have advanced an immense step in the direction of the "white man's way." . . .

7. A Native American Tries to Walk the White Man's Road (1890s)

From 1883 to 1890, Sun Elk, a Taos Indian, attended the Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania, where he learned typesetting. In the following passage, he describes his return to his pueblo in New Mexico. Did his Carlisle education prove beneficial

⁷From Edwin R. Embree, *Indians of the Americas*. Copyright © 1939 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Used by permission.

for him? In what ways does his experience suggest the limitations of the reformers' efforts to "civilize" Native Americans?

When I was about thirteen years old I went down to St. Michael's Catholic School. Other boys were joining the societies and spending their time in the kivas [sacred ceremonial chambers] being purified and learning the secrets. But I wanted to learn the white man's secrets. I thought he had better magic than the Indian. . . . So I drifted a little away from the pueblo life. My father was sad but he was not angry. He wanted me to be a good Indian like all the other boys, but he was willing for me to go to school. He thought I would soon stop. There was plenty of time to go into the kiva.

Then at the first snow one winter . . . a white man—what you call an Indian Agent—came and took all of us who were in that school far off on a train to a new kind of village called Carlisle Indian School, and I stayed there seven years. . . .

Seven years I was there. I set little letters together in the printing shop and we printed papers. For the rest we had lessons. There were games, but I was too slight for foot and hand plays, and there were no horses to ride. I learned to talk English and to read. There was much arithmetic. It was lessons: how to add and take away, and much strange business like you have crossword puzzles only with numbers. The teachers were very solemn and made a great fuss if we did not get the puzzles right.

There was something called Greatest Common Denominator. I remember the name but I never knew it—what it meant. When the teachers asked me I would guess, but I always guessed wrong. We studied little things—fractions. I remember that word too. It is like one half of an apple. And there were immoral fractions. . . .

They told us that Indian ways were bad. They said we must get civilized. I remember that word too. It means "be like the white man." I am willing to be like the white man, but I did not believe Indian ways were wrong. But they kept teaching us for seven years. And the books told how bad the Indians had been to the white men—burning their towns and killing their women and children. But I had seen white men do that to Indians. We all wore white man's clothes and ate white man's food and went to white man's churches and spoke white man's talk. And so after a while we also began to say Indians were bad. We laughed at our own people and their blankets and cooking pots and sacred societies and dances. I tried to learn the lessons—and after seven years I came home. . . .

It was a warm summer evening when I got off the train at Taos station. The first Indian I met, I asked him to run out to the pueblo and tell my family I was home. The Indian couldn't speak English, and I had forgotten all my Pueblo language. But after a while he learned what I meant and started running to tell my father "Tulto is back. . . ."

I went home with my family. And next morning the governor of the pueblo and the two war chiefs and many of the priest chiefs came into my father's house. They did not talk to me; they did not even look at me. When they were all assembled they talked to my father.

The chiefs said to my father, "Your son who calls himself Rafael has lived with the white men. He has been far away from the pueblo. He has not lived in the kiva nor learned the things that Indian boys should learn. He has no hair. He has no

Indian School
ge, he descri
rove benefi

flin Company

blankets. He cannot even speak our language and he has a strange smell. He is not one of us."

The chiefs got up and walked out. My father was very sad. I wanted him to be angry, but he was only sad. So I would not be sad and was very angry instead.

And I walked out of my father's house and out of the pueblo. I did not speak. My mother was in the other room cooking. She stayed in the other room but she made much noise rattling her pots. Some children were on the plaza and they stared at me, keeping very still as I walked away.

I walked until I came to the white man's town, Fernandez de Taos. I found work setting type in a printing shop there. Later I went to Durango and other towns in Wyoming and Colorado, printing and making a good living. But this indoor work was bad for me. It made me slight of health. So then I went outside to the fields. I worked in some blacksmith shops and on farms.

All this time I was a white man. I wore white man's clothes and kept my hair cut. I was not very happy. I made money and I kept a little of it and after many years I came back to Taos.

My father gave me some land from the pueblo fields. He could do this because now the land did not belong to all the people, as it did in the old days; the white man had cut it up and given it in little pieces to each family, so my father gave me a part of his, and I took my money and bought some more land and some cattle. I built a house just outside the pueblo. I would not live in the pueblo so I built outside a house bigger than the pueblo houses all for myself.

My father brought me a girl to marry. Her name was Roberta. Her Indian name was P'ah-tah-zhuli (little deer bean). She was about fifteen years old and she had no father. But she was a good girl and she came to live with me in my new house outside the pueblo.

When we were married I became an Indian again. I let my hair grow, I put on blankets, and I cut the seat out of my pants.

B. The Crusade for Free Homesteads

I. "Vote Yourself a Farm" (1846)

Free homesteads from the public domain found a powerful champion in George H. Evans, an immigrant from England who became a pioneer editor of U.S. labor journals. A confirmed atheist, he was preoccupied with "natural rights" to the soil. He hoped particularly to increase the wages of eastern laborers by luring surplus workers onto free lands in the West. On what grounds does he base the following appeal?

Are you an American citizen? Then you are a joint-owner of the public lands. Why not take enough of your property to provide yourself a home? Why not vote yourself a farm?*

¹J. R. Commons et al., eds., *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society*, vol. 7 (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clarke Company, 1910), pp. 305-307.

*"Vote Yourself a Farm" was a Republican slogan in the Lincoln campaign of 1860.