

54

that such action was taken in consequence of their desire that the way should be cleared for them.

It was in consequence of these representations that Major Ilges was directed to take efficient measures to enforce surrender.

After Major Ilge's action on the 2d of January, Sitting Bull remained for a time at the mouth of the Milk River, still promising to come to Fort Buford, but as the time passed it became very doubtful whether he would fulfill his promises, and consequently it seemed desirable to interpose a force between him and the boundary, so that his retreat might be intercepted should he attempt to make one. Therefore, on the 11th of January Col. T. H. Ruger, Eighteenth Infantry, commanding the district of Montana, was directed to send two companies of the Second Cavalry with a detachment of the Eighteenth Infantry, sufficient to make the whole force 200 men from Fort Assiniboine, down the Milk River to plant themselves between the Indian camp and the boundary. This force left Assiniboine on the 13th of January. On the 22d of January it reached Medicine Lodge, at the lower end of the Big Bend of the Milk River. At this point orders were received to suspend the march. On January 24 orders were received to return to Assiniboine. These orders were given in consequence of the reception at these headquarters of intelligence that Sitting Bull with a portion of his people had already made his escape across the frontiers. It seems that after the capture of the Indians, at Poplar River, the division of sentiment in the camp at Milk River became more marked, the majority of the people still wishing to surrender, but a large minority desiring to return to the British provinces. This division culminated in the middle of January in the retreat of Sitting Bull with forty lodges, leaving behind him about sixty lodges under the leadership of Crow King. These latter immediately began to move towards Fort Buford, but their progress was very slow; they were nearly destitute of food, they had but few horses, they were half naked, and the cold was excessive. Every effort was made by Major Ilges to relieve their