

Chief Joseph

She'd be gone soon. Already the threads to life were unraveling. She could not hear the cracking of the frozen tree limbs, and she could see no light. Her grandmother's breast was cold, but there was no other place.

Who would take her, she wondered. The Christ or the Great Spirit? She fell asleep thinking of the white man.

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Samuel picked nervously at his clothes. He had managed to save his good suit until the day he would arrive at the reservation, but given how wrinkled it was, he didn't think saving it had been worthwhile. The train trip from Washington, D.C., had been trying, but the 60-mile wagon ride from Bitter Root to the Wallowa Valley had been brutal. There had been few opportunities to shave, and he was sure he could use a bath as well.

Reverend McRae, a leader in the Christian community among the Nez Perce in the Wallowa Valley and a man of some power with the Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington, D.C., was an old friend of Samuel's uncle. When offered the opportunity to choose a man to fill the position of Indian agent for the Wallowa Valley territory, Reverend McRae had contacted Samuel's uncle for a reference. His uncle had contacted Samuel.

Although he had been employed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for several months, Samuel was still a rudderless boat, and his uncle was anxious that Samuel assume adult responsibilities, marry, and provide nieces and nephews for his uncle's amusement. As a new and not very promising employee, Samuel's prospects were slim, but in that new land, his uncle said, his prospects could be improved if he would buckle down. Samuel wasn't convinced.

Samuel used Bureau records to look into the Indian situation in the new northwest. The Nez Perce had been a peace-loving, cooperative group, some having accepted Christianity when Old Joseph, then the chief of the Wallowa Valley band of the Nez Perce, followed by other Nez Perce leaders, approached the ministers of the Presbyterian church and asked for his own "book." Old Joseph wanted to learn of the miracles and power the Christian leaders were said to possess. Samuel chuckled irreverently at this.

In 1855, Washington Territory's Governor Stevens held a treaty council. Old Joseph and all the other Nez Perce leaders agreed to cede their land to the United States government in exchange for money, a 7.7 million-acre reservation covering territory in Idaho, Washington, and Oregon, and the right to hunt and fish in their former territory.

In 1860 gold was discovered in Wallowa Valley. By 1862, over 18,000 whites had settled illegally on Nez Perce land in violation of the 1855 treaty. In 1863, Governor Stevens tried to induce the Nez Perce to give up even more of their tribal lands, leaving the Nez Perce ten percent of their original holdings. Some of the leaders agreed while others, including Old Joseph, did not, and the disagreement between the two groups split the tribes. Old Joseph was so angry that he destroyed his Bible. The federal government declared that the Indians who signed the agreement acted as the representatives of all of the Nez Perce.

Samuel wondered at the government's rationale in declaring the Indians who signed the agreement as representatives of all of the Nez Perce. Surprisingly, he found that his sympathies lay with the Nez Perce. No group would tolerate this unfair treatment for long.

As time passed, the Nez Perce who did not sign the 1863 agreement became more and more unwilling to cooperate. They would not be moved to the reservation in Idaho, and some had become active in the Dreamer religion, a belief system only half understood but very much feared by the white officials. The result was that they listened less and less to the whites and retreated more and more into their own culture. Chief Joseph, son of Old Joseph and the current leader of the Nez Perce, was said to be a believer.

These were the lines drawn when Samuel arrived.

Samuel's orders were to observe the situation at the reservation, work with the missionaries, and assist the federal government commissioners in any manner they wished. The commissioners were preparing a report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on the political and social conditions of the Wallowa Valley Nez Perce and their recommendation as to the disposition of the tribe. If it was the recommendation of the commissioners that the tribe be forced to move to the Idaho reservation, Samuel was to have a plan prepared, subject to the approval of the commissioners, for moving the Nez Perce quickly and quietly to the reservation in Idaho.

Samuel had little experience with politics and did not see that the federal government was moving progressively faster toward forcing Chief Joseph's people to move to the Idaho reservation. All Samuel knew was that this was his chance to prove himself, move up in the Bureau, and reward his uncle's faith.

As Samuel's wagon approached the settlement, he was suddenly surrounded by a group of Indian children, running, laughing, and trying to climb on the wagon as it passed. They shouted at him, and Samuel could not help but smile at their enthusiasm. He reached into his travel bag and pulled out the bag of sweets he had saved to ease his arrival among the Indians. He tossed them one by one to the laughing children who scrambled for the candy and squealed at receiving such a rare treat.

To his right through the thick bushes he could just make out a pair of eyes so dark brown they were almost black. "You there," he called. "Come out! Would you like a sweet?" The eyes blinked once and then disappeared. The child must have run away, but he had heard no rustle of limbs or leaves. The other children pushed and shoved to get closer, distracting him.

Suddenly a tall, white man approached the wagon. "Children! Children! Get to your chores. There is much to be done, and the Lord does not like idle hands." The children scattered.

"Welcome. I am Reverend McRae," he said, his expression dour and his tone somewhat less than welcoming. "I run the Presbyterian ministry and the reservation. You are the young man from Indian Affairs?"

Samuel jumped from the wagon. "I am, sir," he said, removing his hat and making a slight bow. "I am Samuel Creighton."

"I trust your journey was tolerable. I assume you are tired and would like to rest," the reverend said, gesturing to a small building at the edge of the inner circle of the reservation.

"In truth, Reverend McRae," said Samuel, "I am much too excited to rest. Could I see the reservation?"

"I suppose. Let me show you around, Mr. Creighton." Without waiting for an answer, Reverend McRae strode off.

"This is the school built for the Indian children. We not only nourish their souls, we attempt to instill a modicum of culture and learning, hoping that they will give up their heathen ways and more easily assimilate into our culture."

Samuel nodded appreciatively and said, "I am unfamiliar with many of the Indian customs. What are their 'heathen ways,' Reverend?"

Clearing his throat, Reverend McRae spoke sonorously, "The Indians have only lately come to know of Christ. Although we have had success in converting some of them to Christianity, unfortunately not all have joined our Christian community."

"You are not from here," Reverend McRae continued, "nor are you familiar with the customs of the Indians, Mr. Creighton. They worship a great spirit who they say lives in the sky and the earth who they think of as the mother of all people. According to them, this great spirit made the earth and everything on it and the earth should not be disturbed or changed in any manner. This includes farming and many of the other occupational skills we are trying to teach them."

"They have stories about animals speaking and acting like humans but becoming

mute after people arrived," he continued. "They send their children alone to the woods to have visions, and they believe that the more powerful the vision, the more power should be ascribed to the child. They dance and beat drums to express their subservience to and worship of their great spirit."

"What about their spiritual leaders? What do they teach?" Samuel asked.

Reverend Mcrae stared arrogantly down his nose at Samuel. "If they have no Christian beliefs, Mr. Creighton, how can they have spiritual leaders?" Reverend McRae seemed both surprised at Samuel's lack of religious training and disgusted at his lack of religious knowledge.

The Reverend cleared his throat. "And our progress is further hampered by the Catholic missionaries who are continually trying to convert the natives to their heathen practices."

"Catholics, sir? I thought Protestants were the only religious missionaries allowed on reservation lands and Presbyterians the only ones allowed on this reservation."

"This is true now, Mr. Creighton, but they have not always been refused the opportunity to live on or visit the reservation and to attempt to impress their beliefs and practices on the Indians. Their influence is still felt here, and their settlement is not so far away that they cannot continue to influence the Indians. We spend much of our time trying to keep them away from the Indians and attempting to counteract their teachings."

"It must be quite a burden to carry the responsibility of so many souls, Reverend," Samuel said, trying to redeem himself with Reverend McRae after his earlier imprudent statement.

"The work of the Lord is a privilege, not a burden, Mr. Creighton." Again Reverend McRae regarded Samuel with contempt and some suspicion.

"Of course, Reverend." Samuel tried to put an appropriately shamed expression on his face while mentally noting how limited any conversation with Reverend McRae would be. Looking through the narrow lens of his concept of ideal Christian behavior, the reverend was not likely to offer much in the way of non-judgmental discussion of the Indians or their lifestyle.

At every opportunity, Samuel took walks around the reservation, watching the Indians. He took a particular pleasure in watching the children who seemed as much at home at the mission as they were in the woods. He saw an unpretentious naturalness about them. While they were very competitive in play, they displayed a tenderness to each other unparalleled in the children he had observed prior to coming to the reservation.

The adults were also committed to each other and to the tribe. The younger adults spent a great deal of time doing the work necessary for the survival of the tribe. The men hunted while the women gathered plants and roots and made tools, clothing, and utensils. The elders, the grandparents, attended to the education of the children, spending much of their time teaching them the skills necessary to take their place as adult members of the tribe and passing down the heritage and history of their ancestors. Although before coming to the Wallowa Valley he had heard that Indians were lazy and warlike, he could find no evidence of that.

Samuel saw the brown eyes at unexpected times, watching him from the bushes, peeking out from behind a tree, or disappearing quickly behind a building as he walked by. It had become a game between them, one he would never win. She was too quick and too quiet, blending into the background, moving with grace and ease. He asked Reverend McRae and others about the child, but no one seemed to know which of the many children she was.

Finally on one of his walks he saw the brown eyes moving in the cover of the trees and undergrowth, but this time they did not disappear. He saw a small, light brown face with a halo of black hair and bright eyes peeking through a hole in the bushes. He looked in the other direction as he walked by.

She began letting him see her more and more often. Sometimes she would pretend she didn't see him and run off with her friends. On other occasions, he would ignore her and continue on his way.

After a particularly long walk, Samuel sat to rest on a fallen tree near the reservation. While his attention was diverted by an entertaining pair of squirrels, the girl, maybe seven or eight years old, came to sit on the other end of the log. Surprised, he pretended not to see her, and she didn't look at him.

When she didn't run off, he said quietly without looking at her, "My name is Samuel."

She looked away.

"What's your name?" he asked.

Again she didn't answer, but she did steal a glance at him.

"You must have a name. What are you called?"

There was still no answer, but she stole another glance at him. He changed tack.

"Do you go to the reservation school?" After a pause, she surprised him by nodding.

"What does the teacher call you?" he asked quietly as if she were a deer who would bolt away.

"Teacher does not call me. She only talks." Samuel had no doubt that this was true.

When he looked again, she was gone.

Samuel was too busy with his bureau duties to take his usual long walks and did not see her for another two weeks.

While Samuel was considering the intricacies of moving the Indians to the Idaho reservation and the different methods by which this could be accomplished, the commissioners from the federal government arrived to investigate and make their report to the Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs about Chief Joseph's band of Nez Perce Indians still living in the Wallowa Valley. Samuel ran errands, escorted the members of the tribe to the commissioners for talks, and took notes of the interviews.

During a break in the work, he again found himself sitting on the log with the girl. Trying to find non-threatening subjects to discuss with her, he asked her about school.

"Do you enjoy school?" he asked. She looked at him out of the corner of her eye. "What do you study?"

She made furrows in the dirt with her bare feet. "She teaches us to speak like you. She teaches us to read."

"What do you read?"

"The Christian book." She was fascinated with her feet.

"The Bible?" he asked. She nodded her head.

"Do you learn the stories of God?"

Again she nodded. "But we already know those."

Puzzled, Samuel asked, "Who told you?" He had understood that although the Catholics lived close to the reservation, their access to the Indians was limited as much as possible by the Presbyterians.

"From the other people, the ones rev'rend doesn't like."

Ah, Samuel thought. The Catholics had had an opportunity to reach the Indians and had used on them the practices that had served them so well in the past. "What does Reverend McRae say about the Catholics?" he asked.

The girl was quiet for a moment. "He says they do not really know the god. He says that the ways they worship the god are wrong. He says bad things about them."

"Bad things?"

"Yes. He does not like them. He wants us not to like them too." The girl's grandmother called, and she ran off.

Samuel considered this as he walked back to the offices on the reservation. Obviously the disagreements between the Catholics and Presbyterians were confusing the Indians. How could anything be taught when there was such divisiveness among the people charged with the teaching?

The next time he saw her, he asked her to tell him more about what the Catholics had told her.

"They told us about their god like the rev'rend tells about his." She looked up, a bird catching her eye. She watched it fly away.

"You know that the God the Catholics told you about and the one Reverend McRae tells you about are the same God, don't you?" Samuel watched her intently as she scrunched up her face in thought.

"Like the Great Spirit?" she asked.

"What's the Great Spirit?" Samuel asked, remembering his conversation with Reverend McRae on the same subject. He was interested in the differences between the girl's description and that of Reverend McRae.

"Smoholla tells us that the Great Spirit made the earth and everything on it and he sees everything and that we are not to harm the earth because it will make the Great Spirit angry." She stared at him with wide eyes.

"Who is Smoholla?"

"Smoholla is a great shaman. He has died many times and comes back. He knows where the best game is and when the rains will come and when the earth will tremble in anger," she explained.

"A shaman? Is that like a reverend or a priest?"

She looked at him curiously as if she couldn't understand why he didn't know. "He is more. Smoholla talks directly to the Great Spirit, and the Great Spirit answers him. Then he tells us what the Great Spirit wants."

"And what does the Great Spirit want?" Samuel asked, growing increasingly

intrigued by the turn of the conversation.

"He wants us to live the ways of our ancestors. He wants us not to listen to the rev'rend and the others. He says to go away from the white man and to take care of the Mother of All."

"Who is the Mother of All?" Samuel asked. He was taking advantage of every moment the girl would stay and answer questions.

"She is the earth. She does not want us to change her like the white man does. It hurts her, and the Great Spirit gets angry. I have to go." With that she ran off without a backward glance.

After the girl left, Samuel walked back to the mission and sought out Reverend McRae.

"Reverend, what do you know of the shaman and the Great Spirit?" Samuel asked warily.

Reverend McRae closed his Bible, stood up, and stared intently and with some suspicion at Samuel. "Who has been talking to you about the great spirit?"

"One of the children," he answered cautiously, concerned that the reverend might ask him which child. "She told me what she had learned from you, from the Catholics, and from the shaman in her tribe. I had never heard of a shaman and thought you might know. He seems to have quite a lot of power among the Indians."

"Indeed he does, Mr. Creighton. The great spirit is a lie told by their shaman, a man whose opinions carry much weight with the Indians. His name is ...," Reverend McRae paused in thought for a moment, "Smoholla. He is a nasty heathen. He has convinced the Indians that the only way they can survive is to give up our ways, including God, and return to the ways of their ancestors."

"What does Smoholla want the Indians to give up?" Samuel asked.

Reverend McRae grew increasingly apoplectic as his voice became louder and louder, "He counsels the Indians to quit our settlements and their reservations, to return to their nomadic lifestyle! He says that is the only way his great spirit will allow the Indians to keep their heathen rituals!" Reverend McRae paused and visibly calmed himself. "Besides convincing the Indians to replace God with this great spirit, he convinces them that our work, the skills we have strived to teach them, is harmful to what I think is their other god, the one they call the mother. He says that anything that changes the earth - digging, clearing trees and brush, building roads, farming - hurts the earth. He teaches them that hurting the mother angers the great spirit who then takes his anger out on them. He has them frightened to pray to God or to listen to us at all. It has greatly hampered our efforts to teach the Indians about God, train them in our

ways, teach them to read and write, and allow them to assimilate into our world."

"Can anything be done about Smoholla? Perhaps he could be arrested or banned from the valley," Samuel suggested.

"Do you not think, Mr. Creighton, that every particular avenue to lessen Smoholla's influence has been attempted? Do you think you can suggest anything we have not already considered and discarded?" Reverend McRae's contempt for Samuel's suggestions was obvious. How was such a man recommended as an Indian agent? His respect for Samuel's uncle was diminishing with each exchange he had with Samuel.

The commissioners had many discussions with Reverend McRae about the problems both experienced and caused by the Indians of Chief Joseph's band, and Samuel took copious notes as they had requested. One of issues they referred to repeatedly was the problem among the Nez Perce caused by the argumentative and sometimes hostile relationship between the Protestants and Catholics and their divisive interactions with the Indians.

Mr. Shanks, one of the commissioners, said, "It seems that there is little hope of educating and controlling the Nez Perce when our own people cannot keep from confusing the Indians with their volatile arguments about the finer points of religion. The Catholics have been banned from erecting a church on the reservation, but still the enmity exists and is affecting our control over the Indians. Is there any end to this problem, Reverend McRae? Do you have anything to offer on this subject?" Mr. Shanks stared at the reverend until he squirmed with discomfort.

Feeling some sympathy for Reverend McRae, Samuel interrupted to ask if the 1863 treaty that had so angered Old Joseph had caused the problem. It seemed to him, he continued, that Old Joseph's anger at the way the Nez Perce were treated had soured his tribe's relationship with the reservation officials and the government.

"No, Mr. Creighton, we don't believe that's the problem or at least not the biggest problem," Mr. Shanks answered. "The issue troubling us is Smoholla's influence on the Indians, and we believe that the Indians' wholehearted acceptance of Smoholla's teachings is due to our lack of a cohesive religious structure to counteract Smoholla. Chief Joseph advocates peace among all of us based on mutual respect of one for the other, but the federal government has made converting the Indians to Christianity a priority. The Indians chafe at this. Chief Joseph believes that the government has no respect for the Indians," Mr. Shanks explained. And he's probably right, thought Mr. Shanks.

Mr. Rennet added, "Chief Joseph's refusal to move his tribe from the Wallowa Valley to the reservation in Idaho is a direct result, we believe, of Smoholla's teachings, which are so attractive to the Indians because we offer nothing in their stead."

During this busy time of interviews, note taking, and discussions, Samuel spent every free minute with his friend. He had tried to find out her name, but she said she didn't have one yet. She tried to explain the ritual of weyekin and when and how she would receive her name, but Samuel wasn't sure he understood.

"If you don't have a name, how do you know when people are speaking to you?" Samuel could picture all the children in the tribe running around like, well, like wild Indians, each with no name they could be called to get their attention, and the havoc they could wreak. He tried but couldn't completely control his laughter, which he covered with a cough.

"If they need to call me, I am 'girl' or anything that makes me look," she said. "This is the way things always are."

He thought of something else he had wondered about. "What is your tribe called?" He paused and tried to explain what he was asking. "I mean, we call you and all of your family the Nez Perce. That's the name we use when we talk about you and all of your tribe."

"We are the Nee-me-poo, The People."

"How do you know this?"

"It has always been." She gave him a look similar to the one Reverend McRae often gave him but without Reverend McRae's rancor.

"Who leads The People?" He knew the answer, but quite often in their conversations, the answers he knew led to answers he didn't know.

"Hin-mah-too-lat-kekt. You call him Chief Joseph."

"Is he a good leader? Does he act like a leader should?" Samuel held her eyes.

"Hin-mah-too-lat-kekt is our father. He takes care of us. He talks to the white man and does not let the white man take our land."

"Are you afraid of that?" he asked.

"That is always a fear when talking with the white man. He gives once and takes much after." She dropped her eyes and kicked her feet in the dirt.

"But what if the white man moves The People to a better place? A place where The People could live without threats or violence?" Unlike Reverend McRae, Samuel did not present this as something for which she should be grateful but rather as an honest question seeking an honest answer.

She thought for a moment and with sadness said, "That is not our home. That is another's home. The People do not take things that do not belong to them. Chief Joseph says that the bones of our fathers are here. We will not sell our ancestors; we will not abandon their bones."

She stood as if ready to leave but stopped. She looked searchingly at Samuel. "You ask many questions. You are not like the others." She turned and slowly walked away.

Samuel was stunned by the simplicity of the girl's sense of right and wrong, of what was of value, and of respect. He had seen her at play and at work. Her love of the earth and the people of the earth was the basis for everything she did. Her spirit had been developed and encouraged by the members of the Nez Perce tribe who must exemplify these traits in order to pass them so completely to their children. She never disparaged other members of her tribe; indeed, she had never complained about any of them. About the white man and the way he had treated the Indians, she expressed only sadness, not anger, at the lack of sympathy and respect the white man had for the Indian.

He and the girl spoke many times. Each time she would teach him about her tribe and their ways. He spent as little time as possible trying to explain the white man's ways. He was more interested in her spirit, which never disappointed.

The girl had touched his heart. For years after he left the Wallowa Valley and the Nez Perce, he would wonder what had happened to her. He was frightened by the events that led inexorably to the troubles of 1877 - Chief Joseph's continuing but failed attempts to negotiate the future of the Nez Perce, his ultimate concession to move the tribe to the Idaho reservation to prevent the harm he saw coming if the Nez Perce continued to live in the Wallowa Valley, and the tribe's desperate run for the Canadian border to escape the army's attacks when Chief Joseph could not move hundreds of men, women, children, and the elderly to Idaho within the thirty days they were allowed. He was frightened for her safety, for the safety of all of the tribe.

Chief Joseph's speech at his surrender in 1877, only 30 miles from the Canadian border, scared Samuel and tore at his heart.

It is cold, and we have no blankets. The little children are freezing to death. My people, some of them, have run away to the hills, and have no blankets, no food. No one knows where they are-perhaps freezing to death. I want to have time to look for my children, and see how many of them I can find. Maybe I shall find them among the dead.

Samuel was determined to find the girl. He sought out members of the Nez Perce tribe who had been sent to the Colville Reservation in Idaho after Chief Joseph's surrender. Some thought they knew which girl, but no one could say for sure whether

she was with the group that surrendered, many of whom had sickened and died on the trip back to Idaho, or with one of the many small groups who took off and hid from the army in the forest when Chief Joseph surrendered, or whether she was one of the ones who simply wandered off, giving up during their 1,400-mile trek in such trying conditions.

He traveled to the Oklahoma reservation where Chief Joseph and his supporters had been sent as punishment. He could not speak directly to Chief Joseph, but he did speak to some of the others who gave him the same answers he had received at the Colville reservation.

He never gave up, but he finally accepted that it was unlikely he would see his friend again.

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Her grandmother was old and could not walk fast. The tribe would not abandon the grandmother, and the grandmother did not want to cause them danger by slowing them down. The girl, however, would not let her grandmother leave alone, and finally, the grandmother allowed her to come before she awakened the others. They left the tribe in the middle of the night in unfamiliar country far from the Wallowa Valley and everything she had known. It was cold, and her grandmother brought only one threadbare, torn blanket. The few that were left were needed for the people who would travel on without them, her grandmother said.

The grandmother died two days later lying in the snow by a frozen stream. The girl tried to clear the snow away from her grandmother's body but then sat on her heels, wrapped her arms around her knees, and rocked back and forth as she moaned and cried. She tired and laid her head on her grandmother's breast. Slowly she fell asleep.

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One hot and humid August day in 1873, the commissioners, Samuel, and Reverend McRae met again to discuss the current situation with respect to the Nez Perce. Sweat ran down their faces, and they had long since shed their suit coats and were now working in their waistcoats. The breeze through the open window gave them little respite.

Mr. Shanks announced that, once again, they were going to try to entice Chief Joseph to move to the Idaho Reservation, this time by offering schools for the young and training for the adults.

"We will describe to Chief Joseph the fertile hunting and fishing lands and the medical treatment we can offer there. We should also emphasize the increased security the tribe will have against the white man," Mr. Shanks explained.

"But, most importantly, we should describe the advantages the Indians will gain by their increased access to schools and training we can offer there, as well as their proximity to churches and religious studies, unfettered," he continued while looking pointedly at Reverend McRae, "by dogma, opinion, and narrow-mindedness."

Mr. Shanks sent Samuel for Chief Joseph and then turned to a red-faced Reverend McRae.

"I am afraid our chance of success has been greatly lessened, Reverend, by your inability to tolerate thoughts different from your own and your failure to work with the Catholics in converting the Indians"

"But that was the directive from Washington, sir," Reverend McRae interrupted. "The Catholics were barred from the reservation, and I was to work diligently to convert the Indians. This I have done."

"Reverend McRae, the Catholics were only barred from the reservation," Mr. Shanks responded, with emphasis on the word "barred." "That did not mean you were forbidden to work with them. Both have something to offer the Indians."

He continued, "Although some blame for this disaster must be laid at the feet of the government and their continued course of entering into treaties and then breaking them, your approach has only further alienated the Indians. I foresee a long and costly war unless Chief Joseph exhibits a more cooperative and respectful attitude than have you."

Samuel entered the room accompanied by Chief Joseph. Mr. Shanks was unsure how much Chief Joseph may have overheard, and Samuel's face offered no clue.

"Chief Joseph," began Mr. Shanks, "once again we would like to discuss your reasons for refusing to move to the Idaho reservation. We understand your reluctance to leave this area that has been the home of the Nez Perce for generations and where your ancestors are buried, but there is much we can offer there that we cannot offer here - land filled with game will be yours; you and your people will never be hungry again; you will be forever safe from the encroachment of the white men. We can offer ..."

Chief Joseph interrupted, "Why do you believe this? The Nez Perce have been offered these things in the past, and each time the white man breaks his promises. Land we were promised in our valley has grown smaller and smaller despite the agreements. We were promised that the white man would no longer come near and try to take our lands, but they have killed our young men and taken our women, all without punishment by the white man. And still we have not fought."

"What is to say," Chief Joseph continued, "that this will not happen in the new

land you have promised? The white man's promises are discarded without thought. I feel I cannot for much longer control our young warriors who carry their anger at the white man's ways. The danger to my people is growing."

Mr. Shanks found he could not disagree with Chief Joseph. However, his duties required that he try again.

"Chief Joseph, in Idaho we can offer your people medical care, land to hunt and fish, and churches and schools for the education of your tribe."

Chief Joseph sighed and looked across the room and out the window. The beauty of his home brought peace to him, but the danger to the tribe if they remained here brought a sharp, clenching pain in his chest.

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From the 1873 commissioners' report to the chief of the Bureau of Indian Affairs:

To further illustrate the evil effects to the Indians of this persistent and injurious contest between religious denominations, among and concerning the Indians, the commission quote the language of Joseph, chief of the non-treaty Nez Perce Indians, now located in the Wallowa Vallev, Oregon, but who with his people held a council with the commission at the Nez Perce agency near the Clear Water River, Idaho Territory, on the 2d day of August, 1873:

"By the commission:

"Question. Do you want schools and school-houses on the Wallowa reservation?

"Answer by JOSEPH. No; we do not want schools or school-houses on the Wallowa reservation.

"Question. Why do you not want schools?

"Answer. They will teach us to have churches.

"Question. Do you not want churches?

"Answer. No, we do not want churches.

"Question. Why do you not want churches?

"Answer. They will teach us to quarrel about God, as the

Catholics and Protestants do on the Nez Perce's reservation, and at other places. We do not want to learn that. We may quarrel with men sometimes about things on this earth, but we never quarrel about God. We do not want to learn that."

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All of which is most respectfully submitted.

*JOHN P. C. SHANKS
T. W. RENNET
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Commissioners*