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Chief Joseph's Death Closes a Stirring Page of History

A virtual prisoner of war for 26 years, denied the privilege of looking on the home of his fathers, the home-hunger of a savage nature eating away his heart year by year, the sudden death of Chief Joseph, the younger, on the Colville reservation, among stranger tribes and alien people, ends one of the saddest tragedies of Northwest Indian history.

Born near the mouth of the beautiful Imnaha river, in June, 1837, reared in the wild freedom of those towering and magnificent peaks that encircle the Wallowa valley like a coronet of gems, this historical Indian character has added a thrilling page to Western history.

His first memory was of the home of his people, hidden away in the precipitous Wallowa mountains, where game and fish and fruits were found in abundance. He learned to love this land, grew to worship the winding trails and singing cataracts of its canyons, and since his famous retreat from it in the Nez Perce war of 1877, his heart has hungered for a glimpse of it, and he died in the hope of once again returning and possessing it, in happiness and peace.

In the early division of the Nez Perce tribe into sub-tribes, the elder Chief Joseph fell heir to the Imnaha river and its tributary valleys, and in the treaty of 1855, between the Nez



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Perces and Governor I. I. Stevens of Washington territory, Joseph drew a circle around a small spot on the ground, representing the Imnaha valley, and was given that spot to hold perpetually, for himself and his posterity.

Invasion of Whites.

But fate willed otherwise. The land-hungry white man was crowding into the West. Indian rights were slightly regarded and in the early '70s settlers invaded the Imnaha, the sacred possession of Joseph's tribe of the Nez Perce.

Old Chief Joseph had died meanwhile, leaving young Joseph and Olcut, his only children, but on his deathbed the old chief had laid a solemn vow upon the two youths, that the Imnaha should never pass from their possession, and that they would defend it against all encroachments.

The Indians complained of the encroachment of the whites, and finally one afternoon, a settler named Findlay, found his wife and children hidden in the brush, having been run away from home by an Indian. The Indian was stretched out on a bed in the house, enjoying a nap, and when Findlay entered his home and found it deserted by the family he supposed the Indian had killed them, and before the big Nez Perce could escape, Findlay shot him dead.

War Begins.

This started the war. The Indians in a war dance on the White Bird, over in Idaho, a few months afterward, vowed to avenge the death of this member of the tribe, and accordingly, Shop-sit-llip-llip and Wa-li-tik, two desperate braves went to the Imnaha, and killed a settler, to avenge the murder of the Indian by Findlay.

These two braves then returned to the Nez Perce reservation and found Joseph nursing a sick wife, unaware of their marauding. They said to Joseph that he would have to fight, although he had acted a coward.

Stung to the quick by the intimation that he was a coward, the old chief left his sick wife, said to the blood-thirsty braves to follow him, and with a force of warriors, started on the warpath.

A Warrior's Story.

A Nez Perce, who was a warrior with Joseph's band in that memora-

ble war of 1877, was in Pendleton today, and through an interpreter, Joe Craig, told Major Lee Moorhouse the story of the campaign and capture of the Nez Perce.

The English name of this warrior is Edward Newman, his Nez Perce name being Me-elts. He is a resident of Nez Perce City, Idaho, and is visiting friends on the Umatilla reservation, and was much affected by the news of the death of Joseph.

Me-elts was 16 years old at the time of the Nez Perce war, and followed his chief through all the long summer's campaign, and saw the finish on the Bear Paw mountain in October, 1877.

The first battle of the war was on the White Bird in early June, when Captain Perry was defeated and 32 soldiers killed. A few days later Lieutenant Raines and 13 men were killed in a skirmish at Craig mountain, and about this time General O. O. Howard took command of the forces in person and began his memorable chase after the wily Joseph.

Howard's Campaign.

Howard overtook the Indians at the Clearwater and fought a hard battle with them, the Indians retreating and starting over the Lolo trail into Montana. When near the summit of the Bitter Roots Joseph met a detachment of soldiers coming up from Ft. Missoula, Mont., and while the chief and the commanding officer were parleying about a passage, which the whites blocked, Joseph's band found another pass across the mountains and were soon safely out of reach in the Bitter Root valley, on the east side of the mountains.

At the foot of the Rocky mountains in the Big Hole country, Joseph's camp was surprised and taken, and a savage hand to hand fight took place, both sides being willing to step the fight.

Battle of the Yellowstone.

At the crossing of the Yellowstone river, a pitched battle between Joseph and Howard was fought, nearly all of Howard's mules and horses being stolen.

Joseph pressed hard toward the Canadian border, Howard in pursuit, and it seemed that the Indians would certainly reach the British line when Col. Nelson A. Miles, then commanding at Ft. Keough, Mont., started westward to intercept the flight of the Indians, and after a hard march, cut off the retreat of the Nez Perce at Bear Paw mountain, Northern Montana, where the combined forces of Howard and Miles fought a five days' battle with the Indians, from October 1 to October 5, when Joseph surrendered to Miles, saying that he would not surrender to Howard, as Miles was the man who captured him.

In handing his rifle to Colonel Miles, Joseph said: "From where the sun now stands, I fight the white man no more."

Olcut, Joseph's brother, was killed in the battle of the Bear Paw. Me-elts, or Newman, who is in Pendleton today, escaped with 50 warriors and 34 women, the night after the surrender and made their way to Sioux territory, where they lived with Sitting Bull for a year.

Prisoner of War.

Joseph was taken a prisoner of war to Ft. Leavenworth, Kas., and afterward to the Indian territory, where he was kept among the Cheyennes for nine years.

On his return to the north he was denied the right to revisit the Nez Perce reservation, and has been virtually a prisoner of war since his capture in 1877.

In the 75 days from July 27 to October 19, 1877, Joseph and his entire band of warriors, men, women, children and outfit, marched about 1600 miles, and fought 19 battles and skirmishes. It was the most remarkable retreat and maneuvering in the history of Indian warfare.

Joseph Wrongfully Accused.

Joseph has been wrongfully accused of killing the Manuel family on the White Bird, in 1877. In an interview with Major Moorhouse a year ago, Joseph assured him that his young men committed this murder, without his knowledge or consent. On that day he was at home with his sick wife. Joseph married a Royal Cayuse woman, and the famous Moorhouse Indian twins are grand nieces of Joseph.

Unwritten History.

Joseph also related an incident of the war to Major Moorhouse which has never found its way into written history. Joseph said that while encamped on the White Bird with his warriors, a number of white women and children were taken prisoners and brought to Joseph's tepee. They were put under strong guard for the night, and after the warriors had gone to sleep Joseph selected his most trusted men and sent them as an es-

(Continued on page 10.)

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