

Montana, Gen. George Armstrong Custer crossed the divide between the Rosebud and the Little Bighorn. Seven days after the Crook affair and twelve miles from its scene, there occurred the infamous “Custer engagement.” While it is considered today mainly a conflict

with the Sioux, the Northern Cheyenne were well represented.

The seventeen years of conflict with the Cheyenne, which cost untold lives and untold millions, were unquestionably a governmental disaster and a deliberate disregard for Indian rights. Secretary of the Interior O. H. Browning, in his 1868 report, states: “It is believed that peaceful relations would have been maintained to this hour had Congress, in accordance with the estimates submitted, made the necessary appropriations to enable this department to perform engagements for which the public was pledged.”

Spilled water and spilled blood were the order of the day; madman and manacle prevailed, with lunacy on both sides, and reason was abandoned to the winds, which cried for justice. In the end, the bitterest of winters stopped the Cheyenne conflict, and it is doubtful whether anything else would have ended their intransigence—certainly not bullets, nor treaties signed in falsehood, nor reservations promised and rescinded. Poverty and want have largely been the portion of the Cheyenne on the discouragingly sterile reservation on the Tongue River of Montana. Hopefully, better days will come for this handful of people who so stubbornly held out for a tithe of what they rightly thought their own.



Sun dance pledgers. Cheyenne

## TWO CHEYENNE MIGRATION STORIES

*The Migration*—There was a man whose family lived quite apart from the tribe. He had two children, and he spent his days hunting. Before starting out, he would paint his wife's face, and when he returned, he would always find her face unpainted. One day he went away as usual, but he came back almost at once. He then saw a water monster come and take the paint off his wife's face.

So, he thought, my wife has been deceiving me.

Then he killed the woman and the water monster. He cut up her body and took the meat into the lodge. His two children ate the flesh, and the younger one knew that he was devouring his own mother. This is why the Cheyenne have grown fierce.

There is, in this story, a mere hint of the Cheyenne's early habitat among the lakes and forests of the East. Usually their myths tell of the long days on the prairie, but occasionally some fragment appears that gives a glimpse of the lost past. It is like the wind blowing across the meadows of childhood, so vaguely that it seems to be a dream. One of these fragments is the story of the waterfall.

In the earliest times, the people lived beside a lake, which turned into a stream, which soon plunged over a precipice and became a lofty waterfall. Some players were gathered there, playing the game of rolling wheel. Two of them, men, suddenly looked at each other, and saw that they were dressed and painted exactly alike.

One said, "You appear to be imitating me." The other protested, "This is my way of dressing and painting. How do you know this way?"

"I got it from the old woman under the waterfall," was the answer.

"It is true, what you say," said the other. "We both must have this from the same spirit."

They came to a good understanding, these

two; and later on, they moved their camp down to the river. "Let us consult the old woman of the water once again," one of them said, and the other nodded agreement.

Then, before the eyes of all who were gathered, the two disappeared. They swam, underwater, toward the great waterfall. Back of the falling water, which was thunderous in their ears, the two men came into a cave, where an old woman was sitting. She greeted them in the customary way and then gave them dried buffalo meat, corn, beans, and seeds of the squash. "These are gifts," she explained. "Gifts for the people." They took them gratefully, and bidding good-bye to the old woman, they dived under the sheet of falling water and emerged on the other side of the spray.

What they held in their hands was more than enough food to feed the entire village. The people were much impressed. And that



Cheyenne young woman