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MOSES N. ADAMS

A Missionary as Indian Agent

EVERETT W. STERLING

EARLY in President Grant's administration the department of the interior invited the principal church groups of the country to co-operate in a new method of administering the Indians under its charge. The program thus initiated came to be known as "Grant's Peace Policy." To ensure honest administration at the national level, prominent public men, including philanthropists, were named to a board of Indian commissioners, whose function it was to oversee the purchase of supplies for the Indians. To secure peace, the government undertook to locate all tribes on reservations,

guaranteed to supply them with means of support, and endeavored to substitute negotiation for military coercion. To speed up the adjustment of Indians to the white civilization which was about to engulf them and to withdraw the Indian service from the realm of party spoils, the nomination of agents was entrusted to various denominations, which were challenged to increase mission work among the Indians given over to their direction.¹

With the introduction of this policy, agencies were assigned to religious groups primarily on the basis of their prior mission activity. Thus, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, an interdenominational missionary society later exclusively Congregational, was given the right to nominate the agent to the Sisseton reservation in what is now South Dakota. Presbyterian missionaries supported by the board had been working among the Sisseton since 1834. Perhaps the best-known representatives of this group are Dr. Thomas S. Williamson and the Reverend Stephen R. Riggs.²

The Sisseton, one of the seven original tribes of the Dakota Indians, are thought to have resided in Minnesota about the headwaters of the Rum River in the latter

¹ See Loring B. Priest, *Uncle Sam's Stepchildren: The Reformation of United States Indian Policy, 1865-1887* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1942); and Robert M. Utley, "The Celebrated Peace Policy of General Grant," in *North Dakota History*, 20:121-142 (July, 1953). The richest printed source of information is the proceedings of the yearly conference of representatives of the co-operating mission societies published with the *Annual Reports* of the Board of Indian Commissioners beginning in 1869.

² Accounts of his mission work by Riggs may be found in *Mary and I* (Boston, 1887), and in "Protestant Missions in the Northwest," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 6:183 (1894). For a general review of the work of the American board among the Sisseton, see William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1:183-212 (St. Paul, 1921); and Moses N. Adams, John P. Williamson, and John B. Renville, *The History of the Dakota Presbytery* (Good Will, South Dakota, 1892).

seventeenth century, and by 1849 their principal village was near Lake Traverse. Following the Sioux Outbreak of 1862, under the provisions of a treaty signed on February 19, 1867, these Indians were moved to a reservation in the northeastern corner of present-day South Dakota.³

For the position of Sisseton agent on this reservation, the American board in December, 1871, suggested the Reverend Moses N. Adams, who was to replace Dr. Jared W. Daniels. The new agent was not unfamiliar with the Indian bands to which he was assigned. As a young graduate of Lane Theological Seminary, he had worked among the Sisseton from 1848 to 1854, when the ill health of his wife forced him to retire to mission work at Traverse des Sioux in the more settled portion of Minnesota.⁴

Adams was to serve as Sisseton agent until May, 1875. His term of office was marked by a sharp clash with the polygamous Chief Gabriel Renville—a clash involving intrigue, resistance, and talk of bloodshed. It was characterized, too, by solid achievement: schools built, lands cultivated, Indian homes constructed, and mission work expanded. But Adams' administration perhaps is most interesting as an experiment in which political control over Indians in a transitional stage between two cultures rested with a minister of the gospel.

THE NEW AGENT went to the reservation a marked man. As a result of his earlier missionary work he was naturally identified with a church faction already existing on the reservation. Under the direction of Riggs, Christian Indians there had recently set up six Presbyterian congregations, each with its own native pastor. The church members constituted the principal element in a faction which opposed the "Scout party," headed by Renville and so called because its members had enlisted as scouts and had co-operated with the army in guarding the Minnesota frontier during

the Sioux Outbreak of 1862. The chief and four of his head men had come into power as a result of the Sisseton-Wahpeton treaty of 1867. They had gained and established their positions largely through the influence of Joseph R. Brown, a prominent Minnesotan who assembled the treaty delegation, escorted it to Washington, and oversaw the drafting of the treaty. The church faction contended that Renville was not properly their chief and, considering his three wives, not a suitable man for the job. The coming of Adams foreshadowed a possible reduction in Renville's authority and was greeted accordingly by both factions.⁵

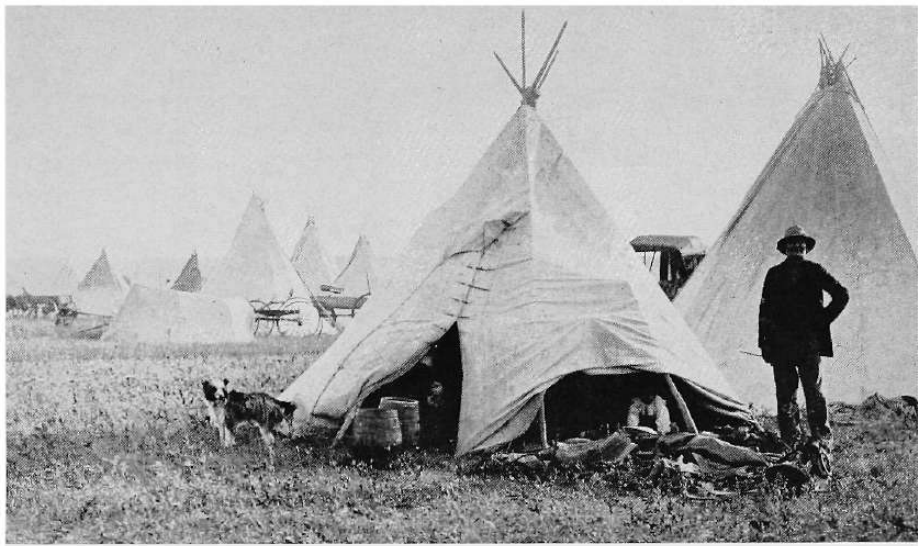
One of the principal objectives of the Peace Policy was to expedite the civilization of the Indians. To Adams, "civilization" was inseparable from acceptance of Christianity, and Christianity with a strongly moral flavor. He saw no distinction, therefore, between his duty as an official representative of the United States government and his calling as a man of the cloth. Indeed, the new Indian policy was inextricably bound up with matters that had always concerned him. Co-operation with the church faction was not, in his opinion, favoritism, but the best means of fostering the advance of the Sisseton in the way directed by official government policy. He felt that if he stood apart from

³ For information on the Sisseton, see Frederick W. Hodge, ed., *Handbook of American Indians*, 2:580-582 (Washington, D.C., 1912). The text of the treaty is given in United States, *Statutes at Large*, 15:505-509.

⁴ A biographical sketch of Adams appears in Warren Upham and Rose B. Dunlap, *Minnesota Biographies*, 5 (*Minnesota Historical Collections*, vol. 14). The Adams Papers, a rich source of information from which much of the material for this article was drawn, are in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society, which also owns the Brown, Cory-Forbes, and Sibley papers cited below.

⁵ On the formation of the church party, see "Narrative of Paul Mazakootemane," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 3:89 (1880). See also chapter 9 of a series of "Reminiscent Articles" by Daniels, a typescript of which is in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society; and Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Reports*, 1869, p. 327.

SISSETON
camp on the
prairie



the dispute between the Scouts and the church members and held aloof as an impartial supervisor, he would negate the very reason for his selection. He refused to simply serve his time, being careful not to give offense to influential elements, but resolved to strive toward the goals set by Grant's policy. Had no factional split existed on the reservation before Adams' arrival, his course of action would have been much the same, and he doubtless would have awakened an opposition much like the one he found.

It should be said further that many of the Indians likewise saw the acceptance of the "white man's way" as requiring the substitution of agriculture for the chase and the replacement of pagan religious practices by the teachings of the Christian missionaries. A few, to be sure, had a more sophisticated view and thought they saw a way of enjoying the best of both worlds, rejecting the more rigorous features of the new civilization. These Indians set their women folk to planting and harvesting, hired out as scouts in a frontier guard, trapped furs to be traded locally, and accepted a brand of Christianity that placed less emphasis upon morals than did the code of the missionaries.

IF THERE was any doubt that Adams would lend his weight as agent to the program of the Christian churches on the res-

ervation, it was quickly dispelled at his first council with the Indians. Late in January they assembled at Good Will, the mission center, and Adams addressed them, setting forth numerous rules and regulations concerning their work, way of life, education, and methods of recreation. The rules touched on observance of the Sabbath, gambling, drinking, family support, and the like. The agent had no authority to impose his proposed regulations and offered them for the consideration of the Indians. Although they were rejected, they showed clearly the line he and members of the church faction hoped to follow.

Adams' proposals reflected the widely accepted idea that, if Indians were to be civilized, they must be made answerable to law in the same way that citizens of the United States were. In his remarks at the council the agent told the Indians that "The proper work of the men is in the field and on the prairie and in the woods. Now if any man will not himself work but is known to drive his wife out to work and reports wood rails hay, etc. work done by the woman, that man shall not have pay for such work done. . . . Should any presume to paint or disfigure their faces and put on eagle feathers, denoting the fact that they have murdered their fellow men or killed other enemies I shall regard this as an evidence that they have not yet left off their old ways nor commenced the new

mode of life and . . . they need not ask me for clothing or sustenance from the supplies designed only for the working and civilized men and women.”⁶

These remarks were occasioned by a novel labor provision contained in the Sisseton treaty of 1867, which specified that food and other supplies would be issued to the Indians on the basis of work performed by them.⁷ Work certificates had accordingly been issued. Some earned by church members were apparently contributed to the native pastors, who in turn presented them at the agency warehouse and drew needed supplies.

THE opposition to Adams’ proposals was not long in making itself heard, and complaints centered about the work certificates. Renville and his men quickly wrote to F. A. Walker, commissioner of Indian affairs, charging that Adams gave supplies to “lazy Indians” of the church faction and asserting that young men of the tribe were turning to trapping as a result of what he felt to be the agent’s abandonment of the treaty. Renville’s group requested that a man of their choice be named as agent.⁸

At the same time Samuel J. Brown, the son of Joseph Brown, influenced Henry H. Sibley and Bishop Henry B. Whipple of the Episcopal church to address a joint letter of protest to Washington. Both men had befriended these Indians on numerous occasions. In writing to Sibley, Brown said he understood that Adams’ policy was “to force these Indians to worship God according to his own way of thinking, that is, to become members of the Presbyterian Church. They do not object to that particular church, but *do* object to a Church and State government.”⁹

Adams was sustained by the Indian office, partly because of support from the secretary of the American board, S. B. Treat. In a letter of thanks to Treat, Adams remarked, “In accepting the appointment to this responsible office I expected some opposition to the faithful and

impartial discharge of its duties, and I believe my expectations have been more than realized in this regard.” To the commissioner of Indian affairs, Adams wrote, “I would not conceal the fact that there are manifestly strong prejudices, existing among these few leading men, against the Christian religion as represented by the native ministry and the missionaries of the ABCFM.”¹⁰

In the face of such opposition Adams set about his duties. By the end of March he was making plans for the construction of a manual labor boarding school and two district schools. He even persuaded the chief and head men to waive their claims to a hundred thousand bricks issued to them by Daniels for the purpose of building houses in order that they might be used for schools. In accordance with the terms of the treaty of 1867, Adams attempted to organize a body of Indian police, but fell into dispute with Renville over certain men the chief desired to appoint. As neither the chief nor the agent had authority to act alone, no appointments were made. A few Indians who did not like the new order of things left to join relatives on the Devil’s Lake reservation to the north. Others, reprimanded for wasting time in dancing, “went off over to the Missouri river and spent most of the summer.”¹¹

IN 1873, a year after his first attempt to get agreement on a code of regulations for the reservation, Adams tried again. At a

⁶ Adams’ address, January 22, 1872, Adams Papers.

⁷ *Statutes at Large*, 15:507, 510.

⁸ Walker to Adams, March 16, 1872, and Adams to Walker, March 20, 1872, Adams Papers; Adams to Walker, March 29, April 3, 1872, Office of Indian Affairs, letters received, National Archives.

⁹ Brown to Sibley, April 15, 1872, Office of Indian Affairs, letters received.

¹⁰ Adams to Treat, June 3, 1872, and to Walker, March 20, 1872, Adams Papers.

¹¹ Council meeting notes, March 28, 1872; Adams to Walker, February 26, March 29, 1872; Walker to Adams, March 21, 1872; W. H. Forbes to Adams, June 6, 1872; Adams to H. K. Clum, acting commissioner, March 2, April 30, 1873, all in Adams Papers.

council opened with prayer by a native pastor, the Reverend John B. Renville, Adams outlined his proposals. There would be no business, entertainment, or traveling on the Sabbath; marriage would be monogamous and indissoluble except for unfaithfulness; and no dances or gambling would be permitted on the reservation. Wherever ten families settled together a schoolhouse would be built, and, finally, to see that the rules were obeyed, a police force would be established. In his minutes of the council meeting, Adams scribbled in pencil, "Two Stars and Gabriel found fault with the U. S. Government, the Agent, and everything done to aid them by the Department. Complained of the salary paid the Physician and sneeringly said that it was not worth \$20.00 per month to them as a people. Council adjourned." Adams later reported that the Indians had rejected the proposed code as contravening their customs and practices.¹²

Adams had no better luck than he had with the Indians when he appealed to the Indian office on the subject of polygamy. An order prohibiting polygamy among the Indians, said the commissioner, "would be a wide departure from the course heretofore pursued by the Government." He did not deem it advisable to take such action at the time.¹³

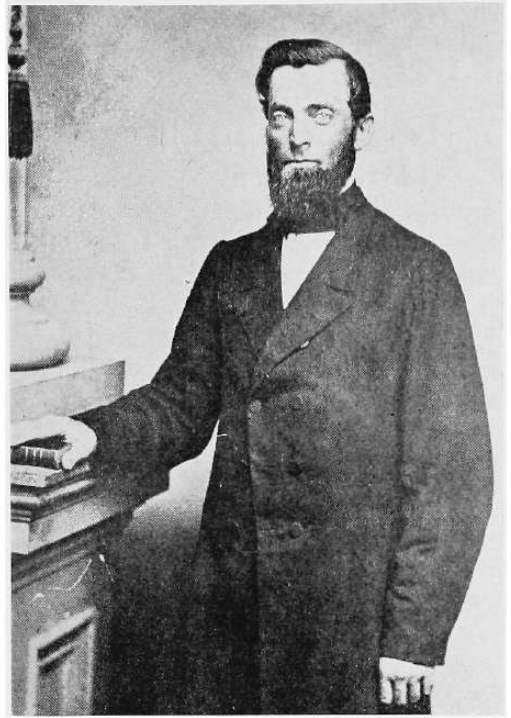
Once again complaints were addressed to Washington by the Indians and forwarded to Adams for reply. In one Adams recognized the handwriting as that of a local aspirant to the position of agent, John S.

¹² Council minutes, January 7, 1873, Adams Papers; Adams to Clum, May 3, 1873, Office of Indian Affairs, letters received.

¹³ Clum to Adams, February 12, 1873, Adams Papers.

¹⁴ Adams to Clum, March 2, April 30, 1873, Adams Papers; Smith to Commissioner E. P. Smith, June 18, 1874, Office of Indian Affairs, letters received.

¹⁵ Angus Brown to Samuel Brown, April 19, 1873, Brown Papers; Adams to Clum, March 2, 1873, Adams Papers. Riggs was blamed by many of the Indians for the dismissal of former agent Daniels. See Daniels to W. H. Forbes, May 20, 1871, Cory-Forbes Papers.



MOSES N. Adams

Allanson, the same man who a year earlier had hoped that the old order might be restored with the support of Renville and the Browns, and with a Democratic victory at the polls. Chief Renville himself lodged a complaint at near-by Fort Wadsworth, with the result that in 1873 the Indian office appointed James Smith, Jr., to investigate.¹⁴

Adams' opponents felt that they were ready for the inspector's visit. Angus Brown reported to his brother Samuel on the preparations that had been made. "I told Gabriel," he wrote, that the Indians "have got there complaint all fixed, I tell you it is a stinger. . . . When they have there counsil with Mr. Smith they are not going to allow any church member to speak. The moment one gets up to say anything they will put him out. They don't intend to let them have anything to say." Adams reported that Renville boasted that he "once routed and drove away a missionary" and threatened to do the same to Riggs unless Adams would remove him.¹⁵

The investigation, however, was delayed. Smith had been selected because he was somewhat informed on Sisseton affairs through his service as one of three commissioners who were negotiating an agreement with the Indians at Sisseton (South Dakota) and Devil's Lake (North Dakota). He delayed completing his investigation, possibly out of consideration for Adams, his fellow commissioner. A year later, in 1874, he inquired whether the department still desired a report; he was convinced that Adams had acted honestly and hoped that affairs might be settled amicably. Four months later he was told that his investigation was not needed.¹⁶

IN THE MEANTIME Renville had failed to impress his point of view upon the commissioner of Indian affairs, E. P. Smith, and the secretary of the interior, Columbus Delano, who together visited the agency in the autumn of 1873. The employment of Riggs as interpreter may have cowed the complainants on this occasion, or perhaps concern over the payment of eight hundred thousand dollars due them from the sale of nonreservation lands took precedence over their quarrel with Adams. In any case, it is certain that the Indians' complaints were directed less at Adams than at the refusal of the Indian office to make a per capita payment in cash or goods, insisting instead that each Indian present work certificates representing logs cut, hay harvested, etc., before he could participate in the payment, which was to be spread over a period of ten years. "If you had a piece of land and sold it[,] would you like to work for the pay?" asked Scarlet Eagle Tail. "Since hearing that we have to work for the pay for our land we feel bad," said Wiyaha.¹⁷

It was Commissioner Smith who had to answer the Sissetons' complaints. "The worst thing to do to an Indian," he told them, "is to shoot him. The next worst thing is to fill their hands—give them all they ask. The white people give this money,

and they know the way to make a man is to make him work. And the big council at Washington won't give any more money except for work. . . . The land you sold was in dispute. Great father did not consider it wholly yours. He has a right to say what to do with money. Another right: you are his children, and he must do what is best for you. If you *hadn't* worked for your money you'd been like the Sioux up the [Missouri] river."

Unconvinced, but recognizing defeat, Sweetcorn remarked, "Great Father can do what he wishes, and he can blast rock and smelt iron, and can change this treaty." Renville, too, seemed beaten down. "There may be death in working, but it is not the only place death comes," he told the commissioner. "That man [Adams] is my friend; something he done we were not pleased with. He is the 3rd Agent we have had, and as far as I am personally concerned I am his friend. These people accused him of some things that they did not like, and I done as the people requested me—made complaints. I did not say it because I had any ill feeling against him. . . . I work for the people but don't get anything for it; I earn only hard feelings."

At the close of the council Renville announced that he was resigning his place as head chief. Secretary Delano had promised to give the Indians a code of laws to take the place of rule by chiefs and head men, and it appeared the system Adams had long sought for would be put into effect. Commissioner Smith was not back in Washington before Adams was urging the department to approve the establishment of an elected executive board to govern the Sisseton. He wrote the commissioner that "It is important to order very early the contemplated election of representatives.

¹⁶ Smith to Commissioner Smith, June 18, 1874, Office of Indian Affairs, letters received; Commissioner Smith to Smith, October 21, 1874, Office of Indian Affairs, letters sent.

¹⁷ Quoted material in this and succeeding paragraphs may be found in the council minutes, August 18, 1873, Adams Papers.

. . . Allow me to recommend that no Bigamist nor Polygamist be eligible to this office of Councilman, or Executive Board.”¹⁸

THE Scout party, however, was not ready to accept defeat. It refused Renville's resignation and renewed its complaints against Adams. When Indian Inspector J. C. O'Connor visited the agency in the fall of 1873, Renville asked him to hold a council with the Indians. Adams reported the result in a letter to Riggs. The inspector, he wrote, “told them no!—that *that* was not what he came for, that he always let well enough alone, or something to that effect. That was a quietus. While all this may be complimentary some what, I do not want to feel flattered, nor be thrown off my guard, for the *old wheel is not yet broken to atoms*, although it is *broken*. There is much to be done yet, to save this people. We are almost overwhelmed with the work and it is increasing.”¹⁹

The calm that followed O'Connor's visit preceded a storm. In November, only three weeks later, Renville went to Fort Wadsworth to complain again to Major R. E. A. Crofton, commander of the post. Renville's young men were proposing to seize items “improperly” issued by Adams to Indians on the reservation and the chief wanted to know whether the commander would send troops if Adams should request them. For some curious reason Crofton gave no reply.²⁰

Early in December, Renville held a se-

¹⁸ Adams to Smith, August 23, 1873, Adams Papers; *Word Carrier*, 2:40 (October, 1873). This periodical, issued by missionaries of the American board and the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, was called *Iapi Oyay* in the Dakota language. A file is in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society.

¹⁹ Adams to Riggs, October 29, 1873, Adams Papers.

²⁰ Crofton to Assistant Adjutant General, Department of Dakota, November 21, 1873, Secretary of the Interior, letters received, National Archives.

²¹ Commissioner of Indian Affairs, *Reports*, 1874, p. 255; Adams to Crofton, December 11, 1873, Adams Papers.

²² Adams to Crofton, December 11, 1873; Crofton to Adams, December 13, 1873; Adams to Garretty, December 16, 1873, Adams Papers.

cret council in which a “police force” was named to exclude from all benefits of the reservation certain Indians who, it was contended, were not enrolled or had been improperly enrolled at the agency. The principal objects of attention were two native pastors, David Grey Cloud and Louis Mazawakinyanna. A “marauding party,” as Adams described it, seized three yoke of oxen, two wagons, one cow and a calf, log chains, and other property which had been issued to the offending pastors, and then reported the fact to Adams.²¹

As soon as Adams learned of the proposal to drive the two families from the reservation, he asked Crofton to bring a company of soldiers “to forestall any further proceedings looking to revolt of the Indians against the authority of the U. S. Government.” Crofton replied that he thought it better to settle matters without a show of force. Later, in the face of open defiance to the authority of the agent, however, a detachment of the Seventeenth United States Infantry under Lieutenant Frank Garretty was dispatched to the reservation with one field piece. “You will please take charge of all legitimate and available means of defense at this agency against any invasion by hostile or rebellious Indians or half-breeds,” wrote Adams to Garretty, “and you will please attend the contemplated open council to be held tomorrow.”²²

At the council on December 17 Adams demanded the surrender of the leaders of the mob and warned that others involved would be deprived of supplies for one month. Unless the oxen and other property were returned to the native pastors, the warehouse would remain locked. In reply Renville charged the agent with violating the treaty of 1867. “We wish some wise man would be sent here from the great father and right what is wrong,” he said. “The Agent is likened to a drop of water falling into a barrel, one does not make any difference.” Renville stated that if a few offenders were taken “up to the Fort we

will all go up." On December 18, however, Two Stars and Good Boy surrendered to the agent and were imprisoned at Fort Wadsworth. They were not set free until the end of January.²³

Opposition to the agent and the program continued. On January 2, 1874, Adams deprived an Indian of rations for one month for killing a cow and holding a feast, reportedly at the direction of Renville. "I want you to go home and go to work and try to behave yourself," he told the offender, "You will get no rations this month, and if you do not stop this bad work I'll put you in dark dungeon at the Fort." The February issue of supplies went off quietly, although some refractory Indians were still denied food.²⁴

THE Scout faction next made an effort to attract the attention of Washington by promoting an Indian scare in western Minnesota. Indians were sent among the settlers to report that, unless Adams was removed, there would likely be a repetition of the outbreak of 1862. It was rumored that Spotted Tail, a redoubtable chieftain of the Missouri River Sioux, was coming to

GABRIEL Renville about 1880

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION



help the dissatisfied Sisseton. According to Adams, a whisky vendor was hired to push a petition calling for his removal; a similar petition was circulated as far away as St. Paul.²⁵

Adams countered with a circular assuring Minnesotans that these Sisseton, who had remained faithful in 1862, were not now about to take up arms. He also circulated a paper for the Indians to sign in which they gave the lie to reports of impending revolt. Even Chief Renville was said to have signed it, as "he was afraid if he did not Mr. A would make him out disloyal to the whites."²⁶

In the spring of 1874, with the approval of the Indian office, Adams removed Renville and four other "refractory leaders" from the executive board. To replace them, he named the Reverend John Renville as chief and a second minister and four church elders as head men. When the new chief and head men first signed receipts for tribal supplies there was some "excitement" on the reservation. Gabriel Renville, however, took no direct steps to retrieve his position. Angus Brown informed his brother that "Uncle G[abriel]" was "attending to his own business. . . . He said that some one had to die this spring when the leaves were thick enough to hide a person. He didn't tell me but I heard it from Charly [Crawford]. I have been telling them all you wished me to and a great deal more but they feel rather *blue*. They say there is no telling who will do anything out of the way or who will be the victim but something of that sort will happen. There are

²³ Quoted material may be found in the council minutes for December 17, 18, 1873, Adams Papers. See also, Adams to Garretty, December 18, 1873; Adams to Crofton, January 24, 1874.

²⁴ Pencil notes, January 2, 1874; Adams to Commissioner Smith, February 6, 1874, Adams Papers.

²⁵ For an account of the Indian scare, see the *St. Peter Tribune*, April 15, 1874. See also J. W. Hines to Samuel Brown, January 27, 1874, Brown Papers; Adams to Smith, February 13, 14, 1874, and to L. Fletcher, March 30, 1874; Cushman K. Davis to Adams, April 14, 1874, all in the Adams Papers.

²⁶ Joseph Brown to Samuel Brown, April 7, 1874, Brown Papers.

quite a number of Yanktons on their way over and are expected to arrive next week. I expect there will be some *scared* people at the Agency when they arrive at Gabriel's. They are bringing horses and mules to Gabriel. From what I have heard I believe that one or two of the ministers—(Indians) will be badly hurt before long. Some of them are getting desperate and if things run—as they now run—'till grass grows some one will be hurt.”²⁷

THE PERSISTENT opposition of the Scout faction and the influence of Sibley, who was at the time on the United States board of Indian commissioners, at last bore fruit in October, 1874. Indian Inspector E. C. Kemble visited the agency, held a council with the Indians, heard their complaints, and questioned agency employees. Kemble's report did not, as Adams hoped, uphold his “civilizing” policy. The prejudices which had existed against Adams from the start were, Kemble reported, “fanned into a strong flame by the repressive vigor of his administration, and he appears to have been more zealous for the compulsory observance of sabbatarian laws of his own framing, and for the punishment of the heathen feasters and dancers than befitted a Government Agent.”²⁸

Kemble did not, however, recommend the removal of Adams. “I think it would be an unjust act to remove him,” he wrote, “and at the present it would be an unwise as well as an impolitic act. It would not

heal the differences in the tribe or reconcile the two parties. It would only shift the dissatisfaction from one to the other. I would respectfully recommend,” Kemble continued, “that the Agent be advised to dissolve his present Board of Chiefs . . . and as soon as practicable have these offices filled by election. The Head Chief Renville should be restored to his place and a police organized.” He also advised that “The Agent should be cautioned against endeavoring to enforce laws to put down Sabbath breaking dancing and polygamy for which the tribe is not yet prepared and also kindly reminded that his duties as a United States Agent may sometimes preclude the use of denominational discipline to correct evils. . . . A less rigorous treatment of offenders will I think remove many objections to his rule,” Kemble concluded.

The Kemble investigation brought to a head other elements of opposition. Agency employees were not united in support of Adams. Dr. G. H. Hawes, the agency physician, claimed that he had incurred Adams' wrath by conferring with Riggs when the latter was gathering information for a report on the agencies assigned to the American board and the American Missionary Association. According to the doctor, Adams had not only relieved him of his position, but had forced him from his house, putting his goods out of doors before he could get transportation. Difficulties with agency employees may have been aggravated by the fact that a depression-conscious and economy-minded Congress had restricted the funds available, forcing Adams to reduce sharply the number of employees.²⁹

On November 19 Riggs wrote Adams that he had reason to believe from advices he had received from the American Missionary Association that the agent would be suspended, primarily because of his difficulties with employees. Riggs advised Adams to resign. A further indication of official disapproval came a few days later when Dr. Hawes was reinstated by the In-

²⁷ Adams to Smith, June 13, 1874, Adams Papers; Joseph Brown to Samuel Brown, April 7, 25, 1874, and Angus Brown to Samuel Brown, May 24, 1874, Brown Papers.

²⁸ Quoted material in this and succeeding paragraphs may be found in extracts from Kemble's report, October 24, 1874, in the Adams Papers. See also Samuel Brown to Sibley, October 19, 1874, Brown Papers.

²⁹ Hawes to Commissioner Smith, November 2, 1874, Hawes to C. G. Higbee, November 12, 1874, enclosed with Higbee to Commissioner Smith, November 15, 1874, Office of Indian Affairs, letters received. For the measure forcing Adams to economize, see *Statutes at Large*, vol. 18, part 3, p. 176.

dian office and directed to return to the agency immediately.³⁰

Adams made some effort to institute a "harmonizing" policy in line with discussions with Kemble. In December he wrote the Indian office that Renville and three of his principal men had been off the executive board long enough. He proposed to reinstate them, dropping two native pastors who had been serving on the board during the past year but retaining three other representatives of the church faction. When the change was announced to a council of the Indians, Renville appealed for advice to Sibley, under whom he had served as a chief of scouts during the Sioux War of the 1860s. He was told that it would be best to try to get along with the agent. Hawes, too, through the interpreter, Thomas Robertson, and his friendship with Renville, did what he could to keep the Indians quiet, assuring them that the Indian office "would do what was right."³¹

THE AGENT followed Riggs' advice early in the new year and tendered his resignation. "I have thought . . . of late that possibly another man might win with a certain class of this people better than I," Adams

wrote the commissioner, "and if you think it worth while to try a change, I have the honor hereby to tender to you my resignation." A few months later he prepared a twenty-page reply to Kemble's report. "The U. S. Government," he wrote, "did not require me to give up my *credentials as a licensed and ordained minister of the Gospel*, nor was it intimated to me in my commission as a U. S. Indian Agent that I was to ignore all moral principles and foster pagan worship and connive at and encourage *heathenish and barbarous* customs, rather than inculcate the Christian religion and encourage the planting and support the institutions of Christian civilization." Adams charged that Kemble was among those who "belittle and openly condemn all that has been done for the last quarter century to enlighten and save this people, and who, before the merest pagans, make

³⁰ Riggs to Adams, November 19, 1874, Adams Papers; Smith to Hawes, November 27, 1874, Office of Indian Affairs, letters sent.

³¹ Kemble to Smith, November 19, 1874, Adams to Smith, December 16, 1874, and Hawes to Smith, January 27, 1875, Office of Indian Affairs, letters received; council minutes, January 22, 1875, Adams Papers; Renville to Sibley, February 5, 1875, and Sibley's reply of February 15, Sibley Papers.



SISSETON
*Indians on the
agency porch, 1896*

light of a man's moral convictions in the faithful and conscientious discharge of his official duties. I could not think, nor do I now believe that the Department will endorse all the views of the Hon. E. C. Kemble."³²

What Kemble considered "innocent amusements" Adams described as "feasting, dancing, horse racing, and serenading from house to house and village to village and gambling away horses, blankets, coats, hats, mocasins and furs. . . . Formerly all these culminated in the *war dance*, to feed the *war path*. Now the 'Hay Makers' of this people is gotten up and sustained. . . . It means far more than pleasure and recreation. Like the *old war dance*, it enters into every department of their lives, involving their social, moral and religious interests. At this dance, they sing old war songs, and rehearse their brave deeds, and thus foster the spirit of revenge and murder. As the legitimate fruits of this so styled *innocent* amusement, three of our young men went over recently to the Ponca Reservation, and killed one and wounded another Ponca. . . . Now, I submit, that it is exceedingly discouraging to us in our efforts to bring this vain and wretched people on in matters of civilization . . . with such adverse counsels and official counter-instruction."

ADAMS was not relieved of his duties until May 1, 1875. In the meantime he pressed

³² For Adams' resignation, see his letter to Smith, January 20, 1875, Secretary of the Interior, appointments division, letters received. See also Adams to George Whipple, January 20, 1875, Adams Papers. Quoted material in this and succeeding paragraphs is from Adams to Smith, March 20, 1875, Office of Indian Affairs, letters received. A draft of Adams' reply, dated March 20, 1875, is in his papers.

³³ Adams to Smith, with an endorsement by Smith, March 5, 1875, Office of Indian Affairs, letters received; Adams to Smith, March 31, 1875, Adams Papers. For the story of the woodcutter, see Angus Brown to Samuel Brown, January 26, 1875, Brown Papers.

³⁴ *Word Carrier*, 6:24 (June, 1877); Upham and Dunlap, *Minnesota Biographies*, 5.

³⁵ *Word Carrier*, 6:4 (January, 1877).

for action by the Indian office looking to a code of laws for the governing of the Sisseton. The commissioner ruled, however, that the matter of the laws should be left for action by Adams' successor. At the end of March, Adams reported that large numbers of the Indians "have of their own accord recently signed the pledge, to abstain from dancing and gambling." His efforts to secure observance of the Sabbath still encountered a cool reception in some quarters. Learning that one of the Indians had cut wood on Sunday, Adams told him that in times gone by he would have been stoned to death. The Indian, who also knew something of the scriptures, replied, "Let those that are not guilty of any sins stone me."³³

With the departure of Adams and the impending ascendancy of Chief Renville's forces, some twenty-five families from the church faction, in fear of persecution, left the reservation to take up homesteads near by. There they remained until the Indian office some twelve years later divided the reservation into individual allotments and furnished deeds to members of the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands. Adams moved on to the post of chaplain at Fort Gibson, Indian Territory. Ten years later, however, he returned to Good Will as a missionary and served among the Sisseton and Wahpeton peoples until his retirement in 1892 at the age of seventy.³⁴

The Peace Policy died a lingering death. Even under Grant some new agents were appointed on the basis of political preferment, but with the election of President Hayes the system of church nominations broke down completely. At least one missionary was content to have it so. From his position among the Santee on the Missouri, Riggs' son Alfred commented that "the heavens will not fall. Indeed it may be high time it [*the system*] was displaced. It has done a good work, but it is by no means the ideal of an Indian Civil Service. And were it continued much longer it might, like other unnatural expedients, breed disorders."³⁵



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