

December 15 80.

Chief White Thunder,

Rosebud Agency, Dakota.

My dear friend:

Yesterday when I wrote to you I told you that I would write to you when we buried your son. I tell you all about it because I know you want to know that we did what was right.

I had them make a good coffin. He was dressed in his uniform with a white shirt, a nice collar and necktie. He had flowers around him that some of the ladies brought for the white people love to get flowers for their friends when they are buried. Six of the Sioux boys who were Ernest's good friends carried the coffin into the chapel. Then the people sang about the land where people's spirits go when they are dead. The minister read from the good book. I told all the teachers, the boys and girls that some time they would have to die too. He told them they must think a great deal about it and they must be ready to die too, because none of the teachers or scholars



could tell when the time would come for them to die.  
 Then he prayed to the Great Spirit we call God.  
 He prayed for you <sup>and</sup> for the other friends of your son  
 that the Great Spirit would take away your sorrow.  
<sup>and</sup> that you might learn from the good book about  
 the good land of the spirits, when good people go  
 when they die. Then they let all the boys <sup>and</sup> girls go  
<sup>and</sup> look once more at their friends, because Chief Smith  
 Bear's daughter <sup>and</sup> died the same night that your  
 son did, <sup>and</sup> we buried them at the same time.

The teachers <sup>and</sup> the boys <sup>and</sup> girls cried a great deal be-  
 cause their hearts were sad. After that all the  
 people walked down to the graveyard, slowly <sup>and</sup> in  
 rows <sup>and</sup> they put the coffins in the grave <sup>and</sup> the min-  
 ister said more words <sup>and</sup> prayed again to God <sup>and</sup> then  
 they filled the grave up, just the way our people al-  
 ways do.

My friends, my heart is heavy when I think to  
 you about your son, but I want you to learn about the  
 good book, <sup>and</sup> what it says. That was the best thing we  
 taught your son while he was alive, it was what the  
 good book says that we wanted him to know so he



could tell you <sup>and</sup> all your people when he went  
back because it is that book which makes the white  
people know as much as they do.

I shall not forget you, my friend, <sup>and</sup> I hope  
your heart will always be good toward me.

I want to say a few words now to you  
though we have now children from your agency  
than from any other there are the first that have  
died, <sup>then</sup> they have been here more than a year.

I look upon this detachment of children away  
from your people somewhat as you would upon a  
party sent out to gather a quantity of buffalo meat  
or even sent out to make war upon some other  
people or to capture horses from some other people.

You know how that is my friend, how that very  
often there are some who never come back <sup>by</sup> such  
is the course of things in this life. We must expect  
death to come to some of us in a good cause as  
well as in a bad cause. I heard that Ernest was

very sick before <sup>and</sup> it may be then was some of that  
sickness left. He was not a wise boy <sup>and</sup> did not try  
to take care of his health. I only say these



things to help you see it in what I think  
 is the right way. Never in all the history  
 of your Tribe have you sent parties away from  
 it on a better mission than this one <sup>and</sup> while  
 my heart is pained <sup>and</sup> sad for the loss that  
 you yourself have sustained in it I am  
 sure your strong good sense will stand  
 by what the Government is trying to do for  
 you <sup>and</sup> help make it strong. I would be  
 glad to have you write to me <sup>and</sup> tell me  
 what you think <sup>and</sup> how you feel about it.

I find I have no pictures of Ernest  
 which I think you will like to have.

Your friend  
 R. H. Pratt  
 Lieut.

