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Relief to Indian refugees in southern Kansas. Letter from J. P. Usher, assistant Secretary of the Interior, in answer to resolution of the House of 28th ultimo relative to mode and amount of relief extended to Indian refugees in southern Kansas.

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RELIEF TO INDIAN REFUGEES IN SOUTHERN KANSAS.

LETTER

FROM

J. P. USHER,

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR,

IN ANSWER TO

Resolution of the House of 28th ultimo relative to mode and amount of relief extended to Indian refugees in southern Kansas.

JUNE 16, 1862.—Laid on the table, and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, *June 13, 1862.*

SIR: In compliance with a resolution of the House of May 28, 1862, I have the honor herewith to enclose to you the report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, with accompanying papers, seven in number, and marked, respectively, A, B, C, D, E, F, and G.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. P. USHER,
Acting Secretary.

Hon. G. A. GROW,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR,
Office of Indian Affairs, June 5, 1862.

SIR: I return herewith a resolution adopted by the House of Representatives in the following words: "On motion of Mr. Richardson, *Resolved*, That the Secretary of the Interior be, and is hereby, directed to inform this House how many Indians who have been driven into Kansas by the rebels have been or are now being fed and clothed there by the government, at what expense per day, and through whom, and whether by contract, and if so, with whom?" calling for information from you relative to the southern refugee Indians who are now in Kansas, which resolution was, on the 29th instant, referred by you to this office for the information sought. I cannot, perhaps, better give the information desired than by reporting the action of this office more or less in detail.

On the 9th day of January last I received information that the disloyal Indians in the territory west of Arkansas, aided by a considerable force of white troops from Texas and Arkansas, had attacked the Union or loyal Indians

of that Territory. The Union Indians, as nearly as I could ascertain, were composed of three-fourths of the Creeks, one-half or two-thirds of the Seminoles, and members from all other tribes in said Territory, except, perhaps, the Choctaws and Chickasaws, of whom very few, if any, adhered to the government.

Notwithstanding the abandonment of all the forts of the Territory by the United States troops, and the treachery of the superintendent and agents first appointed by the present administration, these Indians stood firmly to their treaty obligations with the United States, and under the renowned Opothleyoholo met their opponents upon the battle-field. Twice they succeeded in repulsing the combined forces of whites and Indians arrayed against them, but in the third battle, which took place early in January last, they were defeated, and compelled to flee from the country with their families, leaving everything in the way of property that would impede their flight. They reached Kansas about the middle of that month.

When, in December last, and previous to any knowledge of their defeat, I learned of the noble struggle then being made by Opothleyoholo and the Creeks, Seminoles, and other Indians under him, I renewed through you my application to the War Department for troops for their relief, which resulted in authority being given to General Hunter to organize and arm four thousand loyal Indians, to accompany the expedition then proposed to be sent into the Indian country under General Lane. On the third day of January last I received your communication (copy herewith, marked A) authorizing me to assist General Hunter in the organization of these Indians. After advising with the President and yourself, I proceeded to Fort Leavenworth, in Kansas, which point I reached late in January last. On my arrival I was informed by General Hunter that Opothleyoholo had been defeated, and was, with five or six thousand of his people in southern Kansas, in a most deplorable condition—men, women, and children—naked, starving, and without shelter. Numbers of them had been wounded in battle, and very many, being barefooted and otherwise exposed, were badly frozen. The sick and feeble, the dead and dying, were scattered along their route for a hundred miles or more. I had no information until I reached Kansas of these disasters.

On the 6th day of February I received a communication from General Hunter, with accompanying documents, (copies herewith, marked B, C, D,) advising me that he could only supply these people with provisions temporarily that the provisions made by the officers under his command for their support would be exhausted by the 15th day of February; and that from that time I would be expected to make provision for them. I could but feel that the responsibility was great. The numbers had been accumulating, until it was estimated that they amounted to eight thousand to be provided for, and these lying upon the ground, which was covered with snow and ice, and the weather intensely cold. General Hunter advised me that he had no authority to furnish them clothing, but that Superintendent Coffin, acting under his advice, had purchased some ten thousand dollars' worth of blankets and other necessaries. It will be seen that this purchase amounted to no more than \$1 25 to \$1 50 for each person, and left them about as destitute as before. They were, therefore, not only to be fed, but also clothed. I had no funds applicable to the purpose, and was powerless to relieve them except by purchases made on the faith of an appropriation to be made at the discretion of Congress. The superintendent was in southern Kansas, so that I could not consult or reach him with instructions as to the immediate wants of the Indians. I therefore appointed Dr. William Kile, of Illinois, who, being commissioned by the President to act upon General Lane's staff, was then in Kansas, and had been detailed by that officer as brigade quartermaster, as a special agent to act temporarily in supplying the necessities of these wards of the government.—(See copy of instructions herewith.)

marked E.) On the same day I telegraphed you as follows: "C. B. Smith, Secretary of Interior: Six thousand Indians driven out of Indian territory, naked and starving. General Hunter will only feed them until 15th. Shall I take care of them on the faith of an appropriation? No funds now applicable." To which I received the following reply: "Go on and supply the destitute Indians. Congress will supply the means. War Department will not organize them." I was also advised by you that difficulties had arisen in the way of organizing Indians into the army; that General Lane's expedition had been countermanded, but that it was not expected that it would be abandoned, but would go forward under command of General Hunter, with whom I arranged verbally for the protection of the Indians to their homes whenever it should proceed.

On my return to Washington I advised you fully as to the condition of these people, and then learned that Congress had authorized the application of their annuities to their relief. Still being anxious that they should immediately return to their homes in order to plant crops in season for their support during the coming year, I again, with your hearty concurrence, urged upon the War Department the propriety of arming a home guard of Indians, who, with sufficient escort of white troops, should return with these people to their homes, and protect them there while raising a crop. This resulted in an order from the War Department to General Halleck, directing him to detail two regiments of white troops to accompany two thousand Indians, to be armed for the purpose above stated. I also obtained an order upon the commandant at Fort Leavenworth for 2,000 rifles and suitable ammunition to arm the two thousand Indian home guards. That there might be no delay in the execution of these orders, Judge Steel was appointed a special messenger to bear them to their destination. What action was taken by General Halleck, under the order delivered to him, I am unable to say.

The order for the rifles and ammunition was honored at Leavenworth, and on the 16th of April they were delivered to the superintendent in southern Kansas. For some time but little was heard of the expedition, but on the 16th day of May I received a communication from Colonel Furnis, of the 1st Indian regiment, enclosing an order issued by General Sturgis for the arrest of all officers and others engaged in executing the order of the War Department relating to Indian home guards. I mention these particulars to show that I had reason to consider these people as only temporarily in Kansas, and to expect from week to week that they would be on their way home.

After the order to arrest the officers engaged in organizing the Indian home guards, the changes in the command of the Kansas military department were so rapid that I have been unable to keep pace with the proceedings, but from the best information I have, I believe the expedition, if not already started, will soon be *en route* for its destination.

Superintendent Coffin estimates the per diem expense of subsisting these Indians at 15 cents each. An estimate furnished to me by Captain Turner, chief of the commissary department at Fort Leavenworth, was the basis of my instructions to Agent Kile and Superintendent Coffin. In this connexion see paper marked F. Learning that Mr. Collamore was in this city, and had recently visited these Indians and made careful investigation as to their numbers and condition, and believing that information derived from him would be reliable, as, at the commencement of the rebellion, he was selected as State agent and quartermaster to provide subsistence and forage for the Kansas troops, I have procured from him a report of the numbers and the various tribes comprising these refugees, and his estimate of the cost of clothing and subsistence necessary for a given time, a copy of which is herewith, marked G.

I have no means other than these estimates to even approximate the daily expense of feeding and clothing these Indians. Some twenty-five thousand

dollars (\$25,000) of accounts for purchases have been forwarded here, examined, and paid. From \$50,000 to \$55,000 have been forwarded to Superintendent Coffin, but no account of his disbursements has yet reached me, though I learn by telegraph that his accounts for the past quarter are on the way. I have, as instructed by you, ordered the accounts for the present quarter forwarded to this office for examination before payment.

Special Agent Kile is still employed under his original instructions, as I have seen no reason to change them, and do not know what day the removal of the Indians will enable me to dispense with his services.

For your information, I will state the mode of distributing the articles purchased, whether of clothing or provisions. Agent Kile makes no disbursements, but turns over to Superintendent Coffin all purchases, taking his receipt therefor. No claim or account is allowed, except such as are certified by Agent Kile and Superintendent Coffin. Mr. Cutler, of Kansas, agent for the Creeks; Mr. Coleman, of Indiana, agent for the Choctaws and Chickasaws; Mr. Chatterton, of Illinois, agent for the Cherokees; Mr. Snow, of Indiana, agent for the Seminoles, and Mr. Caruth, of Kansas, agent for the Wichitaws, are upon the ground acting as commissaries for their respective tribes, and to them the goods are delivered for distribution by Superintendent Coffin, he taking their receipts for the same. When funds are in the hands of Superintendent Coffin he may pay accounts, otherwise they are forwarded to this office for adjustment; and in this connexion it is proper to state that all expenses incident to the support and relief of these Indians are paid from their annuities under authority of the act of Congress above mentioned.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM P. DOLE, *Commissioner.*

Hon. C. B. SMITH,

Secretary of the Interior.

A.

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, *January 3, 1862.*

SIR: The Secretary of War, in a letter dated the 2d instant, informs the department that it is desired to receive into the United States service four thousand Indians from the borders of Kansas and Missouri; that it is proposed to give them each a blanket, army subsistence, and such arms as may be necessary to supply deficiencies; and the Secretary requests such instructions from this department to its officers as will enable Major General Hunter to organize them.

You are therefore directed to take such action in the matter as may be necessary to effect the object contemplated by the War Department.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

CALEB B. SMITH, *Secretary.*

WM. P. DOLE, Esq.,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

B.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF KANSAS,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, February 6, 1862.

SIR: I have the honor to inform you that Captain J. W. Turner, chief commissary of subsistence of this department, has just returned from the encampments of the loyal Indians on the Verdigris river and in its vicinity, having

made arrangements for subsisting these unfortunate refugees until the 15th day of the present month.

In the neighborhood of Belmont and Roe's Fort there were, at the time Captain Turner left, about four thousand five hundred Indians, chiefly Creeks and Seminoles; but this number was being constantly augmented by the arrival of fresh camps, tribes, and families.

Their condition is pictured as most wretched—destitute of clothing, shelter, fuel, horses, cooking utensils, and food. This last-named article was supplied by Captain Turner in quantities sufficient to last until the 15th instant, after which time I doubt not you will have made further arrangements for their continued subsistence.

In taking the responsibility of supplying their wants until the Indian department could make provision for their necessities, I but fulfilled a duty due to our common humanity and the cause in which the Indians are suffering. I now trust, and have every confidence, that under your energetic and judicious arrangements these poor people may be supplied with all they need after the 15th instant, on which day the supplies furnished by Captain Turner will be exhausted.

I make no doubt that provision should be made for feeding, clothing, and sheltering not less than six thousand Indians, and possibly as high as ten thousand. On this point, however, you are doubtless better prepared to judge than myself. I only wish to urge upon you the necessity of prompt measures of relief.

Very respectfully, your most obedient servant,

D. HUNTER, *Major General.*

Hon. WM. P. DOLE,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Topeka, Kansas.

P. S.—Copies of the requests made by Captain Turner and Brigade Surgeon Campbell will be furnished you by to-morrow's post. In view of the urgency of this case and the fact that these Indians cannot be supplied any further than has been done from the supplies of the army, I send one copy of this letter to Topeka and the other to Leavenworth City. Fearful suffering must ensue amongst the Indians unless the steps necessary be promptly taken.

C.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF KANSAS,

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, February 5, 1862.

MAJOR: In compliance with instructions from Major General Hunter, contained in your order of 22d ultimo, I left this place on the 22d and proceeded to Burlington, where I learned that the principal part of the friendly Indians were congregated, and encamped on the Verdigris river, near a place called Roe's Fork, from twelve to fifteen miles south of the town of Belmont. I proceeded there without delay. By a census of the tribes taken a few days before my arrival, there was found to be of the Creeks, 3,168; slaves of the Creeks, 53; free negroes, members of the tribe, 38; Seminoles, 777; Quapaws, 136; Cherokees, 50; Chickasaws, 31; some few Kickapoos and other tribes, about 4,500 in all. But the number was being constantly augmented by the daily arrival of other camps and families. I met assembled together Kamtamechks, Talwaneechks, Meichkootks, and Teslamakimaktla, all chiefs of the Creeks; Poskooak 1st and Gotza 2d, chiefs of the Seminoles; Tecumpta, a Chickasaw. From them I learned that a number, greater than were assembled, were scattered over the country at distances varying from 25 to 150 miles, and unable, for want of

food and ponies, to come in; they were chiefly collected on the Cottonwood, Fall, and Walnut rivers.

These friendly Indians had had two fights with the Indians disposed to join the rebels, and had been victorious. Their enemies had received re-enforcements from the Texas Rangers, and had come upon them when they were celebrating a festival, and in this third contest were defeated, compelled to fly with little or nothing to support life or protect themselves from the severity of the weather, and are now endeavoring to exterminate all who are loyal to the government.

It is impossible for me to depict the wretchedness of their condition. Their only protection from the snow upon which they lie is prairie grass, and from the wind and weather scraps and rags stretched upon switches; some of them had some personal clothing; most had but shreds and rags which did not conceal their nakedness; and I saw seven, varying in age from three to fifteen years, without one thread upon their bodies. Hogobohyah, the 2d chief of the Creeks, was sick with a fever—it is time he had received from Mr. Fuller blankets enough to keep him warm; but his tent (to give it that name) was no larger than a small blanket stretched over a switch ridge pole two feet from the ground, and did not reach it by a foot on either side of him. One or two of the lodges were better, all the rest worse than his. The boxes from the Chicago commission contained thirty-five comfortables or quilts, many of them only two feet and two feet six inches wide, forty pairs of socks, three pairs of pantaloons, seven undershirts, and four pairs of drawers, a few shirts, pillows, and pillow-cases. I unpacked the things and piled them up in the wagon in parcels of the same kind of articles. I had the wagon driven round the margin of the woods; I walked through the woods and selected the nakedest of the naked, to whom I doled out the few articles I had, and when all was gone I found myself surrounded by hundreds of anxious faces, disappointed to find that nothing remained for them. The pillow-cases were the most essential articles next to food, for they were the only means that families had to receive their portion of the meal or flour furnished them.

They are extremely destitute of cooking utensils and axes or hatchets; many can with difficulty get wood to make fires, either to warm themselves or to cook with, which, together with the want of cooking utensils, compels many of them to eat their provisions raw. They greatly need medical assistance; many have their toes frozen off, others have feet wounded by sharp ice or branches of trees lying on the snow; but few have shoes or moccasins. They suffer with inflammatory diseases of the chest, throat, and eyes. Those who come in last get sick as soon as they eat. Means should be taken at once to have the horses which lie dead in every direction through the camp and on the side of the river removed and burned, least the first few warm days breed a pestilence amongst them. Why the officers of the Indian department are not doing something for them I cannot understand; common humanity demands that more should be done, and done at once, to save them from total destruction.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. B. CAMPBELL,
Surgeon United States Army.

JAMES K. BARNES,

Surgeon U. S. A., Medical Director, Department of Kansas.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF KANSAS,

Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, February 8, 1862.

Official copy.

CHARLES G. HALPINE,

Major and Assistant Adjutant General.

Hon. WM. P. DOLE,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

D.

OFFICE CHIEF COM'Y OF DEPARTMENT OF KANSAS,
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, February 11, 1862.

SIR: In compliance with your request that I would submit such suggestions as occurred to me in my recent visit to the loyal and destitute Indians now within the southern border of this State—in regard to their numbers, the best locality for them, their requirements, and arrangements for supplying them—I have the honor briefly to offer the following:

At the time I was among them it was impossible to get definitely their total numbers; they were scattered over a great extent of country, but were daily coming in at the point I visited them. At that time they numbered nearly five thousand; I calculated their numbers would swell to at least eight thousand, and probably ten thousand—men, women, children, and negroes.

The place they concentrated at was on the Verdigris river, at a point called Fort Rois, about thirty-five or forty miles from Leroy and Burlington, on the Neosho.

The locality presented itself to me as a desirable one for their sojourn till at least definite arrangements should be made for their permanent abiding place.

It is on Indian land, and sufficiently removed from settlers to obviate the difficulties and disputes which would certainly arise if brought in close contact.

There are a few settlers in the vicinity on the Verdigris, but as they have no right on Indian lands they can raise no objection to these Indians being here, or the free use of the timber.

The only other favorable locality for them is that afforded by the valley of the Neosho, a wooded bottom land. This has the advantage of being nearer your source of supplies and lessening your cost of transportation somewhat, a desideratum, but is open to the very grave objection that the country is mostly owned and occupied by settlers, compelling you to bring these Indians on to settlers' lands, and in daily contact with them.

Ten thousand Indians would stretch along the river bank for several miles in their encampments; no farmers would look with complacency or quietude upon such a crowd of destitute people brought around them, and I apprehend serious difficulties would arise. Moreover, every farmer has, necessarily, in this thinly-wooded country, to husband the little timber which the river bottom affords him; he is rightly choice of his young growth of timber, and jealously guards it.

The Indians never regard these things, and they would necessarily commit great damages, the cost of which, I think, would in the end greatly overbalance the little addition you will have to pay to get your supplies from the Neosho to the Verdigris.

Of course, the Indians are now in want of every necessary of life. When last attacked by the rebel whites and Indians they were dispersed in every direction; in their flight they had barely time to snatch such few utensils and wearing apparel as were at hand; much of this in their long journey, made by many on foot, has necessarily been abandoned or worn out. A strong pair of pants, a pair of shoes, a flannel shirt, and a blanket, would be a sufficient issue of clothing to each Indian.

Cheap unbleached sheeting could be worked up by the women into various garments for themselves and children, and is much needed. The smaller children for whom shoes could not be obtained, the women could easily make moccasins out of blankets for them, which would answer till they supplied themselves again with skins. Stockings might be sent down at first to supply the pressing wants of the most needy, or for the women and children; once supplied with shoes or moccasins, they do not need them. Of cooking utensils

they are totally destitute. The ordinary soldier's camp-kettle and mess-pan, or whatever nearest approached it, would best answer the purpose. About one camp-kettle and three mess-pans would be ample for a family of six. Axes are very scarce with them; two hundred ought to be sent immediately. Equally important with their requirements is shelter, protection against the inclemency of the weather, and which will present more difficulties, as well as greater cost than any other to fill.

Perhaps as speedy a method of supplying it would be to give them material for making shelter tents—the same kind of stuff of which army tents are made. This would serve the best purpose, if it can be obtained, though costly. It might be shipped in bolts, and issued to them in length just sufficient to make a low shelter for a family. Afterwards they could, by the addition of beef hides which must be now fast accumulating, and other skins, complete a more commodious lodge.

In regard to their subsistence, beef and corn meal will probably be their chief articles of food; they are the principal staples in this section of country, and therefore cheaper.

At present it would probably be found more convenient to contract for the delivery of beef weekly—a week's supply at a delivery—on the foot; the Indians will do the butchering. After grass is up sufficient to afford good feed this would not be so important.

I think the flour mills at Burlington and Leroy would be able to furnish all the corn meal that will be required, and from corn obtained in the valley of the Neosho; they are custom mills, though, and their capacity limited. The importance of a continuous supply being placed beyond doubt is readily seen. Flour might be issued in proportion of one-sixth or one-eighth; sugar and coffee are not absolutely needed, but tend much to their comfort, particularly for the sick; it might be kept on hand expressly for the latter. Salt is necessary, and will have to be sent from here; there is none in the immediate country.

It will be necessary, considering the extent of their encampment, and the number of Indians, to have three or four log-houses erected at suitable points within its limits, for issuing depots, with a person in charge of one or two; each tribe, or part of tribe, would then have a certain place for drawing their provisions. An enrolment of all the Indians can easily be obtained, and each issuing clerk have a list of all the heads of families of the tribes to which he issues, with the number in each.

The issues may be made for two, four, or six days, as most convenient; the heads of a family drawing for his own family. A chief and interpreter may be present to prevent any imposition being practiced. In this way the distribution would be more equal, and give greater satisfaction than the method now pursued of turning over the allotment to a tribe to a chief for distribution.

A company or two of soldiers, whose presence will be necessary any way, would soon put up the buildings.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JNO. W. TURNER,

Captain and Commissary of Subsistence.

Hon. WILLIAM P. DOLE,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

E.

LEAVENWORTH, February 10, 1862.

SIR: It has been determined that in consequence of the destitute condition of the Indians in southern Kansas, who have been driven from their homes in the

Indian territory, to provide for them temporarily at the expense of the government of the United States, with such articles of clothing and food as their positive necessities require.

You have, therefore, been appointed special agent for the purpose of purchasing and delivering to Wm. G. Coffin, superintendent of Indian affairs for the southern district, such quantities of clothing and provisions as, in your judgment, may be required to prevent suffering amongst said Indians.

You will consult with Mr. Coffin at your earliest convenience, and receive instructions from him as to the place or places of delivery of the articles you may purchase. I would also advise that you consult with Mr. Coffin as to the articles of clothing to be purchased (if any) after the first purchase, which I think proper should be made at once; and before such conference can be had General Hunter, commandant of the department of Kansas, will turn over to you a considerable quantity of bacon belonging to the army stores at Fort Leavenworth, which will reduce very much the amount of meat needed.

Whatever further supplies of meat you may find necessary you will purchase in beef cattle, to be delivered, as before stated, either on foot or the net beef, as will, in your judgment, be the most economical and beneficial.

For bread, I would advise that you furnish corn meal instead of flour, as being sufficiently good and much cheaper; some flour for the feeble and sick will be allowed; you may find it necessary to furnish these Indians with a small quantity of cooking utensils, and with axes to procure fuel, as I understand they were driven from their homes in such haste as to lose nearly or quite all their property of every description.

The most difficult part of the duties assigned you will no doubt result from the necessity you will be under to make these purchases on the faith of the Congress of the United States making the appropriation to meet any indebtedness you may create, there being now no funds belonging to the Indian department applicable to that purpose.

You can, however, assure those having for sale the articles that you need that there can be little, if any, doubt that Congress will, so soon as the condition of these people is made known to them, hasten to provide for their wants, especially so when it is considered that these very necessities are the result of a failure on the part of the United States to meet her treaty stipulations with these people.

I would again remind you that much more care and labor will be necessary in purchasing these supplies than would probably be necessary had you funds in hand to make prompt payment. You will therefore be careful to seek out, if possible, such parties from whom to make these purchases as are willing to sell to the government without extortion.

Superintendent Coffin has been instructed to receive of you the articles herein authorized to be delivered to him, and provide storage to keep on hand at least one week's provision in advance. I do not think it advisable that your purchases should exceed, at any time, an amount necessary for a supply of thirty days, as it is hoped that our government will return them to their homes early in the spring, and protect them there, where they can provide for themselves.

I am advised by the officers of the commissary department at Fort Leavenworth that one pound of meal and one pound of beef per day for each will, in all probability, be sufficient for these people.

Your compensation will be at the rate of six dollars per day from the date hereof until you return to your place of residence, and your actual expenses, for which you should, in all cases where practicable, take vouchers to accompany your account, which must be certified on honor to the Indian office.

When you find it impracticable to take vouchers, a memorandum of items of

expenditure should be kept and reported with your account, also certified on honor.

A suitable sum of money will be placed in your hands, to enable you to pay all incidental expenses, so soon as your bond, with security to be approved at this office, is received, conditioned that you will faithfully account for the disbursements of the same in accordance with the duties hereby prescribed and hereafter to be prescribed under this appointment; a form of which bond is herewith enclosed.

You will, from time to time, inform the Indian department of your progress in supplying the wants of these Indians; and, in all cases where there is no positive necessity for acting promptly in any matter under this commission, you will advise with this department before acting at all.

Your obedient servant,

W. P. DOLE,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

Dr. KILE.

F.

OFFICE CHIEF COM'Y OF SUBSISTENCE, DEPT. OF KANSAS.
Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, February 11, 1862.

SIR: In compliance with your verbal request that I would submit such suggestions as occurred to me in my recent visit to the loyal and destitute Indians now within the southern border of this State—in regard to their numbers, the best locality for them, their requirements, and arrangements for supplying them—I have the honor briefly to offer the following:

At the time I was among them it was impossible to get definitely their total numbers. They were scattered over a great extent of country, but were daily coming in at the point I visited them. At that time they numbered nearly five thousand. I calculated their numbers would swell to at least eight thousand, and probably ten thousand—men, women, children, and negroes.

The place at which they were concentrating was on the Verdigris river, at a point called Fort Roe, about thirty-five or forty miles from Le Roy and Burlington, on the Neosho. This locality presented itself to me as a desirable one for their present sojourn, till at least definite arrangements should be made for their permanent abiding place. It is on Indian lands, and sufficiently removed from settlers to obviate the difficulties and disputes which would certainly arise if brought in closer contact. There are a few settlers in the vicinity of the Verdigris, but as they have no right on Indian lands they can raise no objection to these Indians being here, or to the free use of the timber. The only other favorable locality for them is that afforded by the valley of the Neosho, a wooded bottom land. This has the advantage of being nearer your source of supplies and lessening your cost of transportation somewhat, a desideratum, but is open to the very grave objection that the country is mostly owned and occupied by settlers, compelling you to bring these Indians on to settlers' lands and in daily contact with them. Ten thousand Indians would stretch along the river bank in their encampments for several miles. No farmer would look with complacency or quietude upon such a crowd of destitute people brought around them, and I apprehend serious difficulties would arise. Moreover, every farmer has necessarily, in this thinly-wooded country, to husband the little timber which the river bottom affords him; he is rightly choice of his young growth of timber, and jealously guards it. The Indian never regards these things, and they would necessarily commit great damages, the cost of which I

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A strong pair of pants, a pair of shoes, a flannel shirt, and a blanket would be a sufficient issue of clothing to each Indian. Cheap unbleached sheeting could be worked up by the women into various garments for themselves and children, and is much needed.

The smaller children for whom shoes could not be obtained, the women could easily make moccasins out of blankets for them, which would answer till they supplied themselves again with skins. Stockings might be sent down at first to supply the pressing wants of the most needy, or for the women and children; once supplied with shoes or moccasins, they do not need them. Of cooking utensils they are totally destitute. The ordinary soldier's camp-kettle and mess-pan, or whatever nearest approached it, would best answer the purpose; about one camp-kettle and three mess-pans would be ample for a family of six. Axes are very scarce with them; two hundred ought to be sent immediately.

Equally important with their other requirements is shelter, protection against the inclemency of the weather, and which will present more difficulty as well as greater cost than any other to fill. Perhaps as speedy a method of supplying it would be to give them material for making shelter tents—the same kind of stuff of which army tents are made. This would serve the best purpose if it can be obtained, though costly. It might be shipped in bolts and issued to them in length just sufficient to make a low shelter for a family. Afterwards they could, by the addition of beef hides, which must be now fast accumulating, and other skins, complete a more commodious lodge.

In regard to their subsistence, beef and corn meal will probably be their chief articles of food. They are the principal staples in this section of country, and therefore cheaper. At present it would probably be found more convenient to contract for the delivery of beef weekly—a week's supply at a delivery—on the foot; the Indians will do the butchering. After grass is up sufficient to afford good feed this would not be so important.

I think the flour mills at Burlington and Leroy would be able to furnish all the corn meal that will be required, and from corn obtained in the valley of the Neosho. They are custom mills, though, and their capacity limited.

The importance of a continuous supply being placed beyond doubt is readily seen. Flour might be issued in proportion of one-sixth or one-eighth. Sugar and coffee are not absolutely needed, but tend much to their comfort, particularly for the sick; it might be kept on hand expressly for the latter. Salt is necessary, and will have to be sent from here. There is none in the immediate country.

It will be necessary, considering the extent of their encampment and the number of Indians, to have three or four log-houses erected at suitable points within its limits, for issuing depots, with a person in charge of one or two. Each tribe or part of a tribe would then have a certain place for drawing their provisions. An enrolment of all the Indians can easily be obtained, and each issuing clerk have a list of all the heads of families of the tribes to which he issues, with the number in each. The issues may be made for two, four, or six days, as most convenient; the head of a family drawing for his own family. A chief and interpreter may be present to prevent any imposition being practiced. In this way the distribution would be more equal and give greater satisfaction than the method now pursued of turning over the allotment to a tribe to a chief

for distribution. A company or two of soldiers, whose presence will be necessary any way, would soon put up the buildings.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN W. TURNER,

Captain and Commissary of Subsistence.

Hon. Mr. DOLE,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

G.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *April 21, 1862.*

DEAR SIR: Agreeably to your request, I furnish herewith an account of my recent visit to the loyal Indians who were obliged to flee from their pursuers (the rebel Indians and Texans) in the dead of winter, and who are now encamped on the Neosho river, in the southern part of Kansas.

Having heard of their great destitution and suffering, in company with the Reverend Evan Jones, who has been for the last forty years a missionary among the Cherokees, and who was driven from his station by the rebels in August last, I visited their encampment the latter part of March last for the purpose of observation and giving information as to their actual condition and wants.

It is no doubt well known to you, but not generally so, what the position of these people has been in the great struggle in which the whole country is involved, and with what resolute firmness and endurance they have resisted all the appeals and temptations held out to them by the rebel leaders to abandon the government which has always protected them. While apparently the attitude of the various tribes was for a season equivocal, and the disposition seemed to incline to aid and comfort the enemy, or, at the best, to "neutrality," yet the evidence is ample and clear that a large portion of the Cherokee nation were determined to stand firm in their loyalty to the Union, as is sufficiently evinced in the correspondence herewith enclosed between John Ross, the principal chief of the Cherokee nation, and General Benjamin McCullough and David Hubbard, commissioner of Indian affairs for the rebel States. And the same may be observed of the other tribes. But the strongest testimony consists in the troops they have furnished and the battles they have fought; and it is the fortune of these battles that has brought them into their present miserable condition in the bare prairies of Kansas. Large numbers of these, driven from their comfortable homes, leaving their farms and their herds, many of them, it may be said, having lived in affluence, joined the armies of the Union. Their houses were fired by the enemy, and their horses and cattle driven off. The battles in which they participated, and which eventuated in their expulsion from their own country, and forced them to seek shelter in Kansas, formed a part of the history of this war. The battle of December last was particularly unfortunate to these people, and the disasters of the defeat left them in the helpless condition I found them.

They are now located near Leroy, in Coffey county, Kansas, a distance of not less than one hundred and seventy-five miles intervening between them and their former homes. Their march was undertaken with a scanty supply of clothing, subsistence, and cooking utensils, and entirely without tents; and during their progress they were reduced to such extremity as to be obliged to feed upon their ponies and their dogs, while their scanty clothing was reduced to threads, and in some cases absolute nakedness was their condition. Let it be remembered that this retreat was in the midst of a winter of unusual severity for that country, with snow upon the prairie. Many of their ponies died from

starvation. The women and children suffered severely from frozen limbs, as did also the men. Women gave birth to their offspring upon the naked snow, without shelter or covering, and in some cases the new-born infants died for want of clothing, and those who survived to reach their present location with broken constitutions and utterly dispirited.

Thus I found them encamped upon the Neosho river bottom, in the timber, extending a distance of some seven miles. Not a comfortable tent was to be seen. Such coverings as I saw were made in the rudest manner, being composed of pieces of cloth, old quilts, handkerchiefs, aprons, &c., &c., stretched upon sticks; and so limited were many of them in size that they were scarcely sufficient to cover the emaciated and dying forms beneath them. Under such shelter I found in the last stages of consumption the daughter of Opothleyoholo, one of the oldest, most influential, and wealthy chiefs of the Creek nation.

In company with Doctor Coffin I visited nearly fifty patients in one afternoon; not a few he pronounced incurable, their diseases being consumption and pneumonia, brought on from exposure and privations of the common necessities of life. Doctor George A. Cutler, agent of the Creeks, informed me that in two months two hundred and forty refugees of that nation had died. Those of other tribes suffered in like degree. Doctor Coffin informed me that upwards of one hundred amputations of frosted limbs had taken place. Among them I saw a little Creek boy, about eight years old, with both feet taken off near the ankle; others lying upon the ground, whose frosted limbs rendered them unable to move about. Five persons in a similar situation the physician pronounced past recovery. Sickness among them on account of their exposure and lack of proper food was on the increase.

The following day I visited almost every lodge of several of the largest tribes, and found the same destitution and suffering among them. A cold drenching rain fell on the last day of the visit, and for eight hours I went from lodge to lodge and tribe to tribe, and the suffering of the well, to say nothing of the sick, is beyond description. Their numbers, as ascertained, are as follows: Creeks, 5,000; Seminoles, 1,096; Chickasaws, 140; Quapaws, 315; Uchees, 544; Keechies, 83; Delawares, 197; Ironeyes, 17; Caddoes, 3; Wichitaws, 5; Cherokees, 240—making an aggregate of 7,600 persons.

Thus this large number of people have been deprived of shelter for some four months, and they have been supplied with clothing wholly inadequate to their actual wants. Some whom I saw had not a single garment on their bodies. Nor has their food been sufficient in quantity or proper quality. Neither coffee, sugar, vinegar, nor pepper has been allowed them, only upon the requisition of the physician for the sick. Only about one pound of flour is given them per week each, and a scanty supply of salt.

To all these necessities of life they have been accustomed. They had been told by the rebel emissaries—as the chiefs informed me—that they would fail to obtain these articles from their Union friends, which, having turned out to be the fact, has affected them with suspicion and discontent.

Great complaint was made by the chiefs and others as to the quality of the bacon furnished, it being, as they expressed it, “not fit for a dog to eat;” many of them were made sick by eating of it. The unfitness of the food I brought to the attention of their agents, who informed me that this bacon had been condemned at Fort Leavenworth; and Major Snow, the agent of the Seminoles, employed the same expression in regard to it as the Indians, that it was “not fit for a dog to eat;” and a reliable person who saw the bacon before it was sent to them, who is a judge of the article, pronounced it suitable only for soap grease.

The unanimous expression of the agents with whom I conversed, including the superintendent of Indian affairs, Colonel Coffin, and the physician, was that

they should be provided with all the articles above enumerated, as essential to their health and ordinary comfort.

Notwithstanding all their hardships and disappointments, these people, who have exhibited a courage and endurance beyond any in the United States, breathe but one spirit of fidelity to the Union, and a desire once more to be restored to their homes and friends, and there, sustained by the federal government, to defend the cause they have espoused.

They ardently desire to return to their farms, rebuild their cabins, re-erect their fences, plant the seed, and obtain from the rich soil of their country a subsistence from their own industry; and unless they are afforded an opportunity to return with this object in view, they must become discouraged and demoralized, and remain upon the hands of the government, a burden from which the natural feeling of pride and independence would save them. Thus the alternative is presented to the government of restoring them to their homes, enabling them to be self-supporting, or sustain them at its own expense for another year at least. In the former case immediate action is necessary, for the planting season in that country is already near at hand.

I was assured by Opothleyoholo that he and his people were willing, if being properly armed, to fight their own way back; but more lately learning from reliable information, that there were three camps, consisting of from five thousand to six thousand rebel Indians and Texans, to oppose him, he would now require assistance from our troops. Should the latter case be adopted, it is highly important that a sagacious, humane, and prudent officer be intrusted with the command.

Should it be determined to retain them in their present position, it is a matter of no difficulty to estimate the expense of so doing. Calling them eight thousand in round numbers, allowing rations for three hundred and sixty-five days at ten cents per day, would demand an outlay of \$292,000 for subsistence alone. \$100,000 would not meet the wants for clothing, to say nothing of tents and other necessary expenses.

We cannot shut our eyes to the demoralizing effect upon them should they remain in their present condition as mere beneficiaries of the government, without employment or incentives to industry.

Your obedient servant,

GEORGE W. COLLAMORE.

Hon. WILLIAM P. DOLE,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs.