

naked; and that he had taken them in and fed them, and that no one with a heart could do any less.

Sumner then directed one of his officers, Captain Hennisee, to go to the Indian camp with Big Foot and bring in all the Indians. That officer started and returned the next day, December 21, with 333 Indians. This large number was a matter of surprise in view of Big Foot's statement shortly before, but it is possible that in speaking of his party he intended to refer only to the warriors. They went into camp as directed, turned out their ponies to graze, and were fed, and on the next morning all started quietly back with the troops. As they had all along appeared perfectly friendly and compliant with every order, no attempt was made to disarm them. On arriving near their own village, however, it became apparent that Big Foot could not control their desire to go to their homes. The chief came frankly to Sumner and said that he himself would go wherever wanted, but that there would be trouble to force the women and children, who were cold and hungry, away from their village. He protested also that they were now at home, where they had been ordered by the government to stay, and that none of them had done anything to justify their removal. As it was evident that they would not go peaceably, Colonel Sumner determined to bring his whole force on the next day to compel them. In the meantime he sent a white man named Dunn, who had a friendly acquaintance with Big Foot, to tell him that the Indians must obey the order to remove. Dunn delivered the message and returned, being followed later by the interpreter, with the statement that the Indians had consented to go to the agency, and would start the next morning, December 23. That evening, however, scouts came in with the word that the Indians had left their village and were going southward. It was at first thought that they intended turning off on another trail to the agency, but instead of doing so they kept on in the direction of Pine Ridge and the refugees in the Bad Lands, taking with them only their ponies and tipi poles.

The cause of this precipitate flight after the promise given by Big Foot is somewhat uncertain. The statement of the interpreter, Felix Benoit, would make it appear that the Indians were frightened by Dunn, who told them that the soldiers were coming in the morning to carry them off and to shoot them if they refused to go. While this doubtless had the effect of alarming them, the real cause of their flight was probably the fact that just at this critical juncture Colonel Merriam was ordered to move with his command up Cheyenne river to join forces with Sumner in compelling their surrender. Such is the opinion of General Ruger, who states officially that "Big Foot and adherents who had joined him, probably becoming alarmed on the movement of Colonel Merriam's command from Fort Bennett and a rumor that Colonel Sumner would capture them, eluded Colonel Sumner's command and started for the Pine Ridge reservation." This agrees with

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Tipi (high marching order)
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