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Letter of the Secretary of War, communicating a copy of the report of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel M. V. Sheridan, upon the extremely destitute condition of the Osage Indians

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LETTER
OF
THE SECRETARY OF WAR,
COMMUNICATING

A copy of the report of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel M. V. Sheridan, upon the extremely destitute condition of the Osage Indians.

FEBRUARY 4, 1869.—Read, referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
February 2, 1869.

The Secretary of War has the honor to submit to the Senate of the United States the accompanying copy of a report of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel M. V. Sheridan, United States army, upon the extremely destitute condition of the Osage Indians in Kansas, numbering some 3,500 persons, and their neglect by their agent.

J. M. SCHOFIELD,
Secretary of War.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE MISSOURI,
Fort Hays, Kansas, December 1, 1868.

GENERAL: I have the honor to report that, in obedience to your letter of instructions of the 7th of November, I have visited the Osage Indians and investigated their condition.

It is impossible to get at the exact number of these Indians, as I could find no enrolment of them, but I learned from Mr. Chouteau, the United States interpreter, that they numbered about 3,500 men, women, and children. Their condition certainly approaches very nearly starvation; they have nothing but pumpkins, acorns, and what few deer they can find on their reservation. They have no breadstuffs of any kind whatever, and no property to trade for any. Unless issues of provisions are made to them by the government during this winter they will either starve or subsist by means of raids on the settlers in their vicinity.

In accordance with your instructions, I purchased a quantity of beef to relieve their present necessities, but, owing to the fact that a half-yearly payment of their annuity is now being made them in flour and meal, I have furnished them no meal, thinking it better to delay until their present supply is exhausted. This, however, will be but a short time, as the money value of the annuity amounts to only \$2 07 each.

It is very necessary that an officer should be sent to their reservation to superintend the distribution of supplies, as there is no official there to look out for the rights of either the government or the Indians.

I was unable to get any information in relation to these Indians from their agent, Mr. George C. Snow, as he lives a distance of over one hundred miles from the reserve, and *never visits it*, except when the Indians are being paid, and seldom then.

I was subsequently compelled to rely upon personal observation and what I could learn from the United States interpreter.

I am, general, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
M. V. SHERIDAN,
Capt. 7th Cavalry, Bvt. Lieut. Col. and A. D. C.

Major General P. H. SHERIDAN,
Commanding Department of the Missouri.

A true copy, respectfully furnished Brevet Major General W. A. Nichols for the information of the Lieutenant General commanding.

J. SCUYLER CROSBY,
Brevet Lieut. Col., A. D. C., A. A. A. G.

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,
St. Louis, Missouri, January 23, 1869.

Official copy, respectfully furnished the Adjutant General of the army for his information.

By order of Lieutenant General Sherman :

W. A. NICHOLS,
Assistant Adjutant General.

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,
February 2, 1869.

Official copy:

E. D. TOWNSEND,
Assistant Adjutant General.