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INDIAN WARFARE IN MINNESOTA.

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The following is a brief account of the battles fought between the Dakotas of the Mississippi and Minnesota and their enemies, and the numbers killed on both sides in the course of ten years, commencing in 1835. It is not a relation of events of great importance in themselves, but it is a fragment of Minnesota history, and may, at some future time be read with more interest than at present. I consider it of little value except as it may afford some help to any who may hereafter wish to form a correct idea of the nature and ordinary results of Indian warfare.

This paper is little more than a copy of a record which I kept for many years, of the number of Dakotas killed by their enemies, and the number of their enemies killed by them, so far as it could be ascertained. There may have been some killed of whom I have no account,—probably there were,—but not many. Whenever an Indian was killed by a war party, the event, with the attending circumstances, was soon reported throughout the country, and for a long time furnished an interesting topic of conversation. And the report was generally correct, for the Indians were not in the habit of concealing their own loss, nor of exaggerating that of the enemy.

The memorandum which I kept would have been made more full and interesting, if I had had any thoughts of making it public. Some defects in it I must supply from memory, and there may be some inaccuracies in this paper. I do not intend to have it contain any grave errors, and shall not draw on my imagination for the sake of making it interesting.

In recording the losses by war I shall give the number killed in each year by itself, beginning with

1835.—In June, a party of Chippewas coming down the Mississippi on a peaceable visit to Fort Snelling, were waylaid and one of their number killed by the Dakotas. The murderers were arrested the next spring by the military at Fort Snelling.

1836.—In March, a war party from Red Wing killed one Chippewa. About the same time a Sac Indian was killed by JACK FRAZIER, a half-breed from Red Wing.

1837.—Thirteen Warpekute Dakotas were killed by the Sacs.

1838.—In the spring, a Dakota of WABASHA'S band was killed on the Chippewa River in Wisconsin, by the Chippewas. They were pursued by the Dakotas and five of them killed. In April, eleven Dakotas were treacherously slain near the Chippewa River, about thirty miles from Lac qui Parle, by the Chippewas, led by the celebrated HOLE-IN-THE-DAY. The Chippewas pretended to be on a friendly visit to the Dakotas, and lay down with them in their tents, but rose on them in the night and killed them. The next day, my brother, G. H. POND, aided by an Indian named TATE-MIME, gathered the scattered fragments of their mutilated bodies and buried them.

In July, about three months after the massacre, HOLE-IN-THE-DAY, with two or three others, made a visit to Fort Snelling. He went first to PATRICK QUINN'S, who lived by the Mississippi, about a mile above Fort Snelling, and whose wife was a half-breed Chippewa. The Dakotas of the Lake Calhoun band heard of his arrival, and started out in a body to kill him, but the agent, Maj. TALIAFERRO, persuaded them to turn back, giving them leave to kill him, if they could, on his way home. The Dakotas seemed disposed to take the agent's advice and started for home, but two of them whose relatives had been killed a short time before near Lac qui Parle, hid themselves near QUINN'S, and in the evening, as HOLE-IN-THE-DAY was passing with his companions from QUINN'S house to another near by, they killed one of them and wounded another, but the chief escaped, having exchanged some of his clothes or ornaments with another of his party who was mistaken for him. One of the Dakotas was badly wounded. They were both

confined in the fort a while, but were finally released on condition that their friends should chastise them severely in the presence of the garrison.

1839.—July 2nd, a son-in-law of the chief of the Lake Calhoun band was waylaid and killed near Lake Harriet by two Chippewas, said to be sons or step-sons of the man who was shot at QUINN's the summer before. They belonged to HOLE-IN-THE-DAY's band.

A few days before this man was killed, several bands of Chippewas, consisting of men, women and children, met at Fort Snelling to transact business with the officers of the garrison. HOLE-IN-THE-DAY and his people came down the Mississippi in canoes. The Mille Lacs band came across by land, and others came down the St. Croix and up the Mississippi. They all started for home at the same time, each party returning by the way it came.

The Mille Lacs Indians and those who came down the Mississippi, encamped the first night at the Falls of St. Anthony, and some of the Dakotas who paid them a visit there complained to Maj. TALIAFERRO that the Chippewas treated them in a rude, unfriendly manner. He advised them not to retaliate, but gave them permission to avenge themselves in case any of their number were killed. The report of the insulting and injurious manner in which some of the Dakotas had been treated by the Chippewas at the falls, spread rapidly among them, producing much excitement and preparing them for what followed.

The day after the Chippewas left the falls on their return home, two men belonging to the party which came down the Mississippi, lay in ambush by the side of a path near Lake Harriet, and killed a Dakota as before stated. While the Chippewas were at the fort, two of them belonging to the band of HOLE-IN-THE-DAY, were seen wailing over the grave of the Chippewa who was killed at QUINN's the year before. The Dakotas had no doubt that these two men had killed the Dakota at Lake Harriet. They also believed, and were right in their belief, that none of the Chippewas, except those who came down the Mississippi, knew that these men had remained behind. They determined, therefore, not to follow HOLE-IN-THE-DAY, who would be watching and probably ready for them, but to

pursue the Mille Lacs and St. Croix Indians, who would suspect no danger. The agent had already given them permission to retaliate in case any of them should be killed. The military at Fort Snelling had no time to interfere, and such an opportunity as they now had for taking a terrible vengeance does not often offer itself in the course of Indian warfare. When the chief, whose son-in-law was killed, told me that he should follow the Mille Lacs party because they would be ignorant of the danger and unprepared for the encounter, he expressed some regret that the innocent should die for the guilty, but probably neither he nor any who went with him were less active or cruel in the work of destruction on account of any scruples of conscience. They were violating no rules of Indian warfare. The Mille Lacs Indians were Chippewas, and they were Chippewas who two years before had been guilty of the treacherous and cowardly massacre of the Dakotas near Lac qui Parle.

The same day that the man was killed at Lake Harriet, nearly all the able-bodied men of the Shakopee, Eagle Head, Good Road, Black Dog and Lake Calhoun bands assembled at the Falls of St. Anthony, and orders were there given by the leaders that no captives should be taken.

They overtook the Chippewas on the morning of the Fourth of July before daylight, but kept themselves concealed, and did not commence the attack until some time after sunrise. They knew the Chippewas had no provisions, and that the hunters would be under the necessity of leaving the rest of the party to hunt for food.

They therefore waited until some time after the hunters had left the camp, and until the women and the few men who were with them had started on their journey with their baggage on their backs before they attacked them.

The Dakotas raised the war-whoop, but they said the Chippewas did not at first seem to realize their danger, they stood a while with their burdens on their backs gazing on their pursuers as though they did not know what to think of them. The Chippewas were thus taken by surprise, wholly unprepared, and about seventy of them were killed. The slain were most of them women and children. The few men who were present defended the women and children bravely, and sold their lives

dearly. After discharging their pieces they would retreat far enough to reload, and then stand again on the defensive, and continued to do so till they were killed. The Dakotas lost more *men* in that attack than they killed.

Most of the young women escaped, the Dakotas being too much exhausted by their forced march to overtake them. The Chippewa hunters did not get to the scene of action soon enough to take any part in the fight, and the Dakotas avoided a conflict with them by a hasty retreat.

At the same time the Kaposia band pursued the Chippewas who returned by the way of the Mississippi and St. Croix, and found them engaged in a drunken revel. Mr. АITKIN, a well known trader, was with them. They killed about twenty-five of them. At first there seemed likely to be a great slaughter among the drunken Chippewas, but the excitement and alarm seemed to sober them, and they finally repulsed the assailants, and pursued them some distance on their retreat. In both these attacks the Dakotas lost twenty-three men; the Chippewa was nearly a hundred—most of them women and children.

1840.—In March, seven Dakotas from Red Wing killed a Chippewa woman and her two sons.

June 17th, a Dakota named LONGFOOT and his wife were killed by Chippewas on the right bank of the Mississippi, near the mouth of the brook between Mendota and St. Paul. This year the Potawatomes killed two Dakota women near the Blue Earth River, and carried off two children.

During the summer a war party from Wabasha fell in with a war party of Chippewas, and two were killed on each side.

1841.—April 8th, three Chippewas came down the Mississippi in a canoe which they left between the Falls of St. Anthony and Minnehaha, and hid themselves in the night, in some bushes, on the bank of the river, near a foot path, about a mile above Fort Snelling. The next morning as KAI-BO-KAH, a Dakota chief, with his son and another Indian, was passing by the place where the Chippewas lay in ambush, they killed his son and mortally wounded him. The Chippewas did not stay to take their scalps. I was on the spot before either of the men were dead, and saw the Chippewas leave the place loading their guns as they ran.

May 11th, a war party from Kaposia fell in with two Chippewas and killed one of them, but lost two of BIG THUNDER'S sons. BIG THUNDER was the chief of the Kaposia Indians and father of LITTLE CROW.

May 16th, a large war party from the Lake Calhoun, Good Road and Black Dog bands killed two Chippewa girls at Pokegama and lost two of their own men. In July a war party from Kaposia killed a Chippewa below the mouth of the St. Croix. In the course of the summer, five Dakotas who went out against the Potawatomes, were all killed.

In the fall, the Dakotas from Petit Rocher (near Fort Ridgely) killed thirteen Potawatomes. About the same time two Dakotas from Lac qui Parle were killed by Chippewas in the night while they were out on a hunting expedition.

Near the same time a war party from Lac qui Parle had one of their number killed.

1842.—March 14th, a war party from Kaposia killed one Chippewa and lost one Dakota, a son of EAGLE HEAD, a chief.

In June, the Chippewas made an attack on BIG THUNDER'S band at Kaposia and killed ten men, two women and one child. They lost four in the fight. In the fall the Chippewas killed one Dakota near Lac Travers.

1843.—In April, the Chippewas killed a Dakota child near Kandiyohi.

In June, a Chippewa war party killed two Dakotas at the fording place of the Chippewa River, near Lac qui Parle.

About the same time the Dakotas killed a Chippewa on Rum River, and lost one of their own men.

1844.—In the winter, HOLE-IN-THE-DAY'S band killed a Lac qui Parle Indian.

In April, four Dakotas from Little Rapids (Carver) killed a Chippewa opposite the mouth of Rum River.

I continued to keep a record of the numbers slain on both sides so long as the Indians remained in this region; but what I have here given is sufficient to show the nature and ordinary results of Indian warfare as it was carried on in Minnesota. The Indians spent a great deal of time in war, but their attempts to kill their enemies were not often very successful.

A very large majority of war parties returned without scalps, and of such parties I have kept no record.

Small parties were usually more successful than large ones, as they could move with more celerity and secrecy. If the party was small it generally withdrew precipitately, after striking a single blow, or as soon as the enemy was alarmed whether it had succeeded in taking a scalp or not. If the party was a very strong one, and supplied with provisions, it might, after killing one or more, wait a while for an attack, but it was not the practice of the Indians, after having taken one or more scalps, to go on farther in quest of more, or remain in the enemies' country after being discovered.

No matter how many were in a war party, nor how far they had traveled in pursuit of the enemy, if a single scalp was taken the expedition was not considered a failure. Dakota war parties were seldom led by the chiefs, though they some times accompanied them. "They were led by volunteers, who claimed to receive their commission by revelation from some superior being who commanded them to make war, and promised them success. When such a leader offered himself, the warriors could do as they pleased about following him. If they had confidence in his abilities, or credentials, he could raise a large party. If not, he could get few followers. His office lasted only during the time of the expedition. Sometimes a few young men started off to look for scalps without the usual formalities and without a leader. Such small unauthorized parties were quite as likely to be successful as any.

It will be seen by the above record that the Indians seldom fought sanguinary battles. They had no desire to fight battles where the forces on both sides were nearly equal. Such battles they carefully avoided. If two war parties met, as they sometimes did, the meeting was accidental. In such a case there might be a little skirmishing, but seldom severe fighting. It was not their custom to look for armed men who were prepared to receive them.

Since I have lived at Shakopee, the Chippewas killed a Dakota as he was in his canoe fishing in the river near my house. The event was immediately known, but though this was a strong band, much stronger than any war party of Chippewas

was likely to be, they did not venture to attack them. The Chippewas spent the night not far from here, and though the Dakotas followed them a little way the next day, they were careful not to overtake them.

At another time two men went over the river to hunt, and one of them soon returned and reported that his companion had been killed very near here by the Chippewas, yet they all waited twenty-four hours before they ventured to bring home the dead body. In both these cases they were afraid of being drawn into ambush by a strong party of the enemy.

They behaved differently when they were attacked here by Chippewas in the spring of 1858, but they were then encouraged by the presence of many white men, and perhaps were ashamed to refuse to cross the river and attack the enemy while so many spectators were looking on.

When the Dakota was killed at Lake Harriet, I was there a few minutes after he was killed, and saw in the tall grass the trail of the Chippewas leading to a small cluster of young poplars. There were no tracks leading from the grove, and all knew that they were there. We afterwards learned that they remained there till dark. I urged the Indians to try to kill them, but though there were as many as fifty armed Dakotas, they refused to go near them, and leaving them to escape, started off in pursuit of the Mille Lacs Indians.

Indeed Indians consider it foolhardiness to make an attack where it is certain that some of them will be killed.

Bloody battles were seldom fought by them except when the party attacked rallied and made an unexpected resistance. They occasionally performed exploits which none but brave men would undertake, and often fought with desperate valor in self-defence or in defence of their families.

From the list of the slain which I have given, it will appear that the Indian warfare in this region for ten years, commencing in 1835, was not attended with any very great destruction of human life, yet from what could be gathered from their own traditions it was a fair specimen of what their wars had been from time immemorial. Both Chippewas and Dakotas complained that the efforts of our Government to promote peace between the two tribes, rendered their condition more insecure

than when each one was left to take care of himself. That precarious peace often exposed them to dangers which in a state of open war they would have avoided.

When Col. SNELLING was in command at the fort he inflicted summary punishment on several Dakotas who had fired on a company of Chippewas who were encamped under the walls of Fort Snelling. They were arrested and handed over to the Chippewas, who shot them by the river, just above the fort, and their dead bodies were thrown over the precipice by the soldiers of the garrison.

This prompt and severe act of Col. SNELLING'S made a salutary impression on the minds of both Chippewas and Dakotas, and for a time there was a suspension of hostilities, at least among those Indians who lived at no great distance from the fort. But the war was gradually renewed, and from 1835 onward there were probably, including the massacre on Rum River, quite as many killed as there would have been if there had been no United States troops in the country.

Such a slaughter as that of the Mille Lacs Indians could hardly have been in the ordinary course of Indian warfare. The Chippewas would not have brought their women and children into the heart of the enemies' country and left them unprotected, if they had not depended on the garrison at the fort for protection. There was another thing which caused the death of many whose lives would have been spared, if our Government had left the Indians to prosecute their wars in their own way. They were compelled to restore all captives taken in war, and they preferred scalps around which they could dance, to captives whom they could not retain. This was the avowed reason, and doubtless the true reason why none of the Mille Lacs Indians were captured. For many years, with very few exceptions, neither Dakotas nor Chippewas spared any of their enemies who fell into their hands, and this indiscriminate slaughter of all women and children would materially increase the number of the slain.

I think we may reasonably conclude that the loss of life in the war carried on between the Dakotas and their enemies, was not much, if any less, most of the time after Fort Snelling was built, than it was before. We know that Indian wars have

sometimes been very destructive of human life. Weak tribes have been nearly exterminated. But these cases were rare. Indian wars are prosecuted with the utmost caution on both sides. Even war parties are very careful to keep out of danger, and every child is taught from infancy to be always on guard against the wiles of the enemy. This constant watchfulness renders it very difficult to take them by surprise. No indication of the proximity of an enemy is unheeded. Every unusual alarm among beasts or birds is noticed, and every suspicious track is carefully examined. Such suspicious, incessant watchfulness is the source of many false alarms, but it tends greatly to their security, so that though the Indians spend much time in war, they spend most of that time in vain, and as I have said before, a large majority of war parties return without scalps.

The Dakotas had traditionary accounts of very few battles where many were killed, yet such an event, if it occurred, would not be soon forgotten. They often spoke of an attack made by the Chippewas long ago, on a party of Dakotas who were encamped by the Mississippi, where Prescott now stands, in which many Dakotas were killed. Also of a very successful winter campaign made by them against the Chippewas some seventy or eighty years ago. But they told of very few great battles or great slaughters, and had preserved no definite account of the number killed. It is probable that some years, perhaps often, they lost more by murder and suicide than by war.

Some persons who have resided in this country during the last thirty-five or forty years, will remember many interesting incidents connected with Indian hostilities, and if any of them read this paper they may wonder why so many of these events are passed over in silence. But to relate them all with any particularity would require a large volume, and my purpose was only to write a short article.

Shakopee, March, 1870.



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