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### A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity: Dispatches from the Dakota War

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disease, and 76 were seriously wounded. The book is a chronological narrative of the regiment's service, from its first days at Camp Strong in Muscatine in early 1861 to its return home in the summer of 1865. The years of service put the regiment in the thick of the fighting at Vicksburg, the Red River Campaign, the Battle of Tupelo, Mississippi, and the Battle of Nashville and in the pursuit of Confederate Sterling Price from Arkansas to Missouri. The book has maps, some photos and illustrations, and a roster of the soldiers of the regiment.

The book is one more fine contribution to the scholarship of Iowa and the Civil War published by the Camp Pope Bookshop. Miller gives publisher/editor Clark Kenyon due credit for the quality of the book. As in most local histories, the book is a labor of love and respect. Miller has done his homework, his research is solid, and he gives his readers some of the personal stories and drama that bring the Civil War home to Iowa. It is a short book, which is not a bad thing. If every Iowa regiment had such a book, Iowa would be well served.

*A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity: Dispatches from the Dakota War*, by Mary Butler Renville; edited by Carrie Reber Zeman and Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. xxvii, 375 pp. Maps, illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$60.00 hardcover.

Reviewer Michael Knock is assistant professor of history at Clarke University in Dubuque. His dissertation (University of Notre Dame, 1996) was "'Alone with Sitting Bull's People': The Dakota Indian Mission of the Congregational Church, 1870-1937."

To the casual observer, the life of Mary Butler Renville sounds like a bad dime novel. A Christian missionary and teacher, Mary Adeline Butler married John Renville, a man of French and Dakota ancestry. The couple was held captive during the 1862 Dakota uprising, an event that would become a book with the sensationalized title, *A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity*.

The similarities between Renville's story and melodrama end there, however. Her story paints a nuanced portrait of the conflict at a time when the wounds from the war were still fresh. Where other writers demonized the Dakota, Renville emphasized the efforts of the Dakota Peace Party to protect captives while also negotiating an end to the bloodshed. The book even ends with a plea for the Dakota: "May God guide the people of Minnesota, who have suffered deeply, to act wisely in the present instance, and not drive even the friendly Indians to homeless desperation" (188).

*A Thrilling Narrative of Indian Captivity*, originally published in 1863, has been revived in a fascinating new edition edited by Carrie Reber Zeman and Kathryn Zabelle Derounian-Stodola. The book contains not only Renville's original narrative, but also an appendix of letters that passed between the Dakota camps and Minnesota authorities during the war. A second appendix contains correspondence between Mary and John through 1888. These primary documents paint a far more complicated picture of the war, and of the Renvilles' marriage.

The two stories are not unrelated. Zeman and Derounian-Stodola put the Renvilles' story into historical and literary contexts by examining how this interracial relationship affected Mary and John and their role in the war. Zeman, for example, explains how Mary's marriage to John would have been seen at the time: "Clearly the dominant society believed a woman who chose to marry an Indian fell quite short of ideal white womanhood: she must be of mixed blood, a prostitute, or 'masterful'" (29). Yet Zeman is clear that Mary and John's relationship was genuine, proven by her willingness to stay by his side during the war: "The Renvilles chose to face their fate together as a family" (41).

Derounian-Stodola puts the Renville story in the context of the American captivity narrative. She, too, focuses on the unique racial component of their story: "As a biracial couple, especially during and immediately after the racially charged war, they were constantly dealing with identity issues depending on where and among whom they lived. Who were they? Where did they belong? How did they situate themselves in the world?" (124). These were perpetual issues on the Dakota frontier from the efforts of the Hazelwood Republic through the forced relocation of the Dakota following the war. And it is these questions that make this edition so interesting.

Of course, there are drawbacks to framing a story of the Dakota uprising from the perspective of the Renvilles. This is not a comprehensive history of that war. As Zeman explains, this is largely because the author, "like most captives, . . . was generally ignorant of the military side of the war, hearing little more than the exploits recounted by soldiers around campfires at night" (68). Still, this fascinating edition should help scholars to better understand the complexities of race, gender, and compassion through the voices of those who struggled with them in their own lives.