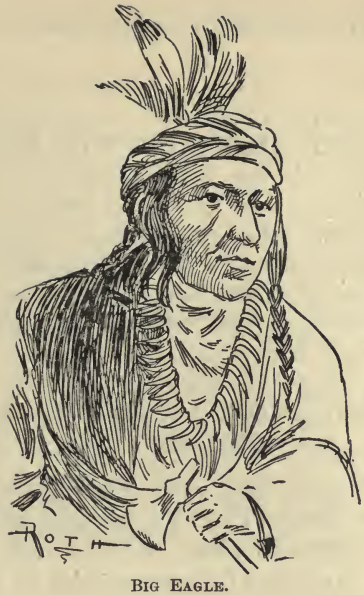
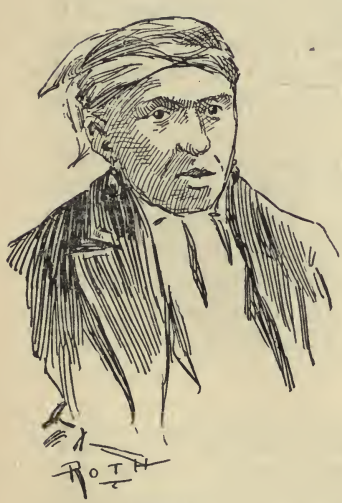
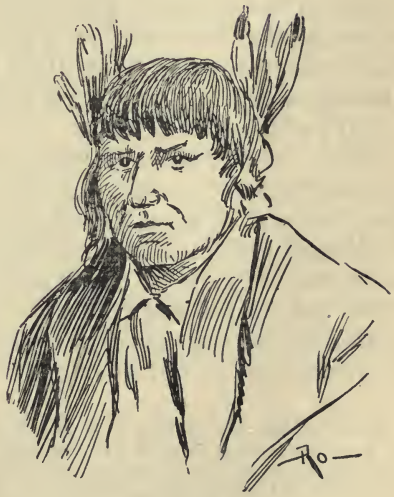


BIG EAGLE.



MANKATO.



RED LEGS.

Group of Sioux Leaders.

(See Page 383.)

A SIOUX STORY OF THE WAR.

THE INDIANS' SIDE OF THE STORY, TOLD BY ONE OF THEIR LEADERS — THE STORY FROM OUTBREAK TO SURRENDER — WHY AND HOW THE SIOUX FOUGHT — CAUSES OF THE WAR, COMMENTS ON THE CAMPAIGNS, AND BATTLE MEMORIES OF FORT RIDGELY, NEW ULM, BIRCH COULIE, WOOD LAKE, ETC., ETC.

CHIEF BIG EAGLE'S STORY OF THE SIOUX OUTBREAK OF 1862.

The stories of the great Sioux war in Minnesota in 1862 never grow old. They are always new to many and never dull to anybody. Although thirty-two years, nearly a third of a century, have passed since that eventful episode, yet to many it seems but a few months since barbarism rode rampant over a great part of the state, and civilization, gashed and bleeding, was prone on the prairies, with none to bind up the wounds. All over the state are survivors of that terrible contest who remember its incidents and relate them as if the crack of the rifle and the din of the war-whoop yet rang in their ears. The story is always of interest to them.

There are two sides to this as to every other story. The version of the white people ought to be well enough known. But the Indian side, strangely enough, has not been recorded. The soldiers of the Union read no stories of the great Rebellion with more interest than the narratives of the ex-Confederates, and we never got the full and true story of the war until they began to write. So we can never fully understand the Sioux war of 1862 until the Indians tell their story.

In June, 1894, Mr. Robert I. Holcombe of St. Paul (who had become familiar with the history of Gen. Sibley's campaigns against the Sioux in 1862 and 1863, from having been employed several months in examining and classifying the letters and papers of Gen. Sibley for the Minnesota Historical society), made a trip to Flandrau, S. D., to get from Mrs. Huggan and others the Indians' side of the story of the great outbreak of 1862. He there met Big Eagle, a chief, who had taken part with Little Crow in the battles, but had not been engaged in the massacre of whites. His narrative was taken down from his own lips, through Mrs. Huggan, Rev. Mr. Eastman and other competent interpreters. (This story was first published in the St. Paul Pioneer Press, July 1, 1894.)

Perhaps the most notable survivor of the old Sioux hostiles is Mr. Jerome Big Eagle, now residing near Granite Falls, in this state. His true Christian name, however, is Elijah. His Indian name is "Wamdetonka," which literally means Great War Eagle, but he was commonly called Big Eagle. The Sioux for the common bald eagle is "hu-ya" and "wamde" means war eagle, "tonka" meaning great or big. He was a sub-chief, and may be termed one of the Sioux generals, since he had a band or division of his own. A representative of the Pioneer Press, who for some time has been engaged in the work referred to, recently interviewed Mr. Big Eagle at Flandrau, S. D., where he was temporarily on a visit, upon the subject of the war of 1862. He cannot speak English, and Rev. John Eastman of Flandrau, an educated and intelligent gentleman, and Mrs. Nancy Huggan, a sketch of whose adventurous life appears in this volume, kindly acted as interpreters during the "talk," which lasted several hours.

Mr. Big Eagle was first informed that his statements were wanted solely in order that a correct knowledge of the military movements of the Indians during the war might be learned. It was suggested to him that no harm therefrom could come to him or any of his people; that neither the war banner nor the "bloody shirt" waved any longer in Minnesota; that it was well known that he was a prominent character in the war, but that he was now and had been for many years a quiet, industrious Christian citizen, respected by all who knew him, and he was assured that he would be correctly reported. He readily consented to tell his story, and gave full permission to use his name. Other Indians interviewed on the same subject gave certain information, but requested that their names be not printed. Big Eagle's story is here given substantially as related to the reporter by the two intelligent interpreters, or at least as it was understood.

The old man was very frank and unreserved. He did not seem to wish to avoid or evade an answer to a single question. He is of more than ordinary intelligence, and spoke candidly, deliberately and impassively, and with the air and manner of one striving to tell "the whole truth and nothing but the truth." He proved a mine of information, and his story contains many items of history never before published.

(The portraits of Big Eagle, Red Legs and Blue Earth, shown on page 381, are from photographs taken in 1858, when on

their way to Washington, and which are now in the possession of the Historical society.)

"I was born in the Indian village of my father near Mendota, in 1827, and am now sixty-seven years old. My father was Grey Iron, a sub-chief of the Midawa-xanton Sioux. When he died I succeeded him as chief of the band and adopted the name of his father, Wambde-tonka, which, as is commonly called, means the Big Eagle. When I was a young man I often went with war parties against the Chippewas and other enemies of my nation, and the six feathers shown in the head-dress of my picture in the Historical society at St. Paul stand for six Chippewa scalps that I took when on the warpath. By the terms of the treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota in 1851, the Sioux sold all of their lands in Minnesota, except a strip ten miles wide on each side of the Minnesota river from near Fort Ridgely to the Big Stone lake. The Medawakantons and Wacoutas had their reservation up to the Yellow Medicine. In 1858 the ten miles of this strip belonging to the Medawakanton and Wacouta bands, and lying north of the river were sold, mainly through the influence of Little Crow. That year, with some other chiefs, I went to Washington on business connected with the treaty. The selling of that strip north of the Minnesota caused great dissatisfaction among the Sioux, and Little Crow was always blamed for the part he took in the sale. It caused us all to move to the south side of the river, where there was but very little game, and many of our people, under the treaty, were induced to give up the old life and go to work like white men, which was very distasteful to many.

"Of the causes that led to the outbreak of August, 1862, much has been said. Of course it was wrong, as we all know now, but there were not many Christians among the Indians then, and they did not understand things as they should. There was great dissatisfaction among the Indians over many things the whites did. The whites would not let them go to war against their enemies. This was right, but the Indians did not then know it. Then the whites were always trying to make the Indians give up their life and live like white men—go to farming, work hard and do as they did—and the Indians did not know how to do that, and did not want to anyway. It seemed too sudden to make such a change. If the Indians had tried to make the whites live like them, the whites would have resisted, and it was the same way with many Indians. The Indi-

ans wanted to live as they did before the treaty of Traverse des Sioux—go where they pleased and when they pleased; hunt game wherever they could find it, sell their furs to the traders and live as they could.

"Then the Indians did not think the traders had done right. The Indians bought goods of them on credit, and when the government payments came the traders were on hand with their books, which showed that the Indians owed so much and so much, and as the Indians kept no books they could not deny their accounts, but had to pay them, and sometimes the traders got all their money. I do not say that the traders always cheated and lied about these accounts. I know many of them were honest men and kind and accommodating, but since I have been a citizen I know that many white men, when they go to pay their accounts, often think them too large and refuse to pay them, and they go to law about them and there is much bad feeling. The Indians could not go to law, but there was always trouble over their credits. Under the treaty of Traverse des Sioux the Indians had to pay a very large sum of money to the traders for old debts, some of which ran back fifteen years, and many of those who had got the goods were dead and others were not present, and the traders' books had to be received as to the amounts, and the money was taken from the tribe to pay them. Of course the traders often were of great service to the Indians in letting them have goods on credit, but the Indians seemed to think the traders ought not to be too hard on them about the payments, but do as the Indians did among one another, and put off the payment until they were better able to make it.

"Then many of the white men often abused the Indians and treated them unkindly. Perhaps they had excuse, but the Indians did not think so. Many of the whites always seemed to say by their manner when they saw an Indian, 'I am much better than you,' and the Indians did not like this. There was excuse for this, but the Dakotas did not believe there were better men in the world than they. Then some of the white men abused the Indian women in a certain way and disgraced them, and surely there was no excuse for that.

"All these things made many Indians dislike the whites. Then a little while before the outbreak there was trouble among the Indians themselves. Some of the Indians took a sen-

sible course and began to live like white men. The government built them houses, furnished them tools, seed, etc., and taught them to farm. At the two agencies, Yellow Medicine and Redwood, there were several hundred acres of land in cultivation that summer. Others staid in their tepees. There was a white man's party and an Indian party. We had politics among us and there was much feeling. A new chief speaker for the tribe was to be elected. There were three candidates—Little Crow, myself and Wa-sui-hi-ya-ye-dan ('Traveling Hail'). After an exciting contest Traveling Hail was elected. Little Crow felt sore over his defeat. Many of our tribe believed him responsible for the sale of the north ten-mile strip, and I think this was why he was defeated. I did not care much about it. Many whites think that Little Crow was the principal chief of the Dakotas at this time, but he was not. Wabasha was the principal chief, and he was of the white man's party; so was I; so was old Shakopee, whose band was very large. Many think if old Shakopee had lived there would have been no war, for he was for the white men and had great influence. But he died that summer, and was succeeded by his son, whose real name was Ea-to-ka ('Another Language'), but when he became chief he took his father's name, and was afterwards called 'Little Shakopee,' or 'Little Six,' for in the Sioux language 'Shakopee' means six. This Shakopee was against the white men. He took part in the outbreak, murdering women and children, but I never saw him in a battle, and he was caught in Manitoba and hanged in 1864. My brother, Medicine Bottle, was hanged with him.

"As the summer advanced, there was great trouble among the Sioux—troubles among themselves, troubles with the whites, and one thing and another. The war with the South was going on then, and a great many men had left the state and gone down there to fight. A few weeks before the outbreak the president called for many more men, and a great many of the white men of Minnesota and some half-breeds enlisted and went to Fort Snelling to be sent South. We understood that the South was getting the best of the fight, and it was said that the North would be whipped. The year before the new president had turned out Maj. Brown and Maj. Cullen, the Indian agents, and put in their places Maj. Galbraith and Mr. Clark Thompson, and they had turned out the men under them and put in others of

their own party. There were a great many changes. An Indian named Shonka-sha ('White Dog'), who had been hired to teach the Indians to farm, was removed and another Indian named Ta-opi ('The Wounded Man'), a son of old Betsy, of St. Paul, put in his place. Nearly all of the men who were turned out were dissatisfied, and the most of the Indians did not like the new men. At last Maj. Galbraith went to work about the agencies and recruited a company of soldiers to go South. His men were nearly all half-breeds. This was the company called the Renville Rangers, for they were mostly from Renville county. The Indians now thought the whites must be pretty hard up for men to fight the South, or they would not come so far out on the frontier and take half-breeds or anything to help them.

"It began to be whispered about that now would be a good time to go to war with the whites and get back the lands. It was believed that the men who had enlisted last had all left the state, and that before help could be sent the Indians could clean out the country, and that the Winnebagoes, and even the Chippewas, would assist the Sioux. It was also thought that a war with the whites would cause the Sioux to forget the troubles among themselves and enable many of them to pay off some old scores. Though I took part in the war, I was against it. I knew there was no good cause for it, and I had been to Washington and knew the power of the whites and that they would finally conquer us. We might succeed for a time, but we would be overpowered and defeated at last. I said all this and many more things to my people, but many of my own bands were against me, and some of the other chiefs put words in their mouths to say to me. When the outbreak came Little Crow told some of my band that if I refused to lead them to shoot me as a traitor who would not stand up for his nation, and then select another leader in my place.

"But after the first talk of war the counsels of the peace Indians prevailed, and many of us thought the danger had all blown over. The time of the government payment was near at hand, and this may have had something to do with it. There was another thing that helped to stop the war talk. The crops that had been put in by the 'farmer' Indians were looking well, and there seemed to be a good prospect for a plentiful supply of provisions for them the coming winter without having to depend on the game of the country or without going far out to the west

on the plains for buffalo. It seemed as if the white men's way was certainly the best. Many of the Indians had been short of provisions that summer and had exhausted their credits and were in bad condition. 'Now,' said the farmer Indians, 'if you had worked last season you would not be starving now and begging for food.' The 'farmers' were favored by the government in every way. They had houses built for them, some of them even had brick houses, and they were not allowed to suffer. The other Indians did not like this. They were envious of them and jealous, and disliked them because they had gone back on the customs of the tribe and because they were favored. They called them 'farmers,' as if it was disgraceful to be a farmer. They called them 'cut-hairs,' because they had given up the Indian fashion of wearing the hair, and 'breeches men,' because they wore pantaloons, and 'Dutchmen,' because so many of the settlers on the north side of the river and elsewhere in the country were Germans. I have heard that there was a secret organization of the Indians called the 'Soldiers' Lodge,' whose object was to declare war against the whites, but I knew nothing of it.

"At last the time for the payment came and the Indians came in to the agencies to get their money. But the paymaster did not come, and week after week went by and still he did not come. The payment was to be in gold. Somebody told the Indians that the payment would never be made. The government was in a great war, and gold was scarce, and paper money had taken its place, and it was said the gold could not be had to pay us. Then the trouble began again and the war talk started up. Many of the Indians who had gathered about the agencies were out of provisions and were easily made angry. Still, most of us thought the trouble would pass, and we said nothing about it. I thought there might be trouble, but I had no idea there would be such a war. Little Crow and other chiefs did not think so. But it seems some of the tribe were getting ready for it.

"You know how the war started—by the killing of some white people near Acton, in Meeker county. I will tell you how this was done, as it was told me by all of the four young men who did the killing. These young fellows all belonged to Shakopee's band. Their names were Sungigidan ('Brown Wing'), Ka-om-de-i-ye-ye-dan ('Breaking Up'), Nagi-wi-cak-te

('Killing Ghost'), and Pa-zo-i-yo-pa ('Runs against Something when Crawling') I do not think their names have ever before been printed. One of them is yet living. They told me they did not go out to kill white people. They said they went over into the Big Woods to hunt; that on Sunday, Aug. 17, they came to a settler's fence, and here they found a hen's nest with some eggs in it. One of them took the eggs, when another said: 'Don't take them, for they belong to a white man and we may get into trouble.' The other was angry, for he was very hungry and wanted to eat the eggs, and he dashed them to the ground and replied: 'You are a coward. You are afraid of the white man. You are afraid to take even an egg from him, though you are half-starved. Yes, you are a coward, and I will tell everybody so.' The other replied: 'I am not a coward. I am not afraid of the white man, and to show you that I am not I will go to the house and shoot him. Are you brave enough to go with me?' The one who had called him a coward said: 'Yes, I will go with you, and we will see who is the braver of us two.' Their two companions then said: 'We will go with you, and we will be brave, too.' They all went to the house of the white man (Mr. Robinson Jones), but he got alarmed and went to another house (that of his son-in-law, Howard Baker), where were some other white men and women. The four Indians followed them and killed three men and two women (Jones, Baker, a Mr. Webster, Mrs. Jones and a girl of fourteen). Then they hitched up a team belonging to another settler and drove to Shakopee's camp six miles above Redwood agency), which they reached late that night and told what they had done, as I have related.

"The tale told by the young men created the greatest excitement. Everybody was waked up and heard it. Shakopee took the young men to Little Crow's house (two miles above the agency), and he sat up in bed and listened to their story. He said war was now declared. Blood had been shed, the payment would be stopped, and the whites would take a dreadful vengeance because women had been killed. Wabasha, Wacouta, myself and others still talked for peace, but nobody would listen to us, and soon the cry was 'Kill the whites and kill all these cut-hairs who will not join us.' A council was held and war was declared. Parties formed and dashed away in the darkness to kill settlers. The women began to run bullets and the men to clean their guns. Little Crow gave orders to attack the agency

early next morning and to kill all the traders. When the Indians first came to him for counsel and advice he said to them, tauntingly: 'Why do you come to me for advice? Go to the man you elected speaker (Traveling Hail) and let him tell you what to do'; but he soon came around all right and somehow took the lead in everything, though he was not head chief, as I have said.

"At this time my village was up on Crow creek, near Little Crow's. I did not have a very large band—not more than thirty or forty fighting men. Most of them were not for the war at first, but nearly all got into it at last. A great many members of the other bands were like my men; they took no part in the first movements, but afterward did. The next morning, when the force started down to attack the agency, I went along. I did not lead my band, and I took no part in the killing. I went to save the lives of two particular friends if I could. I think others went for the same reason, for nearly every Indian had a friend that he did not want killed; of course he did not care about anybody's else friend. The killing was nearly all done when I got there. Little Crow was on the ground directing operations. The day before, he had attended church there and listened closely to the sermon and had shaken hands with everybody. So many Indians have lied about their saving the lives of white people that I dislike to speak of what I did. But I did save the life of George H. Spencer at the time of the massacre. I know that his friend, Chaska, has always had the credit of that, but Spencer would have been a dead man in spite of Chaska if it had not been for me. I asked Spencer about this once, but he said he was wounded at the time and so excited that he could not remember what I did. Once after that I kept a half-breed family from being murdered; these are all the people whose lives I claim to have saved. I was never present when the white people were willfully murdered. I saw all the dead bodies at the agency. Mr. Andrew Myrick, a trader, with an Indian wife, had refused some hungry Indians credit a short time before when they asked him for some provisions. He said to them: 'Go and eat grass.' Now he was lying on the ground dead, with his mouth stuffed full of grass, and the Indians were saying tauntingly: 'Myrick is eating grass himself.'

"When I returned to my village that day I found that many of my band had changed their minds about the war, and wanted

to go into it. All the other villages were the same way. I was still of the belief that it was not best, but I thought I must go with my band and my nation, and I said to my men that I would lead them into the war, and we would all act like brave Dakotas and do the best we could. All my men were with me; none had gone off on raids, but we did not have guns for all at first.

"That afternoon word came to my village that soldiers were coming to the agency from Fort Snelling. (These were Capt. Marsh and his men.) At once I mounted the best horse I had, and, with some of my men, rode as fast as I could to meet them at the ferry. But when I got there the fight was over, and I well remember that a cloud of powder smoke was rising slowly from the low, wet ground where the firing had been. I heard a few scattering shots down the river, where the Indians were still pursuing the soldiers, but I took no part. I crossed the river and saw the bodies of the soldiers that had been killed. I think Mr. Quinn, the interpreter, was shot several times after he had been killed. The Indians told me that the most of them who fired on Capt. Marsh and his men were on the same side of the river; that only a few shots came from the opposite or south side. They said that White Dog did not tell Mr. Quinn to come over, but told him to go back. Of course I do not know what the truth is about this. White Dog was the Indian head farmer who had been replaced by Taopi and who was hanged at Mankato.

"I was not in the first fight at New Ulm nor the first attack on Fort Ridgely. Here let me say that the Indian names of these and other places in Minnesota are different from the English names. St. Paul is the 'White Rock;' Minneapolis is 'the Place Where the Water Falls;' New Ulm is 'the Place Where There Is a Cottonwood Grove on the River;' Fort Ridgely was 'the Soldiers' House;' Birch Coulie was called 'Birch Creek,' etc. I was in the second fight at New Ulm and in the second attack on Fort Ridgely. At New Ulm I had but a few of my band with me. We lost none of them. We had but few, if any, of the Indians killed; at least I did not hear of but a few. A half-breed named George Le Blanc, who was with us, was killed. There was no one in chief command of the Indians at New Ulm. A few sub-chiefs, like myself, and the head soldiers led them, and the leaders agreed among themselves what was to be done.

I do not think there was a chief present at the first fight. I think that attack was made by marauding Indians from several bands, every man for himself, but when we heard they were fighting we went down to help them. I think it probable that the first attack on Fort Ridgely was made in the same way; at any rate, I do not remember that there was a chief there.

"The second fight at Fort Ridgely was made a grand affair. Little Crow was with us. Mr. Good Thunder, now at Birch Coulie agency, was with us. He counted the Indians as they filed past him on the march to the attack, and reported that there were 800 of us. He acted very bravely in the fight, and distinguished himself by running close up to the fort and bringing away a horse. He is now married to the former widow of White Dog, and both he and his wife are good Christian citizens. We went down determined to take the fort, for we knew it was of the greatest importance to us to have it. If we could take it we would soon have the whole Minnesota valley. But we failed, and of course it was best that we did fail.

"Though Little Crow was present, he did not take a very active part in the fight. As I remember, the chief leaders in the fight were 'The Thief,' who was the head soldier of Mankato's band, and Mankato ('Blue Earth') himself. This Mankato was not the old chief for whom the town was named, but a subchief, the son of old Good Road. He was a very brave man and a good leader. He was killed at the battle of Wood lake by a cannon ball. We went down to the attack on both sides of the river. I went down on the south side with my men, and we crossed the river in front of the fort and went up through the timber and fought on that side next the river. The fight commenced about noon on Friday after the outbreak. We had a few Sissetons and Wakpatons with us, and some Winnebagoes, under the 'Little Priest,' were in this fight and at New Ulm. I saw them myself. But for the cannon I think we would have taken the fort. The soldiers fought us so bravely we thought there were more of them than there were. The cannons disturbed us greatly, but did not hurt many. We did not have many Indians killed. I think the whites put the number too large, and I think they overestimated the number killed in every battle. We seldom carried off our dead. We usually buried them in a secluded place on the battle-field when we could. We always tried to carry away the wounded. When we re-

treated from Ridgely I recrossed the river opposite the fort and went up on the south side. All our army but the scouts fell back up the river to our villages near Redwood agency, and then on up to the Yellow Medicine and the mouth of the Chippewa.

"Our scouts brought word that our old friend Wapetonhonska ('The Long Trader'), as we called Gen. Sibley, was coming up against us, and in a few days we learned that he had come to Fort Ridgely with a large number of soldiers. Little Crow, with a strong party, went over into the Big Woods, towards Forest City and Hutchinson. After he had gone, I and the other sub-chiefs concluded to go down and attack New Ulm again and take the town and cross the river to the east, or in the rear of Fort Ridgely, where Sibley was, and then our movements were to be governed by circumstances. We had left our village near the Redwood in some haste and alarm, expecting to be followed after the defeat at Ridgely, and had not taken all our property away. So we took many of our women with us to gather up the property and some other things, and we brought along some wagons to haul them off.

"We came down the main road on the south side of the river, and were several hundred strong. We left our camps in the morning and got to our old villages in the afternoon. When the men in advance reached Little Crow's village—which was on the high bluff on the south side of the Minnesota, below the mouth of the Redwood—they looked to the north across the valley, and up on the high bluff on the north side, and out on the prairie some miles away, they saw a column of mounted men and some wagons coming out of the Beaver creek timber on the prairie and going eastward. We also saw signs in Little Crow's village that white men had been there only a few hours before, and judging from the trail they had made when they left, these were the men we now saw to the northward. There was, of course, a little excitement, and the column halted. Four or five of our best scouts were sent across the valley to follow the movements of the soldiers, creeping across the prairie like so many ants. It was near sundown, and we knew they would soon go into camp, and we thought the camping ground would be somewhere on the Birch Coulie, where there was wood and water. The women went to work to load the wagons. The scouts followed the soldiers carefully, and a little after sundown returned with the information that they had gone into

camp near the head of Birch Coulie. At this time we did not know there were two companies there. We thought the company of mounted men (Capt. Anderson's) was all, and that there were not more than seventy-five men.

"It was concluded to surround the camp that night and attack it at daylight. We felt sure we could capture it, and that 200 men would be enough for the undertaking. So about that number was selected. There were four bands—my own, Husha-sha's ('Red Legs'), Gray Bird's and Mankato's. I had about thirty men. Nearly all the Indians had double-barreled shotguns, and we loaded them with buckshot and large bullets called 'traders' balls.' After dark we started, crossed the river and valley, went up the bluffs and on the prairie, and soon we saw the white tents and the wagons of the camp. We had no difficulty in surrounding the camp. The pickets were only a little way from it. I led my men up from the west through the grass and took up a position 200 yards from the camp, behind a small knoll or elevation. Red Legs took his men into the coulie east of the camp. Mankato ('Blue Earth') had some of his men in the coulie and some on the prairie. Gray Bird and his men were mostly on the prairie.

"Just at dawn the fight began. It continued all day and the following night until late the next morning. Both sides fought well. Owing to the white men's way of fighting they lost many men. Owing to the Indians' way of fighting they lost but few. The white men stood up and exposed themselves at first, but at last they learned to keep quiet. The Indians always took care of themselves. We had an easy time of it. We could crawl through the grass and into the coulie and get water when we wanted it, and after a few hours our women crossed the river and came up near the bluff and cooked for us, and we could go back and eat and then return to the fight. We did not lose many men. Indeed, I only saw two dead Indians, and I never heard that any more were killed. The two I saw were in the coulie and belonged to Red Legs' band. One was a Wakpaton named Ho-ton-na ('Animal's Voice') and the other was a Sisseton. Their bodies were taken down the coulie and buried during the fight. I did not see a man killed on the prairie. We had several men wounded, but none very badly. I did not see the incident which is related of an Indian, a brother of Little Crow, who, it is said, rode up on a white horse near the camp with a

white flag and held a parley and had his horse killed as he rode away. That must have happened while I was absent from the field eating my dinner. Little Crow had no brother there. The White Spider was not there. I think Little Crow's brothers were with him in the Big Woods at this time. The only Indian horse I saw killed that I remember was a bay. Buffalo Ghost succeeded in capturing a horse from the camp. Late in the day some of the men who had been left in the villages came over on their horses to see what the trouble was that the camp had not been taken, and they rode about the prairie for a time, but I don't think many of them got into the fight. I do not remember that we got many re-enforcements that day. If we got any, they must have come up the coulie and I did not see them. Perhaps some horsemen came up on the east side of the coulie, but I knew nothing about it. I am sure no re-enforcements came to me. I did not need any. Our circle about the camp was rather small and we could only use a certain number of men.

"About the middle of the afternoon our men became much dissatisfied at the slowness of the fight, and the stubbornness of the whites, and the word was passed around the lines to get ready to charge the camp. The brave Mankato wanted to charge after the first hour. There were some half-breeds with the whites who could speak Sioux well, and they heard us arranging to assault them. Jack Frazer told me afterward that he heard us talking about it very plainly. Alex Faribault was there and heard the talk and called out to us: 'You do very wrong to fire on us. We did not come out to fight; we only came out to bury the bodies of the white people you killed.' I have heard that Faribault, Frazer and another half-breed dug a rifle pit for themselves with bayonets, and that Faribault worked so hard with his bayonet in digging that he wore the flesh from the inside of his hand. One half-breed named Louis Bourier attempted to desert to us, but as he was running towards us some of our men shot and killed him. We could have taken the camp, I think. During the fight the whites had thrown up breastworks, but they were not very high and we could easily have jumped over them. We did not know that Maj. Joe Brown was there; if we had, I think some of our men would have charged anyhow, for they wanted him out of the way. Some years ago I saw Capt. Grant in St. Paul and he told me he was in command of the camp at Birch Coulie.

"Just as we were about to charge word came that a large number of mounted soldiers were coming up from the east toward Fort Ridgely. This stopped the charge and created some excitement. Mankato at once took some men from the coulie and went out to meet them. He told me he did not take more than fifty, but he scattered them out and they all yelled and made such a noise that the whites must have thought there were a great many more, and they stopped on the prairie and began fighting. They had a cannon and used it, but it did no harm. If the Indians had any men killed in the fight I never heard of it. Mankato flourished his men around so, and all the Indians in the coulie kept up a noise, and at last the whites began to fall back, and they retreated about two miles and began to dig breastworks. Mankato followed them and left about thirty men to watch them, and returned to the fight at the coulie with the rest. The Indians were laughing when they came back at the way they had deceived the white men, and we were all glad that the whites had not pushed forward and driven us away. If any more Indians went against this force than the fifty or possibly seventy-five that I have told you of I never heard of it. I was not with them and cannot say positively, but I do not think there were. I went out to near the fortified camp during the night, and there was no large force of Indians over there, and I know there were not more than thirty of our men watching the camp. When the men of this force began to fall back, the whites in the camp hallooed and made a great commotion, as if they were begging them to return and relieve them, and seemed much distressed that they did not.

"The next morning Gen. Sibley came with a very large force and drove us away from the field. We took our time about getting away. Some of our men said they remained till Sibley got up and that they fired at some of his men as they were shaking hands with some of the men of the camp. Those of us who were on the prairie went back to the westward and on down the valley. Those in the coulie went down back southward to where their horses were, and then mounted and rode westward across the prairie about a mile south of the battle-field. There was no pursuit. The whites fired their cannons at us as we were leaving the field, but they might as well have beaten a big drum for all the harm they did. They only made a noise. We went back across the river to our camps in the old villages, and then

on up the river to the Yellow Medicine and the mouth of the Chippewa, where Little Crow joined us.

"For some time after the fight at Birch Coulie the greater part of the Indians remained in the camps about the Yellow Medicine and the mouth of the Chippewa. At last the word came that Sibley with his army was again on the move against us. Our scouts were very active and vigilant, and we heard from him nearly every hour. He had left a letter for Little Crow in a split stick on the battle-field of Birch Coulie, and some of our men found it and brought it in, and correspondence had been going on between us ever since. Tom Robinson and Joe Campbell, half-breed prisoners, wrote the letters for Little Crow. It seems that some letters were written to Gen. Sibley by the half-breeds which Little Crow never saw. I and others understood from the half-breeds that Gen. Sibley would treat with all of us who had only been soldiers and would surrender as prisoners of war, and that only those who had murdered people in cold blood, the settlers and others, would be punished in any way. There was great dissatisfaction among us at our condition. Many wanted to surrender; others left us for the West. But Sibley came on and on, and at last came the battle of Wood lake.

"When we learned that Sibley had gone into camp at the Wood lake, a council of the sub-chiefs and others was held and it was determined to give him a battle near there. I think the lake now called Battle lake was the old-time Wood lake. As I understand it, there once were some cottonwoods about it, and the Indians called it 'M'da-chan'—Wood lake. The larger lake, two miles west, now called Wood lake, was always known to me by the Indian name of 'Hinta hauk-pay-an wo-ju,' meaning literally, 'the Planting Place of the Man who ties his Moccasins with Basswood Bark.' We soon learned that Sibley had thrown up breastworks and it was not deemed safe to attack him at the lake. We concluded that the fight should be about a mile or more to the northwest of the lake, on the road along which the troops would march. This was the road leading to the upper country, and of course Sibley would travel it. At the point determined on we planned to hide a large number of men on the side of the road. Near the lake, in a ravine formed by the outlet, we were to place another strong body. Behind a hill to the west were to be some more men. We thought that

when Sibley marched out along the road and when the head of his column had reached the farther end of the line of our first division, our men would open fire. The men in the ravine would then be in the rear of the whites and would begin firing on that end of the column. The men from behind the hill would rush out and attack the flank, and then we had horsemen far out on the right and left who would come up. We expected to throw the whole white force into confusion by the sudden and unexpected attack and defeat them before they could rally.

"I think this was a good plan of battle. Our concealed men would not have been discovered. The grass was tall and the place by the road and the ravine were good hiding places. We had learned that Sibley was not particular about sending out scouts and examining the country before he passed it. He had a number of mounted men, but they always rode together, at the head of the column, when on a march, and did not examine the ground at the sides of the road. The night he lay at Wood lake his pickets were only a short distance from camp—less than half a mile. When we were putting our men into position that night we often saw them plainly. I worked hard that night fixing the men. Little Crow was on the field, too. Mankato was there. Indeed, all our fighting chiefs were present and all our best fighting Indians. We felt that this would be the deciding fight of the war. The whites were unconscious. We could hear them laughing and singing. When all our preparations were made Little Crow and I and some other chiefs went to the mound or hill to the west so as to watch the fight better when it should commence. There were numbers of other Indians there.

"The morning came and an accident spoiled all our plans. For some reason Sibley did not move early as we expected he would. Our men were lying hidden waiting patiently. Some were very near the camp lines in the ravine, but the whites did not see a man of all our men. I do not think they would have discovered our ambuscade. It seemed a considerable time after sun-up when some four or five wagons with a number of soldiers started out from the camp in the direction of the old Yellow Medicine agency. We learned afterwards that they were going without orders to dig potatoes over at the agency, five miles away. They came on over the prairie, right where part of our line was. Some of the wagons were not in the road, and if they had kept straight on would have driven right over our men

as they lay in the grass. At last they came so close that our men had to rise up and fire. This brought on the fight, of course, but not according to the way we had planned it. Little Crow saw it and felt very badly.

"Of course you know how the battle was fought. The Indians that were in the fight did well, but hundreds of our men did not get into it and did not fire a shot. They were out too far. The men in the ravine and the line connecting them with those on the road did the most of the fighting. Those of us on the hill did our best, but we were soon driven off. Mankato was killed here, and we lost a very good and brave war chief. He was killed by a cannon ball that was so nearly spent that he was not afraid of it, and it struck him in the back, as he lay on the ground, and killed him. The whites drove our men out of the ravine by a charge and that ended the battle. We retreated in some disorder, though the whites did not offer to pursue us. We crossed a wide prairie, but their horsemen did not follow us. We lost fourteen or fifteen men killed and quite a number wounded. Some of the wounded died afterwards, but I do not know how many. We carried off no dead bodies, but took away all our wounded. The whites scalped all our dead men—so I have heard.

"Soon after the battle I, with many others who had taken part in the war, surrendered to Gen. Sibley. Robinson and the other half-breeds assured us that if we would do this we would only be held as prisoners of war a short time, but as soon as I surrendered I was thrown into prison. Afterward I was tried and served three years in the prison at Davenport and the penitentiary at Rock Island for taking part in the war. On my trial a great number of the white prisoners, women and others, were called up, but not one of them could testify that I had murdered any one or had done anything to deserve death, or else I would have been hanged. If I had known that I would be sent to the penitentiary I would not have surrendered, but when I had been in the penitentiary three years and they were about to turn me out, I told them they might keep me another year if they wished, and I meant what I said. I did not like the way I had been treated. I surrendered in good faith, knowing that many of the whites were acquainted with me and that I had not been a murderer, or present when a murder had been committed, and if I had killed or wounded a man it had been in fair.

open fight. But all feeling on my part about this has long since passed away. For years I have been a Christian and I hope to die one. My white neighbors and friends know my character as a citizen and a man. I am at peace with every one, whites and Indians. I am getting to be an old man, but I am still able to work. I am poor, but I manage to get along. This is my second wife, and this little girl is our adopted daughter. I will come and see you when I come to St. Paul. Good-bye."