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Expedition Against Piegan Indians. Letter from the Secretary of War in answer to the resolution of the House of March 3, 1870, transmitting the report of Brevet Colonel Baker, United States Army, upon the late expedition against the Piegan Indians, in Montana

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EXPEDITION AGAINST PIEGAN INDIANS.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR

IN ANSWER TO

The resolution of the House of March 3, 1870, transmitting the report of Brevet Colonel Baker, United States Army, upon the late expedition against the Piegan Indians, in Montana.

MARCH 15, 1870.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT, *March 14, 1870.*

The Secretary of War has the honor to submit to the House of Representatives, in answer to the resolution of March 3, 1870, the accompanying report of Brevet Colonel Baker, United States Army, upon the late expedition against the Piegan Indians, in Montana, and to state that a detailed report has been called for by telegraph and will be submitted as soon as received.

WM. W. BELKNAP,
Secretary of War.

FORT SHAW, M. T.,
February 18, 1870.

SIR: I have the honor to submit the following report of a scout made by me against the hostile Piegan and Blood Indians:

Pursuant to Special Orders No. 62, Headquarters District Montana, I left Fort Ellis on the 6th January with two squadrons of the Second Cavalry, consisting of H Company, Captain Edward Ball, L Company, Brevet Major Lewis Thompson, G Company, Captain S. H. Norton, and F Company, under the command of Lieutenant G. C. Doane; arrived at Fort Shaw on the 14th.

On our arrival at Fort Shaw, Brevet Lieutenant Colonel G. H. Higbee was ordered to report to me with a detachment of fifty-five mounted infantry, and Captain R. A. Torrey, with his company of the Thirteenth Infantry.

I left Fort Shaw on the 19th, and marched to the Teton River, where we remained in camp until the evening of the 20th, when we left camp and made a night march to the mouth of Muddy Creek, a branch of the Teton. I remained in camp here until the evening of the 21st, then

marched for the Maria's River, expecting to be able to reach the Big Bend on the next morning, having understood from the guide that was where the Indians were encamped.

We were obliged to camp in a ravine on the Dry Fork of the Maria's till the night of the 22d, when we broke camp and marched to the Maria's River, arriving there on the morning of the 23d. We succeeded about 8 o'clock in surprising the camp of Bear Chief and Big Horn. We killed one hundred and seventy-three Indians, captured over one hundred women and children, and over three hundred horses.

I ordered Lieutenant Doane to remain in this camp and destroy all the property, while I marched down the river after the camp of the Mountain Chief, who, I understood, was camped four miles below.

After marching sixteen miles I found a camp of seven lodges that had been abandoned in great haste, leaving everything. The Indians had scattered in every direction, so that it was impossible to pursue them. The lodges were burned the next morning, and the command started for the Northwest Fur Company's station, arriving there on the 25th.

I sent for the chiefs of the Bloods and had a consultation with them, making them give up all their stolen stock. They promised that they would be responsible for the good behavior of their tribe.

On the 25th, started for Fort Shaw, where we arrived on the 29th January.

The cavalry command left for Fort Ellis on the 31st, arriving there on the 6th February, having made a march of about six hundred miles in one month, and this in the coldest weather that has been known in Montana for years.

Too much credit cannot be given to the officers and men of the command for their conduct during the whole expedition.

The result of the expedition is one hundred and seventy-three Indians killed, over one hundred prisoners, women and children; these were allowed to go free, as it was ascertained that some of them had the small-pox; forty-four lodges with all their supplies and stores destroyed, and three hundred horses captured.

Our casualties were one man killed, and one man with a broken leg from a fall of his horse.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. M. BAKER,

Major Second Cavalry, Bvt. Col. U. S. A.

Brevet Major J. T. MCGINNESS,

Acting Asst. Adjt. General, District Montana.

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,

Chicago, Ill., March 8, 1870.

GENERAL: I have the honor to forward the report of Brevet Colonel E. M. Baker, Second Cavalry, giving an account of his fight with Piegan Indians, on the Maria's River, January 23, 1870. I also forward the report of General James A. Hardie, my inspector general, who was sent especially to Montana, so that I might be fully satisfied of the guilt of the Indians, whom you authorized me to punish in your instructions of November 4, 1869.

I am, general, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

P. H. SHERIDAN,

Lieutenant General.

General W. T. SHERMAN,

Commanding United States Army, Washington, D. C.

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
Washington, D. C., March 12, 1870.

In submitting to the Secretary of War the within report of Colonel Baker, and of Inspector General Hardie, I will remark that they are this moment received, and will bear careful perusal, on account of the unusual severity with which the matter has been treated, both by Congress and the press.

General Sheridan took the precaution to send General Hardie, a most humane and considerate officer, well known here in Washington, to Montana, to judge on the spot between the conflicting statements of parties there, and he justified the expedition against Mountain Chief's band of the Piegan tribe.

Colonel Baker followed the instructions of his immediate commander, Colonel De Trobriand, but he does not report in detail, as is proper and usual, the sex and kind of Indians actually left dead at the camp on the Maria's. I will instruct General Sheridan to call on Colonel Baker for a fuller report on this point, to meet the public charge, that of the number killed the greater part were squaws and children.

W. T. SHERMAN,
General.