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♦ Famous American Indians ♦

CHIEF JOSEPH OF THE NEZ PERCE

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About fifteen miles south of Chinook, Montana, is situated the battle field where Chief Joseph surrendered to General Miles on Oct. 5, 1877. There a man, uneducated in military tactics, ended a piece of generalship never surpassed even in modern warfare.

The trouble arose over the Nez Perce trying to keep the white people from their lands that they had lived upon from time immemorial. The land occupied by the Nez Perce was the valley of the Clearwater and Salmon River in Idaho, with the country extending to the westward of the Snake River into Washington and Oregon as far as the Blue Mountains. In the Wallowa Valley in this section Chief Joseph was born.

In 1843 the Nez Perce were described in a report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs as, "Noble, industrious, sensible and well-disposed to the whites, and though as brave as Caesar, the whites have nothing to dread at their hands in case of their dealing out to them what they conceive right and equitable."

In 1855 the Nez Perce ceded a large portion of their territory and were given possession of the rest. In 1860 gold was discovered and the promises made in 1855 were broken, and in 1861 the town of Lewiston was laid out against the will of the Indian Agent. The town of Lewiston sprang up with 1,200 inhabitants almost over night. In 1863 a new treaty was made and the settlers were legally given the land they had taken and with the gradual closing in from all sides the Nez Perce were held in narrower bounds. By the treaty the Wallowa Valley in Northeastern Oregon was taken from the Indians. The Indians in this valley were under the leadership of Chief Joseph.

They ignored the treaty and continued to live in Wallowa until the encroachment of the whites forced the government to take action in regard to this band. This band had refused to take part in the treaty making and felt that they were not bound to its provisions and continued to roam without restraint.

The tribe numbered about 2,800 and about 500 acknowledged Joseph as their chief.

Disagreements between the whites and the Indians became more frequent in the Wallowa Valley. One of Chief Joseph's band was killed. A commission was appointed to treat with Joseph and persuade him to move with his people to the Fort Lapwai Reservation in Idaho. Chief Joseph still refused and General Howard was sent to meet him. General Howard held his first council with Chief Joseph and his people on May 3rd, 1877, at Ft. Lapwai.

At this council an impractical and visionary man, Toolhulhulsote, acted as spokesman for the Indians. He clung to the old Indian Smohalla doctrine—"That the earth was his mother, that she should not be disturbed by the plow and that land should not be sold or given away." Toolhulhulsote said, "We have never made a trade. Part of the Indians gave up their land. I never did. The earth is a part of my body and I never gave up the earth. So long as the earth keeps me I want to be left alone."

The Indians saw that Toolhulhulsote was wrong and that by disturbing mother earth much could be produced from the ground and many trees bearing fruit planted. Toolhulhulsote continued his "sleepy talk," or dreaming, and was finally put under arrest by General Howard. The Indians agreed to go onto the reservation by June 14, 1877.

Chief Joseph and other leading chiefs then went out to select locations for their reservations and Joseph decided on Lapwai Valley.

Everything was going nicely. Gen. Howard had reported a successful settlement of the trouble to Washington. The Indians were preparing to move. The joy of going some place was with them. Hopes of a new home naturally thrilled them. When all was moving so peacefully one act of lawless violence upset the labor of weeks.

Once before one of Chief Joseph's band had been murdered. While his band were collecting their cattle a lawless band of white robbers attacked them, scattered and ran off their cattle, and killed one of the young Indian leaders. Chief Joseph could not now keep his warriors from fighting and on June 13, 1877, the day

(Continued on page 4)