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Message from the President of the United States, communicating, in answer to a Senate resolution of November 13, 1877, information in relation to the cause and probable cost of the late Nez Perces War.

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M E S S A G E

FROM THE

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES,

COMMUNICATING,

In answer to a Senate resolution of November 13, 1877, information in relation to the cause and probable cost of the late Nez Percés war.

JANUARY 18, 1878.—Read, referred to the Committee on Military Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate of the United States:

In response to the resolution of the Senate of the 13th November last, calling for information concerning the cause, numbers engaged, number of lives lost, and probable cost of the late so-called Nez Percés war, I have the honor to submit the accompanying communication from the General of the Army, and an extract from the annual report of that officer. Upon the subject of the cost of the Nez Percés war, I submit reports from the Quartermaster-General and the Commissary-General of Subsistence.

R. B. HAYES.

EXECUTIVE MANSION, *January 17, 1878.*

EXECUTIVE MANSION, WASHINGTON,
November 14, 1877.

SIR: I have the honor to inclose herewith, by direction of the President, a resolution of the Senate of the United States of the 13th instant.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

O. L. PRUDEN,
Assistant Secretary.

Hon. The SECRETARY OF WAR.

[First indorsement.]

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY,
Washington, November 15, 1877.

Respectfully returned to the Secretary of War, inviting attention to my reply, herewith inclosed.

W. T. SHERMAN,
General.

(See letter from the General of the Army to the Hon. Secretary of War, November 15, 1877. Copy inclosed.)

NEZ PERCÉS WAR.

[Second indorsement.]

WAR DEPARTMENT, ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, November 15, 1877.

Respectfully referred to the Quartermaster-General and the Commissary-General of Subsistence.

By order of the Secretary of War.

E. D. TOWNSEND,
Adjutant-General.

[Third indorsement.]

WAR DEPARTMENT, QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, November 21, 1877.

Respectfully returned to the Adjutant-General, United States Army, through the office of the Commissary-General of Subsistence, United States Army.

According to report of chief quartermaster, Military Division of the Pacific, of 19th instant, and other information on file in this office, the estimated cost to the Quartermaster's Department in the Division of the Pacific, of the Nez Percés war, including the transportation of the Second Infantry from the Department of the South to engage therein, is as follows:

Regular supplies	\$30,000 00
Incidental expenses	27,000 00
Army transportation	581,738 00
Cavalry horses	27,185 30
Barracks and quarters	6,762 15
Total	672,685 45

If further information reaches this office from the Division of the Missouri in time, it will be forwarded direct to War Department.

M. C. MEIGS,
Quartermaster-General, Brevet Major-General, U. S. A.

[Fourth indorsement.]

WAR DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE COMMISSARY-GENERAL SUBSISTENCE,
December 28, 1877.

Respectfully returned to the Adjutant-General, with a statement of the cost to the Subsistence Department of the late so-called Nez Percés war.

R. MACFEELY,
Commissary-General Subsistence.

[Fifth indorsement.]

ADJUTANT-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, December 31, 1877.

Respectfully returned to the Secretary of War, with reports from Quartermaster-General and Commissary-General of Subsistence.

E. D. TOWNSEND,
Adjutant-General.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, D. C., November 15, 1877.

SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of the Senate resolution of November 13, calling for information concerning the cause, numbers engaged, number of lives lost, and probable cost of the late so-called Nez Percés war, and in answer to state that my annual report covers so much of this inquiry that I venture to send it you for this special use.

The final reports of Generals Howard and Terry are not yet received, but are hourly expected, and will, I believe, completely answer this resolution of inquiry, excepting in the matter of cost.

In order to ascertain what special expenditures are chargeable to the Nez Percés war, and what belong to the usual annual disbursements, you will have to inquire of the Quartermaster and Commissary Generals.

I am, with great respect, your obedient servant,

W. T. SHERMAN,
General.

HON. GEO. W. McCRARY,
Secretary of War.

Extract from the annual report of the General of the Army for 1877.

The recent war with the Nez Percés was so unexpected, and has been attended with such varied and interesting incidents, covering a vast surface of country utterly regardless of boundary-lines, that I find it necessary to embrace it more at length and in detail than is ordinarily called for where an Indian war is usually confined to a smaller area, generally to a single department. The best connected account of the Nez Percés Indians which I have been able to find is in the report of Col. H. Clay Wood, assistant adjutant-general, dated Portland, Oreg., January 8, 1876, with a supplementary report of August 1, 1876, describing two interviews with Joseph and others of the tribes at the agency and at Fort Lapwai. "The census of the tribe in 1851 was officially reported as one thousand eight hundred and eighty." "In November, 1875, the population is stated in the annual report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at two thousand eight hundred, of whom one thousand three hundred and twenty are males." The reservation at Lapwai is seven hundred and forty-six thousand six hundred and fifty-one acres, and on this are located the principal part of the Nez Percés Indians; but ever since the treaty of 1863, Joseph and his party have claimed the boundaries of the reservation as established by the Stevens treaty of 1855, more especially that part of it west of the Snake River, known as the Wallowa Valley. Though this valley never was the home of Joseph and his confederates, who usually lived on Salmon and Snake Rivers, still for some reason they cling to this particular tract, "Wallowa," and it was conceded to them by the President (Grant) in his Executive order of June 16, 1873; but on the 10th of June, 1875, this order was revoked, and all that part of Oregon west of Snake River, embracing the Wallowa, was restored to the public domain, has been partially surveyed, forms a part of Union County, Oregon, and settlers have acquired legal titles under the laws of the United States. (See map of Oregon accompanying the report of Commissioner General Land Office for 1876.)

On the 23d of June, 1876, one of Joseph's band was killed by two white men (Finley and another), which produced commotion, and was one of the reasons for Colonel Wood to seek an interview with Joseph, chief of the non-treaty Nez Percés. At this interview Joseph stated his own case in these words:

That it was true one of his brothers had been killed by whites in Wallowa Valley; that the Indian who was killed was much respected by the tribe, and was always considered a quiet, peaceable, well-disposed man; that the whites who killed him were bad, quarrelsome men, and the aggressive party; that the whites in the valley were instigated by those in authority, and others in Grand Ronde Valley, to assault and injure the Indians while fishing and hunting in that section of country; that he wished the white man who killed the Indian brought to the agency to be there confronted with his accusers.

Joseph said that among the Indians the chiefs controlled the members of their band, and had power to prevent bad Indians doing wicked things; and he reasoned that

those in authority over the whites had, or should have, the same control over white men, and hence the white authorities in the vicinity of Wallowa Valley and elsewhere were directly responsible for the killing of his brother; that his brother's life was of great value; that it was worth more than the Wallowa Valley; that it was worth more than this country; that it was worth more than all the world; that the value of his life could not be estimated; nevertheless, that now, since the murder had been done since his brother's life had been taken in Wallowa Valley, his body buried there, and the earth had drunk up his blood, that the valley was more sacred to him than ever before, and he would and did claim it for the life taken; that he should hold it for himself and his people from this time forward, forever; and that all the whites must be removed from the valley.

Major Wood, in reply, explained that the white men would be indicted and "tried by a court having jurisdiction in the vicinity of the locality where the crime was committed (probably the town of Union), and that the witnesses (Indians or others) would be summoned to appear and give their evidence," and that their claim to the Wallowa Valley would probably be submitted to a commission of five distinguished gentlemen to be appointed from Washington, &c.

For a more perfect understanding of the cause of the Nez Percés war I again refer to the two reports of Colonel Wood, which are in print, and I have only extracted much as seemed necessary to an understanding of the first events hereafter recorded, and because the same general conditions exist with other Indian tribes in Idaho, Oregon and Washington Territories, which may lead to similar results.

The Nez Percés tribe has a good reservation, with clearly-defined boundaries, sufficient to give each and every one a home. The bulk of the tribe has long resided thereon, and most of it has remained there during the recent hostilities, which were confined to Joseph and the non-treaty Nez Percés, with other malcontents—in all about five hundred males.

The settlements in that part of Oregon and Idaho are much exposed and scattered and the danger to life was so great from an outbreak of these Indians that General Howard, commanding the department, made extraordinary efforts to adjust the difficulty as well as the case would admit of, so as to avoid conflict.

The agent for this tribe, J. B. Monteith, esq., resided at the agency on the reservation east of Snake River, in the Territory of Idaho, and the Indian Bureau always contended that Joseph and his band rightfully belonged on that reservation and were bound by the treaty of 1863, which did not include the Wallowa Valley, which lies west of Snake River in the State of Oregon. An immense amount of correspondence and negotiation followed, when the whole subject was submitted, by the Secretary of the Interior, to a commission composed of D. H. Jerome, esq., General O. O. Howard, William Stickney, esq., A. C. Barstow, esq., and Major H. C. Wood, which resulted in the final instructions of the acting Secretary of the Interior, Charles T. Gorham, esq., addressed to the Secretary of War, embodying the letters of J. Q. Smith, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, dated Washington, March 6, 1877, and of J. B. Monteith, United States Indian agent, dated Lapwai, Idaho Territory, February 9, 1877, which letters were, in due course of official usage, sent to me and by me indorsed to General McDowell, commanding Military Division of the Pacific, to order the necessary force to be supplied the agent of the Indian Bureau, to compel the removal of these non-treaty Nez Percés to the reservation of their tribe.

All these papers are embodied with General McDowell's report, along with his own instructions to General Howard, commanding the Department of the Columbia, in these words:

"The division commander has examined the various papers transmitted from the headquarters of the Army hereinbefore referred to, and it seems to him that the Indian Bureau anticipate possible, not to say probable, resistance to the demand on Joseph to remove to the reservation. In fact, the case seems not unlike that of the recent difficulty with the Sioux, which resulted in the war of last year against these Indians.

"It is therefore of paramount importance that none of the responsibility of any step which may be made shall be initiated by the military authorities. You are to occupy Wallowa Valley in the interest of peace. You are to comply with the request of the Department of the Interior, as set forth in the papers sent you, to the extent only of merely protecting and aiding them in the execution of their instructions."

On the 19th of May General Howard gain had a conference with Joseph and others, and reported the result of his talk with the chiefs on the 21st, "that they yielded a constrained compliance with the orders of the government, and had been allowed thirty days in which to gather in their people, stock," &c.

On the 14th of June the Indians belonging to Joseph, from Wallows, White Bird, from Salmon River, and Looking-Glass, from Clearwater, had assembled near Cottonwood Creek, on the border of the reservation, seemingly in compliance with their engagement, when news reached General Howard that four white men had been murdered on John Day's Creek, to the south of this reservation, by some of the young Nez Percés braves, and that White Bird had mounted his horse and proclaimed his

would not go on the reservation. General Howard was then at Fort Lapwai, which was garrisoned by Captain Perry's company (F) and Captain Trimble's company (H), First Cavalry, and a company of the Twenty-first Infantry.

Colonel Watkins, Indian inspector, and Agent Monteith, were at the agency. General Howard put himself in communication with these agents of the Indian Bureau, who sent out messengers and got authentic accounts of the murders already committed, embracing the four at John Day's Creek, and many others. Great alarm spread in the country round about, and General Howard dispatched the two cavalry companies under Captain Perry, numbering ninety-nine men, to the scene of disorder. Lieutenant Theller, Twenty-first Infantry, was attached to Captain Perry's company in place of his own lieutenant (Bomus), who was quartermaster of the post.

Captain Perry proceeded rapidly by night to the Indian camp on Cottonwood and found it vacant; then to Grangerville, and thence to the head of White Bird Cañon, making seventy miles, with the loss of two nights' sleep. There he found the Indian camp, and assisted by eleven citizen volunteers proceeded at once to the attack. The Indians seemed to be well prepared, for they repulsed the attack and compelled the command to fall back, fighting over most difficult ground, to Grangerville, losing Lieutenant Theller and thirty-three enlisted men killed. This fight occurred June 17, but, apprehending trouble, General Howard had previously, on the 15th, ordered forward from Vancouver, Walla Walla, and Wallowa, Whipple's and Winters's companies of cavalry, five companies of the Twenty-first Infantry, and Miller's company of the Fourth Artillery, making an effective force of two hundred and twenty-seven men. As soon as he learned that Perry had been defeated, he determined to take the field in person with this force, so as to hold the Indians in check, while emboldened by their success at White Bird Cañon, until he could bring forward every available man of his department, and also could be re-enforced from the direction of California. His first attention had to be given to the protection of families alarmed and terrified by the murders already committed, and still more by the hundreds of wild reports which always attend and aggravate Indian wars.

Even at this date I am unable to state the exact number of murders committed by the Nez Percés prior to Captain Perry's attack on their camp, but General McDowell reports, under date of October 17:

"I am since informed that the immediate cause of this outbreak was different from that reported, and that instead of being a retaliation for the murder of one of their number, it was a deliberate act on the part of some Indian outlaws, who have nothing to gain and all to lose by going on the reservation, and who fired the Indian heart by deliberate murders, and thus forced the chiefs to go with them. The latter, feeling that they were irretrievably compromised in the eyes of the whites by the dreadful acts of their people, threw themselves into the conflict, the commencement of which they had not sanctioned."

Having thus endeavored to describe the *cause* and *beginning* of the Nez Percés war, I leave General Howard to describe the minute details of its conduct in his report inclosed herewith, marked 10 A, which gives a connected narration from June 15 to August 27, 1877.

Re-enforcements were promptly dispatched by the division commander, General McDowell, but these had to be drawn by dribblets from the small and remote posts along the Pacific coast as far south as Yuma; and on General Howard's application for further re-enforcement at Army headquarters, the Second Infantry, Colonel Wheaton was sent from South Carolina.

By the 8th of July General Howard had collected a force sufficient to justify him in resuming the offensive, viz, about four hundred men; and on the 11th he discovered the enemy in a deep ravine on Clearwater, near the mouth of Cottonwood Creek, where he at once attacked them. The ground was difficult, so that the fight was at first desultory; but on the next day the Indians were fairly defeated and driven in confusion, losing their camp and much provision. General Howard reports twenty-three warriors killed, twice as many wounded, twenty-three warriors taken prisoner, and seventeen women and children made captive. His own loss was thirteen men killed, two officers and twenty-two men wounded. This battle was chiefly important because it prevented other Indians, similarly situated, from joining the hostile Nez Percés, and gave increased confidence to the settlers, many of whom had abandoned their farms. On the 15th a messenger reached General Howard from Joseph, to ascertain the terms on which he might surrender; but, believing it to be a ruse to gain time, he did not permit any delay, and on the 17th Joseph began his famous retreat eastward toward the buffalo country by the Lolo trail.

General Howard was authorized from the start to proceed without regard to boundary-lines of military departments; but, having defeated Joseph, he with perfect propriety delayed pursuit for some days, to give increased security to the people in his rear as against apprehended and possible danger, also to enable his own re-enforcements to come up within reach. He then reorganized his command, sending one force up north into the Spokane country; another was held in reserve near the Indian reservation,

and he himself, with a select force (described in his report), started in pursuit on the Lolo trail. This is universally admitted by all who have traveled it, from Lewis and Clarke to Captain Winters; as one of the worst trails for man and beast on this continent.

These very Nez Percés had for years been in the habit of going from Oregon to the Yellowstone and Mussleshell country to hunt buffalo and to cure meat. Therefore as soon as the telegraph carried news that Joseph had started on the Lolo trail, the people of Montana became alarmed.

There was but a single regiment of infantry (Seventh) in all Montana, Col. John Gibbon, commanding, distributed to five posts, four on the eastern border and one on the western, with two small companies, A and G, commanded by Captain Rawn, who were employed in building the new post at Missoula. It is near this place that the Lolo trail debouches into the Bitter Root Valley, the western settlement of Montana. Joseph had many personal acquaintances among the settlers, some of whom are civilized Flatheads, and he managed, with Indian cunning, to cause information to go ahead that he was bound for the buffalo country; that if permitted to go on unmolested he would do no damage; that he had no quarrel with the people of Montana, only with General Howard, &c. But hearing of the approach of these Indians, Captain Rawn left his post in the valley, and with his small command intrenched himself in the Lolo trail, in order to hold the Nez Percés in check till General Howard could come up from the west, or Colonel Gibbon could reach him from the east. Captain Rawn had with him only forty men, but quite a force of citizen volunteers assembled at his redoubt to assist him. The Indians reached Rawn's fort July 28, passed around it into Bitter Root Valley in such numbers that he was not justified in attacking them outside his intrenchments, and with a large herd of horses passed deliberately up the Bitter Root Valley (which is well settled), doing little comparative damage to the inhabitants. Colonel Gibbon was then at Fort Shaw, but by the 27th of July he had drawn to him what few men could be spared from Benton and Baker, marched rapidly one hundred and fifty miles to Missoula, then taking every man that could be spared from there, he started in pursuit with fifteen officers and one hundred and forty-six men (afterwards increased by thirty-four citizens).

Colonel Gibbon's report herewith, marked 3 A, is so spirited that I prefer to let him tell his own story; suffice it for me to say that he overtook the enemy on a branch of Big Hole, or Wisdom River, surprised them at daybreak of August 9th, and for a time had the Indians at his mercy; but their numbers so far exceeded his own, that he in turn was compelled to seek cover in a point of timber, where he fought on the defensive till the Indians withdrew at 11 p. m. on the 10th.

Colonel Gibbon reports his loss at two officers, six citizens, and twenty-one enlisted men killed; five officers, four citizens, and thirty-one men wounded; and on the part of the enemy, eighty-three were buried on the field, "and six dead were afterwards found in a ravine at some distance away." It is otherwise known that the Indians sustained a very heavy and nearly fatal loss in wounded in this fight, and could Colonel Gibbon have had another hundred men, the Nez Percés war would have ended right there.

At 10 a. m. of the 11th, General Howard arrived with a small escort, well in advance of his main command, and his approach may have hastened the departure of the enemy, which had occurred, as before stated, at 11 p. m. the night before; and on the next morning his medical officers, Surgeon C. T. Alexander and Assistant Surgeon Fitzgerald, also reached Colonel Gibbon's command, and "gave the wounded the much-needed attendance" absolutely required, because Colonel Gibbon had no medical officer along.

On the 13th Colonel Gibbon ordered to duty with General Howard three of his officers and fifty men, and with the remainder, being himself wounded, he began his return via Deer Lodge, leaving General Howard to resume his long pursuit. Happening myself to be in Montana at the time, I saw in what estimation Colonel Gibbon and his handful of troops were held, and I heartily joined in the general sentiment. Also having at a later period visited his wounded at Deer Lodge, among them several citizens, I now recommend that the families of the killed and of the wounded citizens, who volunteered, under such circumstances, be placed on the footing of "soldiers" as to pensions. The wounded of all classes had received every possible care at Deer Lodge.

From Gibbon's battle-field on Big Hole, General Howard resumed the pursuit. His men had had a very hard march across the mountains and up the Bitter Root Valley. He followed to Horse Prairie and Junction Station, then threw a force of forty cavalry and some scouts towards Henry's Lake, designing to "intercept and hinder the enemy" so as to overtake them with his main command; but this party, after waiting some days, returned, leaving the route open to the Indians. The Indians seem to have delayed some days on and near the stage-road leading from the Pacific Railroad to Helena, interrupting travel, cutting off telegraphic communication, and causing much alarm to the people generally. General Howard was at Pleasant Valley, on the stage-road, August 18; the Indians at Dry Creek Station. On the 19th General Howard left the stage road toward the east, struck the trail, and made camp eighteen miles distant

at Camas Prairie. Here the Indians turned on him, stampeded and run off at daylight of the 20th his pack-train, which was partially recovered by his cavalry. In this fight Captain Norwood's company (L, Second Cavalry) made a handsome fight. General Howard was soon after compelled to give his men and animals some rest, and take time to collect food and clothing. It was during this rest, at Henry's Lake, that he made his report of August 27, hereinbefore referred to. I recognize the full measure of the labors, exposure, fatigue, and fighting of General Howard and his command, having personally seen much of the route over which he passed, and knowing the great difficulty of procuring food for men and horses in that mountain region. It is simply impossible for infantry, or even cavalry with their single horses, to overtake Indians, who drive along a herd, changing from a tired horse to one comparatively fresh at pleasure; knowing the country as these Indians do, ready to hide in the many rocky cañons, ravines, and dense woods in which that country abounds, and able with a small rear guard to hold at bay any number in pursuit, who often for miles *must* follow trails in single file. Happening to be in Montana at the time, and not wishing to complicate matters by exercising any command except to assist where possible, I gave up my cavalry escort which I had brought up from Tongue River, and was pleased to learn that it was of material assistance to General Howard at Camas on the 20th of August. Several dispatches passed between General Howard and myself, which I insert here entire, because they explain themselves. They have never heretofore been published in full, while garbled parts of them have somehow, without authority, reached the press and were misconstrued.

"HELENA, August 21, 1877.

"To General HOWARD:

"Just arrived at Helena. Will remain till I know you are all right and have everything. Telegraph me some account of affairs that I can understand. What is your force? What your plans? Spare nothing to insure success.

W. T. SHERMAN, *General.*"

"VIRGINIA, MONT., August 24, 1877.

"To General W. T. SHERMAN, *Fort Shaw* :

Just arrived here to communicate with General McDowell. After extraordinary effort to overtake Gibbon, with horses much jaded, I moved rapidly to head off Indians at or near Pleasant Valley. They delayed me a little by their apparent move westward by head of Horse Prairie and Lemhi, but I did not lose a march. Sent a small force to Henry's Lake to skirmish with and delay them; officer staid four days, and concluded that they had broken for the Wind River country. The next day, however, (the 23d), the Indians passed Henry's Lake, through Loches Pass, with my force in close pursuit. At Camas Meadows they stampeded a part of my mules, just before dawn, and in the effort to recover them, brought on a sharp skirmish, after which they fled as usual.

"My command stays at Henry's Lake for supplies, while my Indian scouts watch and bother the hostiles. What I wish is from some eastern force, the hostiles be headed off before they disaffect the Crows or unite with Sioux.

"They have had some re-enforcements in Montana, picked up plenty of excellent stock, and though worried and depleted in numbers, are still able to give battle and do much damage. They have the best arms and plenty of ammunition.

"I hear that Miles, probably Sturgis, is on the Yellowstone, not far from my front. Is that true? My force, all told, is about 200 cavalry, 300 infantry, 50 scouts, and 50 armed pioneers.

"My command is so much worn by over-fatigue and jaded animals that I cannot push it much further. If Miles or Sturgis is near by, with Norwood's company just sent to Ellis, and the 50 Indian scouts that I will send thither, or on the heels of the hostiles, I think I may stop near where I am, and in a few days work my way back to Fort Boise slowly, and distribute my troops before snow falls in the mountains. Wheaton has returned to Lewiston, Idaho, from his successful march northward, and will pick up any small hostile parties skulking in his neighborhood.

"HOWARD,
"Commanding Department."

"FORT SHAW, MONT., August 24, 1877.

'General HOWARD, *Virginia City* :

"I don't want to give orders, as this may confuse Sheridan and Terry; but that force of yours should pursue the Nez Percés to the death, lead where they may. Miles is too far off, and I fear Sturgis is too slow. If you are tired, give the command to some young, energetic officer, and let him follow them, go where they may, holding his men well in hand, subsisting them on beef gathered in the country, with coffee, sugar, and salt in packs. For such a stern chase infantry are as good as cavalry. Leave to Sturgis

to head them off if he can. I will be at Helena on Tuesday next. No time should be lost. I don't know your officers, but you can select the commander and order accordingly. When the Indians are caught your men can march to the Pacific Railroad and reach their posts by rail and steamboat. They are not needed back in California and Oregon now, but are needed just where they are.

"SHERMAN, General"

"HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE COLUMBIA,
August 27, 1877.

"To W. T. SHERMAN,
General United States Army, Helena, Mont.:

"Yours of the 26th (24th) received. You misunderstood me. I never flag. It is the command, including the most energetic young officers, that were worn out and weary by a most extraordinary march. You need not fear for the campaign. Neither you nor General McDowell can doubt my pluck and energy. My Indian scouts are on the heels of the enemy. My supplies have just come, and we move in the morning and will continue till the end. I sent Cushing and Norwood, now *en route*, two days ago to operate from Ellis and Crow agency. Indians captured a party of eight gentlemen and two ladies on Lower Geyser Basin, Friday evening last. Hostiles will probably cross Stinking River about one hundred miles southeast from Crow agency.

"HOWARD,

"Brigadier General, Commanding Department"

"HELENA, August 28, 1877.

"General O. O. HOWARD, via *Virginia City* :

"Just back from Benton. Got your dispatch of 27th. Glad to find you so plucky. Have every possible faith in your intense energy, but thought it probable you were worn out, and I sometimes think men of less age and rank are best for Indian warfare. They have more to make. I think Sturgis will look out for your Indians at Clark's Fork, and that Sheridan will have another party at Camp Brown, and still another at the head of Tongue River. But my idea is that the Nez Percés expect to hide in the Big Horn Mountains, about Stinking Water, trusting to your stopping pursuit. Were your force to return to Idaho now, these Indians would surely return to Montana. I start on Thursday for Missoula and Walla Walla. Will report you all well.

"W. T. SHERMAN, General"

"FORT SHAW, MONT., August 24, 1877.

"General P. H. SHERIDAN, *Chicago, Illi.* :

"Dispatch received. I don't think Howard's troops will catch Joseph, but they will follow, trusting to your troops heading them off when they come out on the east of the mountains. Will be back to Helena next Tuesday.

"W. T. SHERMAN, General"

From Henry's Lake in Montana, August 27th, to Bear-paw Mountains, Dakota, September 30th, I have no connected report of General Howard's march and operations, but I have no doubt his promised supplementary report will soon be received; it may be in time to accompany this report. All he could do was to follow where the Indians led, and this he did with praiseworthy zeal and perseverance. On others devolved the task of "heading off" and "capture." The Indians were already in General Sheridan's division, and he promptly gave the necessary orders. He caused a force of six companies of the Seventh Cavalry, under its colonel, Sturgis, to watch the outlet by Clark's Fork of the Yellowstone; another of five companies of cavalry, under Major Hart, of the Fifth, on the Stinking Water, which is a branch of the Big Horn; and still another of ten companies of cavalry, under Colonel Merritt, of the Fifth, on Wind River, northwest of Camp Brown. One or other of these bodies was sure to intercept them, with General Howard's command on their heels.

The Nez Percés, after leaving Henry's Lake, passed up the Madison and Fire Hole Basin into the National Park, crossed the divide and the Yellowstone River above the falls and below the lake. Once across the Yellowstone they seem to have rested their animals, while some of the young men made excursions down to Soda Mountain and Henderson's ranch, burning Jack Baronette's house and bridge, and killing some men and stealing horses and cattle. General Howard after a short rest followed, when the Indians passed on over the Snowy Mountain and down Clark's Fork, General Howard in pursuit. They successfully evaded General Sturgis's command and got across the Yellowstone again near the mouth of Clark's Fork. I inclose General Howard's and Colonel Sturgis's reports of this affair, dated September 12th and 13th, herewith, marked B. After the Indians had passed around Colonel Sturgis, it seems that General Howard dispatched him, re-enforced by Major Stanford's battalion of the First Cavalry and Lieut-

tenant Otis's howitzer battery in "fast pursuit," and from General Sheridan's report I learn that Colonel Sturgis caught several hundred ponies and killed a number of Indians.

The Nez Percés then passed north across the Muscleschell, through Judith Basin (a region once densely filled with buffalo and large game), to the Missouri River at Cow Island. This is a steamboat-landing, one hundred and twenty-five miles below Fort Benton, used for some weeks after the boats stopped running to Benton. Near this place First Lieutenant Edward Maguire, United States Engineers, with a small guard of the Seventh Infantry, was engaged in removing obstructions in the river. With these the Indians lightly skirmished; burned some stores on the landing; forded the river; and, on September 23d, pushed on north toward Milk River and the British boundary, evidently aiming to reach the same harbor of refuge which had been gained by Sitting Bull last winter. But on the 17th of September, Colonel Miles, commanding the district of the Yellowstone, received at his post at the mouth of Tongue River the two dispatches of General Howard and Colonel Sturgis herewith, marked 3 B. He instantly organized the available force of his garrison, and on the morning of the 18th was across the Yellowstone and off in the direction of the mouth of Muscleshell, aiming to head off and capture the Nez Percés. His command reached the Muscleshell, where he crossed the Missouri River on the 27th. There he learned that the Nez Percés had crossed at Cow Island on the 23d. He accordingly moved with extreme rapidity northwest, passed the Little Rockies and Bear-paw Mountains on the 29th, struck the trail, and on the morning of September 30th found the camp on Eagle Creek, near the head of Snake River, which is a tributary of Milk River. For a description of the fight I refer you to Colonel Miles's official report herewith, marked 3 C. The result was complete, viz, the capture of Joseph and the surviving remnant of his brave but dangerous body of Indians. The Indians in this fight lost in killed six of their leading chiefs and twenty-five warriors, with forty-six wounded.

Colonel Miles reports his own loss at two officers and twenty men killed, four officers and forty-one men wounded, the names of all of whom are given.

General Howard, with a small escort, arrived on the field a short time before the surrender, but did not exercise any command. Of course Colonel Miles and his officers and men are entitled to all honor and praise for their prompt, skillful, and successful work; while the others, by their long, toilsome pursuit, are entitled to corresponding credit, because they made that success possible.

All the troops thus engaged are now *en route* back to their several posts and stations by various routes.

Thus has terminated one of the most extraordinary Indian wars of which there is any record. The Indians throughout displayed a courage and skill that elicited universal praise. They abstained from scalping; let captive women go free; did not commit indiscriminate murder of peaceful families, which is usual, and fought with almost scientific skill, using advance and rear guards, skirmish-lines, and field fortifications. Nevertheless, they would not settle down on lands set apart for them, ample for their maintenance; and, when commanded by proper authority, they began resistance by murdering persons in no manner connected with their alleged grievances. With your approval, these prisoners are now *en route* by the most economical way to Fort Leavenworth, to be there held as prisoners of war until spring, when, I trust, the Indian Bureau will provide them homes on the Indian reservation near the Modocs, where, by moderate labor, they can soon be able to support themselves in peace. They should never again be allowed to return to Oregon or to Lapwai.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, D. C., December 15, 1877.

SIR: In connection with my report of November 21, 1877, through the Adjutant-General of the Army, of the cost to the Quartermaster's Department in the Division of the Pacific, of the late war with the Nez Percés Indians, in answer to the resolution of the United States Senate of November 13, 1877, I now have the honor to state that a partial report has been received at this office from the chief quartermaster Military Division of the Missouri, in response to telegram from this office of November 20, 1877, which foots up a total cost to the Quartermaster's Department in that division, of the Nez Percés war, of \$208,454.29, exclusive of the cost in the Department of the Platte, which is yet to be heard from on the subject.

When the report as to the cost in the Department of the Platte received at this office, it will be communicated to the War Department.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

M. C. MEIGS,

Quartermaster-General, Brevet-Major-General, U. S. A.

Hon. the SECRETARY OF WAR.

P. S.—Cost as far as reported—	
Division Pacific	\$672,685 31
Division Missouri	208,454 21
Total	881,139 52

WAR DEPARTMENT,
QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL'S OFFICE,
Washington, D. C., December 18, 1877.

SIR: In connection with my report of the 15th instant, on the subject of the cost of the Nez Percés war, I now have the honor to state that a report has this day been received from the chief quartermaster Department of the Platte (the remaining department to be heard from), showing that the total cost to the Quartermaster's Department, of the Nez Percés war in that department, is \$50,189,18.

The following is a recapitulation of the cost of the Nez Percés war to the Quartermaster's Department, as shown in the reports of this office of November 21, December 15, and present report, viz :

Report of November 21, 1877	\$672,685 31
Report of December 15, 1877	208,454 21
Present report	50,189 18
Total	931,329 50

Very respectfully, your obedient servant (in the absence of the Quartermaster-General),

HENRY C. HODGES,

Deputy Quartermaster-General, Lieutenant-Colonel, U. S. A.

Hon. the SECRETARY OF WAR.

Statement showing the cost to the Subsistence Department of the United States Army, of the so-called Nez Percés war, in reply to resolution from the Senate of November 13, 1877.

Cost of subsistence supplies in Department of Columbia and with troops, &c., operating therefrom, in excess of cost of supplying troops in peace:	
Issues to employes, scouts, guides, volunteers	\$4,584 39
To troops in excess of average cost of ration	4,690 72
Difference in issuing hard bread instead of flour	3,234 37
Meals furnished enlisted men in excess of cost of ration	3,000 00
	<hr/>
Cost of issue to volunteers	325 91
Cost of rations issued to Nez Percés prisoners to November 30, 1877	1,366 09
Cost of stores destroyed at Cow Island, Mont., by Nez Percés Indians	7,738 75
Difference of cost of 6,000 pounds of bacon purchased at Fort Benton, Mont., between price paid and cost of bacon if furnished from depot	530 40
	<hr/>
	\$15,509 25

Expenses to Subsistence Department of the Nez Percés war to November 25, 1877

R. MACFEELEY,

Commissary-General of Subsistence.

WAR DEPARTMENT, OFFICE OF
COMMISSARY-GENERAL OF SUBSISTENCE,
December 28, 1877.