

## **A Confrontation Between the War and Peace Factions**

Brown and Robertson watched them [Running Walker and his group] leave then headed back to camp. They were disappointed but understood that a Dakota man must choose his own path. As they rode back to camp, the two mixed breeds discussed the differences between the Dakota and white cultures, and also whether those who had fought the soldiers were criminals or not. Robertson felt that men like Little Crow were soldiers not criminals, but Brown disagreed and the discussion became rather heated until they were interrupted by the sight of a war party emerging from the river bottom about a quarter of a mile away. The group appeared to be headed toward the old war faction camp, which they both thought was strange. Then Brown cried out, “They have captives with them!”

Since the beginning of September Medicine Bottle and his warriors had been raiding west of St. Paul and had expected to find the Dakota camped near Yellow Medicine when they returned. Instead the Upper Agency was overflowing with white soldiers, and had they not wisely sent a scouting party ahead as a precaution they might have blundered right into them. Following the river north and west that morning, they came upon a Mdewakanton camp that was mostly abandoned, but from the few people that remained they learned of the white soldiers’ victory two days before and the location of the new camps. They were told that most of the warriors had already run away, including Little Crow and Little Shakopee, but the returning raiders found that hard to believe. Now here they were. The camp was mostly abandoned, just as they had been told, and they were not sure what to do next. Only a camp full of “pantaloon” remained.

Their raids to the north had been reasonably successful, although the whites there had been more difficult to surprise. They ambushed some whites traveling east from Fort Abercrombie, and before that they surprised a family traveling by wagon. They had not been carrying anything of particular use, but they did have a pretty fourteen-year-old daughter who they had brought along as a captive with her eight-year-old brother, after they had shot both their parents. The question now was should they flee well, and if they did should they take the captives along

or leave them in the Peace Party camp as they had been told everyone else was doing.

While the returning warriors were milling about the empty camp trying to come to a decision, they saw a large group of men approaching on horseback from the direction of the Peace Party camp. One of the warriors said that he recognized Gabriel Renville and Antoine Campbell, so Medicine Bottle told everyone to stay calm and went forward to meet them.

“Ho, ho, what do you want?” called out Medicine Bottle as the riders approached. The Peace Party soldiers reined in their mounts twenty yards away, spreading out to the right and left to show that they had superior numbers. Renville and Campbell both dismounted and walked forward.

“Ho, have you not heard of the big fight between the white soldiers and your people?” asked Renville in an unfriendly manner.

“We have heard of it,” replied Medicine Bottle warily.

“Then you also know that all the prisoners are to be returned to the whites. We see that you have prisoners and we aim to take them from you!”

“Who are you to say so?” replied Medicine Bottle with a mirthless laugh.

“Your people have lost the battle and have run away. You may do so as well, but the captives must stay here!” demanded Renville, pointedly ignoring the question. He strode past Medicine Bottle and reached up for the girl who was sitting behind one of the mounted braves. The girl reached out to take his hand, but the brave grabbed it and pulled it back. A chorus of clicking sounds came from the Peace Party as fifty shotguns were raised and pointed in the brave’s direction.

“Let them go,” Medicine Bottle said, seeing that the odds were not in their favor. The brave grunted and allowed the girl to slide down into Renville’s arms.

“My brother!” the girl sobbed, and a boy came dashing around some horses to join her.

Renville placed an arm around each of their shoulders, turned them about, and walked them past the fuming Medicine Bottle. “Do not worry. You are safe now,” he said to them softly, then turning back to Medicine Bottle he added, “Go away now, if you wish. We do not want to kill you, but the soldiers are coming today, and they will surely kill you if they find you here.”

Medicine Bottle and his men had only two choices, surrender to the white soldiers or flee as their comrades had done. They chose the latter.

