



## A.L. Riggs

### *The Word Carrier*

Knox, Nebraska: Published for the Dakota Mission at Santee Agency 1889-1900

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# THE WORD CARRIER.

VOLUME XVIII.

HELPING THE RIGHT, EXPOSING THE WRONG.

NUMBERS 1-2.

SANTEE AGENCY, NEBRASKA.

JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 1889.

FIFTY CENTS PER YEAR.

#### OUR PLATFORM.

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Miscellaneous lot of 22 issues of the periodical *The Word Carrier*. An English language periodical published for the Eastern Dakota Indians at the Sioux Santee Agency in Nebraska. Each issue is tabloid format and four pages. Apparently disbound One issue with a photographic illustration on the front cover. The majority of periodicals are near fine, some issues have small closed edge tears. Other issues have loose stitching on the spines.

The Santee Sioux Reservation was established in 1863 in present day Nebraska. Alfred R. Riggs (editor of *The Word Carrier*) was the founder of the Santee Normal Training School which was established in the winter of 1870-71. The school operated until 1937.

Issues include: January-February 1889; March 1889; April-May 1889; June-July 1889; August 1889; September 1889; October 1889; November-December 1889; January 1891; February 1891; March 1891; June 1891; August-September-October 1898; November-December 1898; May 1899; August-September 1899; October-November 1899; January 1900; February 1900; March 1900; May-June-July 1900; and August-September-October 1900.

Detailed image on following page. [\[BTC#422746\]](#)

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## OUR PLATFORM

*For Indians we want American Education! We want American Homes! We want American Rights! The result of which is American Citizenship! And the Gospel is the Power of God for their Salvation.*

A large debt is owed to the editors of our antiquarian magazines, such as *The American Antiquarian*, *The American Anthropologist*, and *The Journal of American Folk-Lore*. Few men have the ability, and fewer yet have time and opportunity to do what they are doing for us in collecting materials for the better understanding of human history. The least that can be done towards repaying this debt is to give them a liberal support in the way of subscriptions.

*The American Antiquarian* for January, 1889, is at hand, giving us articles on Woman's share in Primitive Culture, by Otis T. Mason; The Mexican Messiah, by Dominick Daly; Indian Myths and Effigy Mounds, by Rev. S. D. Peet, and interesting Editorial notes and book reviews. Terms, \$4.00 per year. S. D. Peet, Mendon, Ill., Publisher.

*The American Anthropologist* is published quarterly by the Anthropological Society, of Washington. Terms, \$8.00 a year. Address H.W. Henshaw, Hoop Building, Washington. The leading articles for its January number, 1889, are: Navajo Gumboing Songs, by Dr. Washington Matthews; The Beginning of the Carrying Industry, by Otis T. Mason; On Alternating Sounds, by Dr. Frank Boos; Indians of Siletz Reservation, by J. Owen Dorsey, and Suffrage and its Mechanism, by J. H. Blodgett.

## CAMP LIFE.

I question whether one can use any other title for Indian life on Rosebud Reservation than the above. Home life is not yet established. At least it is not established in camps fifty miles from the agency. They are simply camped here, when they are not on the road between here and the agency, for the main occupation of these camps is traveling to the agency for rations. One week ago they reached home from the agency, today they started again. In five days they will be home again. In winter time they are on the road half of the time. In summer time they draw rations for a month or even two months. But as soon as the corn is plowed or the few tons of hay cut, they commence traveling again. The result of this system is seen in the entire life of the people.

1. In carelessness about their homes. As they only stay in the

houses half of the time, they do not need to be careful or clean.

2. Carelessness in providing for anything. The cattle run out in all weather and are never fed. Few men in the camp have stables, though timber is abundant. The houses are poorly made and dirty to the last limit that you can imagine. Crops are left to grow or be cloked by weeds; no need of farming, since enough is given them for subsistence. Farming implements are left to rust and rot. The only moving machine cared for in the four camps near me is one which an enterprising Indian bought.

3. Wear upon teams and men. The horses are made useless for work, and the cattle are tired out all the time. The coils are stunted and worthless from running along in the almost constant travel. The men and women are kept at work on the travel. Rain or shine, mud, dust, or mire, they must go to the agency.

4. This unsettled and unnatural mode of life keeps back progress. It fosters the old travel-and-hunt life. Polygamy has advantages in this kind of life. One wife stays at home and keeps the children, the second or third goes along to the agency to cook and care for the meat. If there is only one wife, then all the children must go along with her.

Such are the aspects of camp life about Park Street Church Station.

The Indians here as a whole are not lazy. There is more corn for sale here than the market demands. With a good market all the men in these camps would raise large crops. I cannot feed my horses enough to work at anything which will result in any benefit. They cut wood far beyond the amount I can buy. Of hay, in the fall a person could buy any amount at a moderate price. Where there is any encouragement for progress, they are ready to advance.

The first Sunday at the Mission Station furnished me a pleasing figure for missionary work. The camps are about a mile apart, and as there was no bell there, I wondered how they would be called to service. But when time for service came, Louis DeCoteau, the missionary at this station, took a small mirror and flashed the sunlight across those houses, and in a few minutes ten or a dozen boys and girls came running and tumbling down the hill towards the church.

That is the work of the missionary. In the present state of Indian life, it does not seem possible to make firm and lasting impressions.

All the surroundings are against it. But the gospel is a clear ray of light; it brings hope and gladness. And it is this alone which can deliver these Indians from the darkness which now surrounds them.

Of course on coming to live here this winter the Indians welcomed me. The fact that I belonged to the Sacred Herald (T. L. Riggs) gave me a ready reception. As soon as my house was completed I had plenty of callers. At first they never thought of knocking. But I told one boy to knock at the door like a white man; since then I have only had to tell three persons to knock. So about spitting on the floor. I told one boy about it, and from him it spread until now they are quite white about this habit. In their way, and as they know how, the Indians are gentlemen; I have yet to find one in these camps who has been rude or impolite.

I wish I could present to the readers of *The Word Carrier* a picture of the common sights here. For example the matter of polygamy. My nearest neighbor, a bright, industrious, and intelligent man, a representative to Washington last fall, sentative to the band settled near here, chief of the band settled near here, has two wives. Generally family matters run so smoothly, but when one mother is away, the children almost kill her children. Only a few days ago, two little girls were dragging a boy around by his hair, pounding him with sticks which would stun a man. The next man would stun a man. The third man has three wives and ten children. This family is quite a happy one, as all the wives are sisters; two of them are twins, and the children seem to belong to the three in common. At the fourth house the old man and one son have only one wife each. Further than this I can not give many facts at present. One daughter has had four husbands and is an old maid at present. She kindly offered herself to me the first week I was here.

The evil-spirit worship is almost as bad. In this respect the family I have referred to before of three wives and ten children is the worst in the camps. In the first place the man is lazy; and in the second place he is religious. This is an awful combination, even when the religion is Christianity; but when it is the old Dakota superstitions it is worse. Since October first, I have seen three of these children clad only in a calico shirt and moccasins. At first the above mentioned garment came to the ankles. But playing in the grass and rolling on the ground has worn them off, until last week, December 25th,

they did not come to the knees. And last week when I went to take one of them, a boy, a pair of my base ball pants, I saw the prints of the bare feet of those children in the snow. And yet I have seen the snow after yard of calico, gingham and flannel, whip away in the wind, where it had been hung up as an offering to the evil spirits. A large new "ghost tent" stands near, and soon there will be a big donation of goods, saved by the parents or robbed from their children.

And then could I show you the painting of some of these young men. I remember in college trying to paint and color a boy to represent Satan. I failed, but these Indians succeed every time, so well that, like Martin Luther, I feel like saying "Oh! it's you, is it?" In dancing they are adepts. Before they go to the agency, and after they return, they dance; and generally they stop at a camp half way to the agency and dance, one night each way.

As I get acquainted more, I find the evil worse. Here is a bright young man, cleaner and neater than most that I see. I take courage and think, now here's a boy I can depend on. He tries to talk English to me, but loses his head and his English. I enquired about him, and this is the story: "Five years at Carlisle; has had two wives and thrown them both away, and is now disturbing and annoying all the young women around. He is the most worthless young man about here. I have known him two years and more."

These are the sights and circumstances of camp life on White river. They are not colored nor exaggerated. I think they represent fairly the condition of these camps. They represent the dark and hopeless and discouraging aspect of Indian life and missionary work. But do not let the reader get discouraged. I am not. In my next letter I shall write of the hopeful side of the work.

J. F. Cross.  
Park Street Church Station.

In the evening, when the wind was howling fiercely and the ice was covering the windows of the mission station, a woman came in very suddenly. She had a bundle in her arms. I could not imagine what it was, but as she unrolled it, it turned out to be a baby. A round stick of wood could not have been rolled tighter. Poor little thing! It was a month old, and its parents had taken it to the Agency. It had been ten days driving in an open wagon in the coldest weather in January. It had a bad cold, and every time it drew a breath its throat rattled like a ratchet drill.