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Subsistence of Indian Tribes. Letter from the Secretary of War, transmitting a communication from Lieutenant General Sherman, relative to the subsistence of certain Indian tribes by the War Department, &c

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SUBSISTENCE OF INDIAN TRIBES.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

TRANSMITTING

A communication from Lieutenant General Sherman, relative to the subsistence of certain Indian tribes by the War Department, &c.

MAY 26, 1868.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, May 25, 1868.

SIR: I have the honor to send herewith, for the consideration of the proper committee, a copy of a communication of May 8, 1868, from Lieutenant General Sherman, with an indorsement by the General of the army, respecting a recommendation that certain tribes of Indians specified therein be subsisted by the War Department after they shall have been removed to a reservation deemed desirable for the preservation of peace, until the proper provision shall be made for them by the Indian Bureau.

Your obedient servant,

E. M. STANTON,
Secretary of War.

Hon. SCHUYLER COLFAX,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,
Fort Laramie, D. T., May 8, 1868.

GENERAL: It is proper I should keep you advised of the condition of affairs on this frontier, that you may judge of the probabilities in the future. I was of opinion, and still am of opinion, that the peace commission should do little or nothing more till our report to Congress of last December, with the bill reported by Mr. Henderson, have been fully and freely discussed in Congress and action taken in the form of law. The Indians, finding our general promises not sustained by facts, are naturally tending to the conclusion that the treaties we make, and the promises held out, are of the same nature as others of like kind in former times. Still, as a rule, those whom we met last year seem to act on their promises of peace, whereas others whom we did not meet, and have not yet seen, are as mistrustful and seemingly hostile as ever. Several murders and robberies have occurred along the line of the railroad, and the people generally ridicule our efforts at peace, and think we are deliberately deluded and deceived even by those who have signed treaties. I arrived here last Monday, and found here Generals Harney, Augur, and Terry, and General Sanborn. Mr. Commissioner Tappan came with me, so that we are now six commissioners present. We have had several meetings, and have canvassed all the questions, and have

concluded it is best to persevere in the course begun, if only to gain time, and to withdraw from hostility a considerable part. Before my arrival a treaty had been signed by the Brulé band of Sioux, in which they engage, on certain very liberal terms, to remove to the reservation indicated in our report, (on the Missouri river;) and as many of these were encamped last winter at North Platte on the railroad, we have concluded it best for them and for us that they should move at once over to the Missouri river, near Fort Randall, even if we, the military, must furnish them subsistence till Congress provides the necessary means to the Indian department to fulfil the treaty stipulations. With the Brulés will go scattered parts of other bands, including some half-breeds, that have usually lingered about this fort (Laramie.)

Yesterday we signed a treaty with the Crow nation, which is represented to have always been friendly, and we have given them a reservation of limited extent in Montana, south of the Yellowstone, a reservation that I think will be temporary, and that in due time they, too, will find it to their interest to go down the Missouri river and settle among the Sioux.

To-day and to-morrow we hold councils with the fragments of Northern Cheyennes and Arapahoes, and will insist on their becoming a part of the Sioux nation, or returning to their old tribes located in the reservation back of Arkansas.

This will close out all Indians now here, but will leave out the Ogalallas and Minneconjoux, who have been our worst enemies on the Powder River road. From these we have varied accounts. Some want to come in for peace, but the young warriors contend that they will wait to see if we are honest in our resolve to withdraw those posts which they assert were the cause of the war. I have long since given an order for the withdrawal of these posts, but it is impracticable till summer. On the 1st of June, all the public stores and property which cannot be moved at Fort C. F. Smith will be sold at auction to people who are willing to buy and remove back into Montana. The garrison will move then to Fort Phil. Kearney. From that post we will remove everything portable and abandon the post and remove to Reno, and then the same to Forts Fetterman and Laramie. This will bring in the regiment of John E. Smith, with which General Augur designed to build a new post on the head of Wind river, at the mouth of Popage creek, about 50 miles north of St. Mary's station on the old emigrant road, or about 80 miles north of the Pacific railroad. After full reflection I have instructed General Augur to build that post and not to complete the post of Fort Fetterman, begun last year, but rather to protect the railroad by detachments posted along the railroad itself or temporary stations near it. This will leave us to build only quarters for four companies on the railroad where it crosses the North Platte, intermediate between Fort Sanders and Fort Bridger. General Augur will keep the troops in summer in tents, and may send a couple of companies to the Wind river to give protection to the people who have gone to the newly discovered gold mines there, but will bring in all to the posts already finished, or to the railroad stations for winter. Still, this will leave General Augur short of quarters for one regiment the coming winter. We have never had reserves in hand for the clamors that always open with spring, and instead of pushing our troops out so far, I am convinced he should have a regiment at Omaha in winter, to send out on the railroad to meet these cases. Instead of building these expensive posts out here, I will recommend that we build cheap barracks for one regiment in or near Omaha. Parties there have more than once offered the necessary land, and General Augur will, on his return to Omaha, endeavor to secure a site of about 100 acres near Omaha, and proceed to build there quarters for a regiment. We have already there all the necessary storehouses, leaving necessary only the barracks. He will have plenty of time to make plans and estimates to be submitted to you and the Quartermaster General for approval. I am satisfied this will prove more economical and more efficient than to rebuild one or more new posts out here, to replace those to be abandoned.

On Monday next we will have concluded with all the Indians who have come in, when General Augur, General Terry, Mr. Tappan and myself, will return to Cheyenne, leaving Generals Harney and Sanborn here some days longer to await the return of some messengers who have gone out to Red Cloud and the Man-afraid-of-his-horses, who represent the hostile Indians. If they come in here these two commissioners can conclude with them a treaty similar to the one already made with the Brulés. I and Mr. Tappan will go by stage to Denver and Fort Union in New Mexico; and thence to the Navajoes, to see if we can make any solution of that most troublesome case. General Augur, after looking to matters pertaining to his command, will go out to Fort Bridger, to conclude a treaty with the Shoshones or Snakes, who are represented as willing and waiting. General Terry will go up to Fort Randall and Fort Sully, to make preparations for the Sioux to be moved over to that neighborhood, and be prepared to join Generals Harney and Sanborn, who will go up the Missouri river as high as Fort Rice, to conclude with the river Indians, who are also represented as perfectly willing to remove within the reservation marked out for them west of the river and above Nebraska.

Thus you will see we have cut out work for all summer, although I expect to get in the latter part of June from New Mexico, and will await the return of the other commissioners from their various errands before we all meet again, at some agreed-on place, to conclude our work. I do not apprehend any general war this year, only the predatory bands of thieving or murdering Indians which the people in this vast [and sparsely] inhabited region should be prepared to resist. In time we must take these wild Indians in hand. I will do all that is possible to give general protection, especially to the rapid progress of the Pacific railroad, but it were idle to undertake to run down every horse thief, or to protect what are termed the ranches, scattered at wide distances along the road, occasionally traversed by trains of wagons. The Pacific railroad does not make settlements in the strict sense of the term. Every twenty miles is a station where a few men are kept as repair parties, but they are so dispersed that they are a weakness instead of strength. They are all clamorous for protection, and General Augur has been forced to place soldiers at nearly every station outside of Omaha. The great advantage of the railroad is that it gives us rapid communication, and cannot be stolen like the horses and mules of trains as of old, but the people along it are much exposed to depredating bands of hostile Indians. They always charge their losses to the friendly Indians who have been collected near, and it is for this reason that I deem it so essential to remove them at once, even at our military expense, without awaiting the lawful but slow action of Congress.

Asking yours and the Secretary of War's approval in these matters, I will act at once. Please reply in general terms by letter, and telegraph to General Augur, as by the time this reaches you I will probably be beyond Denver.

With great respect, &c.,

W. T. SHERMAN, *Lieutenant General.*

General U. S. GRANT, *Washington, D. C.*

HEADQUARTERS ARMIES U. S.,

May 20, 1868.

Respectfully forwarded to the Secretary of War, inviting special attention to those portions of the letter which relate to the removal and subsistence of Indians at military expense, requesting to be informed as early as practicable whether the Secretary sanctions such expenditure. General Sherman's recommendation that cheap barracks for one regiment be built in or near Omaha is approved.

U. S. GRANT, *General.*