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Letter of the Secretary of War, communicating, in compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 30th ultimo, the official reports, papers, and other facts in relation to the causes and extent of the late massacre of United States troops by Indians at Fort Phil. Kearney.

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LETTER
OF
THE SECRETARY OF WAR,
COMMUNICATING,

In compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 30th ultimo, the official reports, papers, and other facts in relation to the causes and extent of the late massacre of United States troops by Indians at Fort Phil. Kearney.

FEBRUARY 2, 1867.—Read and referred to the Committee on Military Affairs and the Militia.

FEBRUARY 5, 1867.—Committee discharged, referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, February 2, 1867.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith a communication of this date from General Grant covering all official reports, papers, and others facts bearing on the subject of the late massacre of United States troops by Indians at Fort Phil. Kearney, called for by the Senate's resolution of January 30, 1867.

Very respectfully, sir, your obedient servant,

EDWIN M. STANTON,
Secretary of War.

Hon. L. F. S. FOSTER,
President of the Senate.

HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, February 2, 1867.

SIR: I have the honor to return Senate resolution calling for information "which may tend to explain the origin, causes, and extent of the late massacre of the United States troops by Indians at or near Fort Phil. Kearney, in Dakota Territory," and referred by you to me for report. I send herewith "all official reports, papers, and other facts," in possession of these headquarters, bearing upon the subject.

I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

U. S. GRANT, *General.*

Hon. E. M. STANTON,
Secretary of War.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE,
Omaha, Nebraska, December 26, 1866.

GENERAL: On the 21st instant three (3) officers and ninety (90) men, cavalry and infantry, were massacred by Indians very near Fort Philip Kearney.

Indians reported near three thousand, (3,000,) probable, from the completeness of the massacre.

I order up four (4) companies of infantry and two (2) of cavalry from Laramie.

I order Colonel Carrington to Casper, headquarters of the new eighteenth if not approved I request the assignment of General Wessels at Reno to his brevet rank, to command district.

Just received at least five "leaves of absence" of officers of these troops. It is important that all these officers be ordered to join.

Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman, Captain Brown, and Lieutenant Grummond, are the officers killed; not a man was left alive.

Sent direct in General Sherman's absence.

Shall report by mail.

P. ST. GEORGE COOKE,
Brevet Major General, Commanding.

Major General JOHN A. RAWLINS,
Chief of Staff.

Official copy :

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

[Telegram.]

HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, December 26, 1866.

General Grant desires me to say that your despatch of to-day is received. Your action in Colonel Carrington's case is approved; and if you deem it still necessary you are authorized to assign General Wessells as proposed. Suspend all leaves of absence until you think they can be safely granted.

C. B. COMSTOCK,
Brevet Brig. Gen. and A. D. C.

General P. ST. GEO. COOKE, *Omaha.*

Official copy :

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

[Received at office United States military telegraph, War Department, Washington, D. C. December 26, 1866.]

FORT PHIL. KEARNEY, D. T., *December 21, 1866,*
By courier to Fort Laramie, December 26.

GENERAL: I send copy of despatch to General Cooke simply as a case when in uncertain communication I think you should know the facts at once. I want all my officers. I want men. Depend upon it, as I wrote in July, no treaty but hard fighting is to assure this line. I have had no reason to think otherwise. I will operate all winter, whatever the season, if supported; but I redeem my pledge to open and guarantee this line I must have re-enforcements and the best of arms up to my full estimate.

Respectfully, your obedient servant,

HENRY B. CARRINGTON.

U. S. GRANT.

Official:

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

Copy forwarded to Secretary 27th.

[Copy of telegram to General Cooke.—Received at office of United States military telegraph, War Department, Washington, D. C., December 26, 1866—3.15 p. m.]

FORT PHIL. KEARNEY, D. T., *December 21, 1866,*
By courier to Fort Laramie, December 26.

Do send me reinforcements forthwith. Expedition now with my force is impossible. I risk everything but the post and its store. I venture as much as any one can, but I have had to-day a fight unexampled in Indian warfare. My loss is ninety-four (94) killed. I have recovered forty-nine bodies, and thirty-five more are to be brought in in the morning that have been found. Among the killed are Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman, Captain F. H. Brown, and Lieutenant Grammond. The Indians engaged were nearly three thousand, (3,000,) being apparently the force reported as on Tongue river in my despatches of the 5th of November and subsequent thereto. This line, so important, can and must be held. It will take four times the force in the spring to reopen if it be broken up this winter. I hear nothing of my arms that left Leavenworth September 15. Additional cavalry ordered to join have not reported their arrival. Would have saved us much loss to-day. The Indians lost beyond all precedent. I need prompt re-enforcements and repeating arms. I am sure to have, as before reported, an active winter, and must have men and arms. Every officer of this battalion should join it to-day. I have every teamster on duty, and, at best, one hundred and nineteen left at post. I hardly need urge this matter; it speaks for itself. Give me two companies of cavalry, at least, forthwith, well armed, or four companies of infantry, exclusive of what I need at Reno and Fort Smith. I did not overestimate my early application; a single company, promptly, will save the line; but our killed show that any remissness will result in mutilation and butchery beyond precedent. No such mutilation as that to day is on record. Depend on it that this post will be held so long as a round or man is left.

Promptness is the vital thing. Give me officers and men. Only the new Spencer arms should be sent. The Indians desperate, and they spare none.

HENRY B. CARRINGTON,

Colonel 15th Infantry, Commanding.

General U. S. GRANT.

Copy forwarded to Secretary 27th December.

Official:

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

[Telegram.]

HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, December 27, 1866.

General Grant desires me to forward the accompanying telegram from General Cooke, and to say that General Cooke's action in Colonel Carrington's case has been approved; that General Cooke has been authorized to assign General Wessels as proposed, if he still deems it necessary; and also to suspend all leaves of absence.

C. B. COMSTOCK,
Brevet Brigadier General, A. D. C.

Gen. W. T. SHERMAN, *St. Louis.*

Official copy:

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

[Received at office United States military telegraph, War Department, Washington, D. C.
December 26, 1866.]

FROM OMAHA, *December 26, 1866.*

On the 21st instant three (3) officers and ninety (90) men, cavalry and infantry, were massacred by Indians very near Fort Philip Kearney. Indians reported near three thousand, probably, from the completeness of the massacre. I order up four (4) companies of infantry and two (2) of cavalry from Laramie. I order Colonel Carrington to Casper, headquarters of the new eighteenth. If not approved, I request the assignment of General Wessels at Reno, at his rank, to command the district. Just received at least five leaves of absence of officers of these troops. It is important that all these officers be ordered to join. Send direct in General Sherman's absence. Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman, Captain Brown, and Lieutenant Grammond, are the officers killed. Not a man was left alive. Shall report by mail.

P. ST. GEO. COOKE,
Brevet Major General, Commanding.

Gen. J. A. RAWLINS, *Chief of Staff.*

Official :

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

[Telegram.]

HEADQUARTERS ARMIES OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, December 28, 1866.

General Grant requests that you will furnish him with any additional information you may receive in reference to the Fort Philip Kearney massacre, and if there has been fault in the matter, that you will have it strictly investigated.

C. B. COMSTOCK,
Brevet Brigadier General, A. D. C.

Gen. W. T. SHERMAN, *St. Louis.*

Official copy :

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

[Received at office United States military telegraph, War Department, Washington, D. C.
December 28, 1866—4.45 p. m.]

ST. LOUIS, *December 28, 1866.*

GENERAL: Just arrived in time to attend the funeral of my adjutant general Sawyer. I have given general instructions to General Cooke about the Sioux. I do not yet understand how the massacre of Colonel Fetterman's party could have been so complete. We must act with vindictive earnestness against the Sioux, even to their extermination, men, women and children. Nothing less will reach the root of this case.

W. T. SHERMAN,
Lieutenant General.

U. S. GRANT.

Official :

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

[Received at office United States military telegraph, War Department, Washington, D. C.,
December 29, 1866—3 p. m.]

ST. LOUIS, *December 29, 1866.*

GENERAL: Your despatch of yesterday is received. I have another despatch from General Cooke, but nothing more definite as to the Fort Phil. Kearney massacre. A heavy snow storm is prevailing west of Omaha, and cuts off communication. I will have the matter fully investigated. In the meantime the Indians must be pursued and punished. General Cooke asks for a regiment of cavalry and one of infantry. I will see if the two new colored regiments, now organizing in General Hancock's department, can be made available by April 1; if not, I may have to ask some help from General Grant. Please ascertain of him if he has any troops he could spare this spring, as we must not overlook this case, but must pursue and punish at all hazards. The posts in that quarter are strong and well supplied; but it is reported the Sioux have three thousand (3,000) warriors, well armed, and their country is very difficult to operate in.

W. T. SHERMAN,
Lieutenant General.

General C. B. COMSTOCK, *Aide-de-Camp.*

Official:

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

[Special Orders No. 126.]

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE,
Omaha, Nebraska, December 26, 1866.

I. The following telegraphic orders of this date are hereby confirmed:

Brevet Brigadier General J. N. Palmer, commanding Fort Laramie, will send from the garrison of that post two companies of the 2d cavalry and four companies of the 18th infantry, to report to Brevet Brigadier General Wessells at Fort Reno.

II. Brevet Brigadier General Wessells will proceed with the re-enforcements and assume command of Fort Philip Kearney, and will also have authority to order such movements of the troops at Forts Reno and C. F. Smith as he may find necessary. The commanding officers at Forts Reno and C. F. Smith will obey all orders they may receive from Brevet Brigadier General Wessells.

III. Colonel H. B. Carrington, 18th United States infantry, will be relieved from the command of Fort Philip Kearney, by Brevet Brigadier General Wessells, and will proceed immediately to Fort Casper, to which post the headquarters of the new 18th regiment have been heretofore ordered, and assume command of the post and that regiment.

IV. Brevet Lieutenant Colonel J. K. Mizner, commanding Fort McPherson, will send promptly two of his companies to take post at Fort Laramie.

V. Brevet Major General John Gibbon, commanding Fort Kearney, will send immediately one company of his command to take post at Fort McPherson.

VI. Captain George O. Sokalski, 2d United States cavalry, will proceed today, taking railroad and mail conveyances (and without stop) to Fort Laramie, Dakota Territory, reporting, on arrival, to the commanding officer of his regiment, with a view to joining his company, "C," with the least practicable delay. The quartermaster's department will furnish the necessary transportation.

By command of Brigadier and Brevet Major General Cooke:

H. G. LITCHFIELD,
Brevet Major United States Army, A. D. C.

Official:

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

[Telegram.]

FORT LARAMIE, *December 27, 1866.*

Orders to command Fort Reno issued yesterday; the most violent, blinding storm now raging; there would be nothing gained by moving in such a snow storm; meantime all preparations which can be made in-doors are going on. One Indian messenger, just in to see the Indian agent, gives the following information: He says there is a grand coalition of Indian tribes north, to the number of ten thousand (10,000) to twelve thousand (12,000) fighting men; they are to make common cause against the whites; twelve (12) tribes are enumerated; story somewhat improbable, because tribes deadly hostile to each other are named, and such large numbers can't live together; not enough for them to eat in the country.

J. N. PALMER, *Commanding.*

Major H. G. LITCHFIELD,
Assistant Adjutant General.

Official:

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE,
Omaha, Nebraska, December 27, 1866.

GENERAL: I communicated yesterday by telegraph the disastrous news from Fort Philip Kearney. I enclose a copy of Colonel Carrington's telegram. An officer's letter states not one escaped. December 6, a severe skirmish occurred a few miles from that post, when Lieutenant Bingham, second cavalry, Sergeant Bowers, eighteenth infantry, were killed, and one sergeant and four privates were wounded, (and eight horses killed and wounded.) December 11, a private soldier was killed in sight of Fort Reno. I shall enclose several messages of instruction to Colonel Carrington as bearing on my subject matter. Colonel C.'s statement that, with teamsters, he had, December 21, "but one hundred and nineteen men left in the fort," requires the statement that his December 10 report shows an aggregate present of four hundred and seventy-five.

My special orders to meet this occasion have been mailed to you, (as in usual course.) The six companies ordered forward will have the duties of re-enforcing perhaps Fort Reno—opening communication with C. F. Smith—re-enforcing that besides Fort Philip Kearney. Deficiency of troops, the season, and amount of supplies at the upper posts, together, do not admit of more being sent. I hope they will do, and be able to carry out my telegraphic instructions to General Wessells, viz: "I expect you to make Reno safe, with power to forward mails, and to proceed with all other of the six companies ordered to you above. I hope regular communication can be kept with Fort C. F. Smith, and that we may be able to chastise Indians who may insult the posts; but with great caution. The officers are not equal to their stratagems in the broken ground they know so well; their numbers, it seems now certain, are so very superior."

Colonel Carrington is very plausible—an energetic, industrious man in garrison; but it is too evident that he has not maintained discipline, and that his officers have no confidence in him. Some of his acts *officially reported*, such as *hell*ing woods when Indians had appeared on a previous day may have, by this time, settled his appreciation by Indians.

Major Van Voast volunteered to lead a short winter expedition of some five companies, which I approved in the abstract, but when he communicated his information, plans, &c., I found it would be too far, (one hundred miles beyond Reno;) his force too small; all too uncertain for the risk and sufferings.

I have always understood that about the first grass the Indian ponies are unserviceable. I think it will be practicable to attack them about the 1st of May; that an additional regiment both of cavalry and infantry will be the *least* needed, and that they can be placed at Fort Laramie about the 1st of April. At that time they will be able to go by steam within about one hundred and fifty miles.

I think it will be practicable, as well as very important, that the immigration to Montana, our best new Territory of arable land as well as precious metals, should not be interrupted by this best route.

You will observe Colonel Carrington asks for *Spencer* arms for infantry. Some of his men have used them mounted, and have since felt the inferiority of the muzzle-loading arms. In fact, I have had an official report of a cattle guard excusing themselves for not firing on attacking Indians; that if they fired, the Indians having revolvers, they would be defenceless. They *have* revolvers, and it comes to this, that the savages are better armed than the troops. I therefore earnestly recommend that breech-loading Springfield muskets be now furnished for all these troops. I found that even the cavalry were generally unfurnished with revolvers; and a telegraphic requisition for a supply for five companies, with an implied consent of General Dyer, of November 6, has not yet resulted in their being received or heard from.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

P. ST. GEO. COOKE,
Brevet Major General Commanding.

General J. A. RAWLINGS,
Chief of Staff of General Commanding, Washington.

HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES ARMY,
February 1, 1867.

Official copy :

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

[Telegram.]

FORT PHILIP KEARNEY, *December 21, 1866.*

Do send me reinforcements forthwith. Expedition now with my force is impossible; I risk everything but the post and its stores; I venture as much as any one can, but I have had to-day a fight unexampled in Indian warfare; my loss is ninety-four killed.

I have recovered forty-nine bodies, and thirty-five more are to be brought in in the morning, that have been found. Among the killed are Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman, Captain F. H. Brown and Lieutenant Grammond. The Indians engaged were nearly three thousand, being apparently the force reported as on Tongue river, in my despatches of 5th November and subsequent thereto. This line, so important, can and must be held; it will take four times the force in the spring to reopen it, if it be broken up this winter. I hear nothing of my arms that left Leavenworth, September 15. The additional cavalry ordered to join me has not reported; their arrival would have saved us much loss to-day.

The Indians lost beyond all precedent. I need prompt re-enforcements and repeating arms. I am sure to have, as before reported, an active winter, and must have men and arms. Every officer of this battalion should join it. To-day I had every teamster on duty and but one hundred and nineteen men left at post. I hardly need urge this matter, it speaks for itself. Give me two companies of

cavalry, at least, forthwith, well armed, or four companies of infantry, exclusive of what is needed at Reno and Fort Smith.

I did not over-estimate my early application a single company. Promptness will save the line; but one hundred killed shows that any remissness will result in mutilation and butchery beyond precedent. No such mutilation as that to-day is on record. Depend upon it that the post will be held so long as a round or a man is left. Promptness is the vital thing. Give me officers and men only; the new Spencer arms should be sent; the Indians are desperate; I spare none and they spare none.

HENRY B. CARRINGTON.

Colonel Eighteenth Infantry.

Brevet Major General P. ST. GEORGE COOKE,
Commanding Department.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY UNITED STATES.

February 1, 1867.

Official copy:

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

[Telegram.]

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE,
Omaha, Nebraska, September 27, 1866.

Colonel H. B. CARRINGTON,
Fort Philip Kearney, Dakota Territory:

Your long telegram and others of 17th instant received; also copy of Major Van Voast's letter of September 22, to you. You must have corn before this in plenty. It is impossible to take the offensive this season, except you can manage to surprise Red Cloud in winter camps by infantry.

Two or three hundred infantry, with much suffering, perhaps, might thus accomplish more than two thousand troops in summer.

I have reason to believe there are whites with the Indians—never spare them. You can only defend yourself and trains, and emigrants, the best you can. There are so many conditions and circumstances connected with Fort C. F. Smith I am ignorant of, I cannot order or advise; only at the worst you can recall its garrison, and in such case strengthen Reno.

Having one company of cavalry you can probably dispense with your ninety-four horses, after mounting all the cavalry men. They could be used for cavalry at Laramie. The same as to any useless horses at C. F. Smith and Reno.

General Myers telegraphs about Bailey's party and wages. Cartridges attended to.

P. ST. GEO. COOKE,
Brevet Major General Commanding.

Official:

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE,
Omaha, Nebraska, December 28, 1866.

GENERAL: By direction of the general commanding you will, upon arrival at Fort Philip Kearney, make a thorough investigation of the circumstances connected with the massacre on the 21st instant, near that post, and make full

report of the same to these headquarters. While this investigation is considered important you are not to permit its prosecution to interrupt military duties of still greater moment.

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

H. G. LITCHFIELD,
Brevet Major U. S. A., Aide-de-Camp.

Official :

Colonel and A. D. C.

Brevet Brigadier General H. W. WESSELLS,
United States Army, Commanding Mountain District.

WASHINGTON, *January 14, 1867.*

General Augur left last evening for Omaha, *via* St Louis. Are you having an investigation into the Fort Phil. Kearney massacre? A report will probably be called for, and it is important that we should know all that can be learned about it as soon as possible.

U. S. GRANT, *General.*

Lieutenant General W. T. SHERMAN, *St. Louis, Missouri.*

Official :

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE,
Omaha, Nebraska, January 14, 1867.

GENERAL: I have received to day Lieutenant General Sherman's despatch of this date, which, after giving General Grant's, says to me: "General, I want a thorough investigation and report of the whole matter; and to fulfil General Grant's inquiries, I wish you to send me by mail at once your (my) version of the affair based on the facts known, and your (my) judgment of the probabilities."

December 28, I ordered Brevet Brigadier General Wessels, then assigned to command of the district including Fort Phil. Kearney, to make a "thorough investigation" as now required, a copy I enclose. It was sent by telegraph to Fort Laramie, the nearest available office, 157 miles from Fort Reno, where General Wessells was in command, 66 miles this side of Fort Philip Kearney. He could make no investigation before reaching Fort Phil. Kearney. His march there depended on the arrival of re-enforcements from Fort Laramie, ordered by telegraph December 26, but which, owing to "blinding snow storms," &c., only marched January 3, and it is believed arrived at Fort Reno January 11, instant. This recital shows the impossibility of obtaining from so remote a post, with communication temporarily suspended, reports so soon as desired and expected. The law forbids me to order a court of inquiry, and I am not aware of my power to order any other investigation than I have already done.

I have just received telegram from Fort Laramie, dated 12th, stating a mail carrier had arrived from Fort Philip Kearney; the first communication since the day of the massacre, which brought Colonel Carrington's report (which I mailed to you) and it brings me nothing. I have telegraphed an inquiry for information to General Palmer. Thus uninformed, I have no "version" of the affair. It remains to me to comply with the call for my "judgment of the probabilities." The probabilities must be founded on my orders, Colonel Car-

rington's reports, and my knowledge of the previous events, and the conduct of the commander and the troops.

First, I enclose copies (A and B) of instructions of September 27 and November 12, 1866. Colonel Carrington has, before December 21, made no expedition against Indians; all his skirmishes have been with war parties attacking his supply trains, or appearing in sight of the fort. I am informed that on these occasions it was the custom of officers and men to sally forth, mounted on afoot, much at their discretion, and in confirmation of this, I enclose (C) a report of Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman of the affair of December 6. He says, when his command of thirty men reached the wood party surrounded by Indians four miles from the post, he was joined by Captain F. H. Brown, 18th United States infantry, with a couple of mounted infantry, who had already started for the relief of the train, and was overtaken by Second Lieutenant A. H. Wands, 18th United States infantry.

I enclose, finally, an important account (D) which would be supposed to have important bearing, a despatch from Colonel Carrington of December 19, two days before the massacre, indicating a detachment and expedition, and proving that he felt strong enough to take the offensive.

The size and composition of the party massacred indicate that they were all mounted cavalry and infantry to just the number of horses in hands of infantry. All my suggestions of the offensive in winter to Colonel Carrington laid stress upon using infantry. Assuming, then, that Colonel Carrington did not disobey in spirit [How about the infantry?] and in letter my instructions as to expeditions, my judgment of the probabilities is, that on the 21st December hostile Indians, in number between 1,500 and 3,000, formed an ambush within five or six miles of Fort Phil. Kearney; that they sent a party to decoy the garrison; that all the available horses (which I believe were kept saddled) were mounted, and that hastily and irregularly they sallied out to engage or pursue; that the Indians skillfully managed to lead the pursuit of the whole into ground selected as forbidding to escape; and that there, by so greatly superior numbers, the troops were surrounded and massacred, no quarter asked or given.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

P. ST. GEORGE COOKE.

Brevet Major General Commanding.

Brevet Major General W. A. NICHOLS,

A. A. Gen. Division of Missouri, St. Louis, Mo.

Official:

Colonel and A. D. C.

[Received at office United States military telegraph, War Department, Washington, D. C. January 17, 1867—4.30 p. m.—from St. Louis, Mo., January 17, 1867.]

To General U. S. Grant:

The subjoined telegram has this moment been received:

“Omaha, January 7, 1867. Lieutenant General W. T. Sherman: Following despatch just received: ‘Fort Phil. Kearney, January 4. To Adjutant General Department of the Platte: The mail takes full report of fight December 21. All bodies received. Severe cold and drifting snows, with mercury once at twenty-two degrees below zero, have so far prevented further Indian depredations. Their losses may also explain this. The facts disclosed show that the detachment was several miles from the wood train. They were sent to relieve, and pushed over Lodge Trail ridge in order of pursuit, after ordi-

three times given not to cross that ridge. I found Lieutenant Grammond's body; also, Fetterman and Brown—evidently shot each other. Signed, H. B. Carrington, Colonel 18th infantry.' Respectfully, P. St. G. Cooke, Brevet Major General."

W. T. SHERMAN,
Lieutenant General Commanding.

Official copy :

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,
St. Louis, Missouri, January 19, 1867.

GENERAL: I now have the honor to send you General Cooke's letter of the 14th, with its enclosures, which is the nearest approach to accounting for the unhappy affair at Fort Phil. Kearney. I have already transmitted a copy of a telegraphic despatch from General Cooke, notifying me that a full report is on its way by the regular mail from Fort Laramie.

Until the reports of Colonel Carrington and General Wessels are on hand, I cannot advise either a formal court-martial or court of inquiry.

With great respect,

W. T. SHERMAN,
Lieutenant General Commanding.

General J. A. RAWLINS,
Chief of Staff, Washington, D. C.

Official copy :

Colonel and A. D. C.

HEADQUARTERS MILITARY DIVISION OF THE MISSOURI,
St. Louis, January 28, 1867.

DEAR GENERAL: Knowing your anxiety to hear something definite and comprehensible of the Fort Phil. Kearney matter, I have had a copy made of a letter from a sergeant there to a clerk in this office, which seems to explain the case fully. As soon as their official report comes I will send it also.

Yours, in haste,

W. T. SHERMAN,
Lieutenant General.

General U. S. GRANT,
General United States Army.

Extract from private letter received January 28, 1867.

FORT PHIL. KEARNEY, DAKOTA TERRITORY,
December 28, 1866.

Yours of November 28 came to hand, I was pleased to hear from a friend in the civilized world. We have passed through some trying and even heart-rending scenes within the last twenty days.

On the 6th instant we had an engagement with the Indians about three miles from the fort. Lieutenant Bingham, of the second cavalry, and Sergeant Bowers, of

E company, second battalion eighteenth infantry, were killed and scalped. On the 21st instant, the timber train, while on its daily trip to the mountains, under Corporal Legrow, of E company, was attacked by Indians. Detachments from the different companies of the garrison, some mounted and some on foot, the whole being under the command of Captain and Brevet Lieutenant Colonel Fetterman, assisted by Captain Brown and Lieutenant Grammond, proceeded from the fort to protect the train. The command amounted to three officers, eight sergeants, ten corporals, and sixty-three privates. Those from E company were Sergeant Morgan, Corporal Quinn, and four privates. Upon their leaving the fort the colonel gave orders for the detachment to protect the train, but to remain within supporting distance of the garrison; but, contrary to these orders, they pursued the Indians (who immediately left the train without inflicting any damage) for some six miles, to the main force of the enemy, which lay in ambush. The Indians perceiving (as I suppose) that they had the advantage in numbers, immediately rushed from their places of concealment, and succeeded in cutting our men off from any communication with the post, and the scene which followed you and all others may imagine, but I cannot describe it, *as not a man was left to tell the tale*. All were butchered and scalped, their bodies gashed; chopped with knives and tomahawks, stripped of every article of clothing, and then (perhaps while in the agonies of death) shot through and through with arrows. Poor Sergeant Morgan was shot through the breast and scalped; his body was full of arrows. The wood train returned without further trouble, and the colonel, becoming alarmed at the absence of the command, ordered a second detachment, under Captain Powell, to their relief. Captain Powell followed their trail across a high bluff, into a valley, where, to the surprise and mortification of his command, he found, not those brave and noble hearts who a few hours previous had left the fort with buoyant spirits, thirsting for revenge, but eighty-four mangled and disfigured corpses, lying naked on the ground. The Indians, on the completion of their hellish work, departed, taking clothing, arms, and accoutrements, with their dead and wounded, for it is not supposed that eighty-four armed soldiers could be killed, not one escaping, and that, too, in daylight and open ground, without some loss to the enemy.

Captain Powell sent a messenger to the garrison, informing the colonel, stating he would await the arrival of wagons to bring on the bodies. The report went like a death-knell to the heart of every soldier. We could hardly believe it, until the arrival of Captain Powell's detachment and return of the wagons, bringing forty-five dead bodies. The remaining thirty-six were not brought in until the next morning.

The severity of the weather, and probability of an immediate attack upon the fort, compelled us to bury our dead in trenches, without ceremony or military honors. The same evening Colonel Carrington sent citizen couriers to Laramie with despatches to department headquarters for re-enforcements; the mail has arrived since forwarding the despatch, but no re-enforcements. We have been compelled to stop all work. The snow is deep, and the weather so intensely cold that the guards have to be relieved every half-hour.

There are six companies here, and but five officers, Lieutenant Bisbee has been detached to department headquarters. Lieutenant Grammond, who was in command of the company, was killed. I have had to receipt temporarily to the quartermaster for clothing and other necessary stores, some of which had been previously invoiced to the company, but not receipted for by the company commander. This looks rather bad on the part of the government, when 1st sergeants have to be responsible for duties pertaining only to commissioned officers, but such are the chances of war in times of peace. Corporal Legrow has been made sergeant, *vice* Morgan deceased; Legrow is a faithful and deserving soldier. A few days before the massacre I was released from confinement, there being no

one that could do anything with the company. I was just in time to have my hands full, as usual.

It is now past tattoo, the night is cold, the men are sleeping in their clothes and accoutrements on. Indian signals have been seen, and we don't know what hour the post may be attacked. Self and two soldiers are keeping watch so as to awake the men in case of alarm. At midnight I shall have Sergeant Clark and three others to relieve us. So you can imagine the state of affairs here.

I have seen an article in a Chicago paper stating that the commissioners on Indian affairs had received intelligence that reports of hostilities on the frontiers were without foundation and were exaggerated. The Indian commissioners are furnishing Indians with arms and ammunition to hunt with, and they are using it to murder white men. Those commissioners are a nuisance to the government. We want men and arms on these plains to exterminate this accursed race of savages. We are fighting a foe that is the devil. In your last you spoke about some newspapers which you had sent me. I did not get them. Please write soon, and pray God to hasten the day when I shall get out of this horrible place.

Good-bye, this may be my last letter; should it reach you, don't forget your friend.

HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES ARMY,
February 2, 1867.

Official copy:

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

[Telegram.]

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE,
Omaha, Nebraska, August 11, 1866.

Two companies 2d cavalry have been ordered to assist in the protection of the road. You are authorized to enlist not to exceed fifty Indian scouts, pay and allowances of cavalry soldiers; let them use the ponies if you can't do better. Be very cautious; don't undertake unnecessary, risky detachments.

P. ST. GEORGE COOKE,
Brigadier General Commanding.

Colonel H. B. CARRINGTON,
Commanding Fort C. F. Smith, (via Laramie.)

Official:

E. S. PARKER,
Colonel and A. D. C.

[Telegram.]

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE,
Omaha, Nebraska, September 27, 1866.

Your long telegram and others of the 17th instant received. Also copy of Major Van Voast's letter of September 22, to you. You must have corn before this in plenty. It is impossible to take the offensive this season, except you can manage to surprise Red Cloud's bands in winter camps, by infantry. Two or three hundred infantry, with much suffering, perhaps, might thus accomplish more than two thousand troops in summer.

I have reason to believe there are whites with the Indians; never spare them. You can only defend yourself and trains and emigrants the best you can. There are so many conditions and circumstances connected with Fort C. F.

Smith I am ignorant of, I cannot order or advise only as the worst, you can recall its garrison, and in such case strengthen Reno. Having one company of cavalry, you can probably dispense with your ninety-four horses, after mounting all the cavalry men. They could be used for cavalry at Laramie. The same as to any useless horses at C. F. Smith and Reno.

General Myers telegraphs about Bailey's party and wages. Cartridges attended to.

P. ST. GEORGE COOKE,
Brevet Major General Commanding.

Colonel H. B. CARRINGTON,
Fort Phil. Kearney, Dakota Territory.

Official :

Colonel and A. D. C.

B.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE PLATTE,
Omaha, Nebraska, November 12, 1866.

COLONEL : You are hereby instructed that, so soon as the troops and stores are covered from the weather, to turn your attention to the possibility of striking the hostile bands of Indians by surprise in their winter camps, as intimated in telegram of September 27, ultimo, from these headquarters. An extraordinary effort in winter, when the Indian horses are unserviceable, it is believed should be followed by more success than can be accomplished by very large expeditions in summer, when the Indians can so easily scatter into deserts and mountain hiding places, almost beyond pursuit.

Four companies of infantry will be available, besides some cavalry; you have a large arrear of murderous and insulting attacks by the savages upon emigrants, trains, and troops, to settle; and you are ordered, if there prove to be any promise of success, to conduct, or to send under another officer such an expedition. Major Van Voast has volunteered, and has been instructed to make such a one in December, from Fort Laramie, Dakota Territory.

By command of Brevet Major General Cooke :

H. G. LITCHFIELD,
Brevet Major U. S. Army, A. D. C.

Colonel H. B. CARRINGTON,
18th U. S. Infantry, commanding Fort Phil. Kearney, Dakota Ter.

Official copy :

Colonel and A. D. C.

FORT PHILIP KEARNEY, DAKOTA TERRITORY,
December 7, 1866.

CAPTAIN : In compliance with your communication of to-day I have the honor to submit to the colonel commanding the post the following report of the operations of my party on the 6th instant, while in pursuit of Indians who had attacked the wood party :

In obedience to the instructions of the colonel commanding, I took command of the cavalry, numbering about thirty men, under the immediate command of Second Lieutenant H. S. Bingham, 2d United States cavalry, and proceeded

to the wood train, about four miles from the post, which I found corralled and surrounded by Indians. There I was joined by Captain Fred. H. Brown, 18th United States infantry, and a couple of mounted infantry, who had already started for the relief of the train, and was overtaken by Second Lieutenant A. H. Wands, 18th United States infantry, and started in pursuit of the Indians, who retired before us for five miles, when, arriving in a valley through which passed the Big Horn road, the Indians offered us battle. In the most unaccountable manner the cavalry turned and commenced a retreat, which I, assisted by Captain Brown and Lieutenant Wands, used every exertion to check. The Indians corraling and closing around us, it was plain the retreat, if continued, would be a rout and massacre. We, therefore, with the two mounted infantry men who were with us, dismounted from our horses, and, continuing our exertions, succeeded in calling back a few of the cavalry, which swelled our number to about fourteen men, with which we turned and fought the enemy, who numbered about one hundred, surrounding us on three sides. While thus engaged, the mounted infantry which had started out on the Big Horn road, under the command of Colonel Carrington, came in sight, and passed along the road about half a mile to our right, with the purpose, I hoped, of getting to the rear of the enemy, who had a low ridge at their back. The Indians, seeing the approach of the mounted infantry, retired, we following; but finding that their rear was not attacked, a large number of them returned. After fighting about twenty minutes longer they again retired, we in pursuit. Not being able to overtake them, I concluded to take the road and join Colonel Carrington's party, which we soon found on the road a short distance in advance. I cannot speak too highly of the conduct of Captain Brown and Lieutenant Wands, without whose assistance I fear we must have suffered serious disaster. Lieutenant Bingham, while retiring with the major part of the cavalry, encountered the mounted infantry as they were descending the road, and joined them, leaving my party of about fourteen men to oppose a hundred Indians. I cannot account for this movement on the part of an officer of such unquestionable gallantry as Lieutenant Bingham; but it is presumed that being unable to check the retreat of his men, he deemed it most prudent to hold his men in hand as much as possible, and fall back on the mounted infantry who were expected down the road.

Our casualties at this time were one man wounded, two horses wounded, and one killed.

Three Indian ponies were shot, and two men were seen carried from the field.

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

WM. J. FETTERMAN,

Capt. 18th Infantry, Bvt. Lieutenant Colonel U. S. A.

Brevet Captain WM. H. BISBIE,

18th Inf., Post Adjutant Fort Philip Kearney, D. T.

Official:

Colonel and A. D. C.

[Telegram.]

PHIL. KEARNEY, D. T., *December 19, 1866.*

A. A. GENERAL, *Department of the Platte:*

No special news since last report. Indians appeared to-day and fired on wood train, but were repulsed. They are accomplishing nothing, while I am perfecting all details of the post and preparing for active movements.

HENRY B. CARRINGTON,

Col. 18th U. S. Infantry, Commanding Post.

Official:

Colonel and A. D. C.