

1-11-1869

Letter of the Secretary of War, communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate of December 14, 1868, information in relation to the late Indian battle on the Washita River

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LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

COMMUNICATING,

In compliance with a resolution of the Senate of December 14, 1868, further information in relation to the late Indian battle on the Washita river.

JANUARY 19, 1869.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs and the Militia and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT, *January 18, 1869.*

The Secretary of War has the honor to submit to the Senate of the United States, in further reply to its resolution of December 14, 1868, and as supplemental to his prior report of January 11, 1869, the accompanying copy of a report received by the Lieutenant General of the army from Major General Sheridan, concerning the late Indian battle on the Washita.

J. M. SCHOFIELD,
Secretary of War.

[By telegraph from St. Louis, Missouri, January 16, 1869.—Time, 11.20 a. m.]

TELEGRAPH OFFICE, WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, D. C., January 16, 1869.

General E. D. TOWNSEND:

I did intend to abridge the following despatch from General Sheridan, on account of the cost of telegraph, but conclude to send it entire:

[By special messenger to Lawrence, Kansas, January 15, 1869.]

“IN THE FIELD, FORT COBB, INDIAN TERRITORY,
“*January 1, 1869.*

“GENERAL: I have the honor to forward the following for the information of the Lieutenant General:

“The destruction of the Comanche village by Colonel Evans’s command on Christmas day gave the final blow to the backbone of the Indian rebellion. At 12 o’clock on the night of the 31st December, 1868, a delegation of the chief fighting men of the Cheyennes and Arrapahoes, 21 in number, arrived at this place on foot. Their animals were not able to carry them on. They said they ruled the village, begged for peace and permission for their people to come in, asking no terms, but only for a paper to protect them from the operations of our troops while en route. They report the tribes in mourning for their losses, their people starving,

their ponies dying, their dogs all eaten up, and no buffalo. We had forced them into the cañons in the eastern edge of the State and plains, where there were no small game or buffalo. They are in a bad fix, and desire to surrender unconditionally. I acceded to their terms, and will punish them justly, and I can scarcely make an error in any punishment awarded, for they all have blood upon their hands.

"Yesterday we received a few papers, the first for one month, and I see it alleged by Indian agents that Black Kettle's band was on their reservation at the time attached. This is a falsehood. The reservation extends but thirty miles up the Washita from Fort Cobb. The battle took place 120 miles up the river from Fort Cobb. It is also alleged the band was friendly. No one could make such an assertion who had any regard for truth. The young men of this band commenced the war; I can give their names. Some of Black Kettle's young men were out depredating at Dodge when the village was wiped out. Mules taken from trains, matter carried by our murdered couriers, photographs stolen from the scenes of outrages on the Solomon and Saline, were found in the captured camp, and, in addition, I have their own illustrated history, found in their captured camp, showing the different fights or murders in which this tribe was engaged; the trains attacked; the hay parties attacked about Fort Wallace; the women, citizens, and soldiers killed. It is at the service of any one desiring information on the subject. It should be known, also, that I invited Black Kettle and his family to come in through the Arapaho chief Little Raven, in my interview with that chief at Fort Dodge in September last. They did not come.

"Yours, respectfully,

"P. H. SHERIDAN,

Major General United States Army.

"Brevet Major General W. A. NICHOLS,

Assistant Adjutant General, Military Division of the Missouri."

W. T. SHERMAN,

Lieutenant General.

ADJUTANT GENERAL'S OFFICE,

Washington, January 16, 1869.

A true copy:

E. D. TOWNSEND,

Assistant Adjutant General.