

CHIEF JOSEPH

On the surrender of Joseph and his band of Nez Perces, General Miles recommended that they be kept on the Tongue River until the question of their final disposition should be definitely determined. The Lieutenant-General of the Army strongly objected to this, an account of the expense attendant on furnishing them with supplies, and an order was issued by the War Department, in November, 1877, to send all the Nez Perce prisoners to the Missouri River, to Fort Lincoln or Fort Riley; on the 20th of the same month another order was issued to have them forwarded to Fort Leavenworth, instead of keeping them at either of the points named. November 27, 1877, the Lieutenant-General notified the Secretary of War of their arrival at the latter fort and recommended that this bureau be requested to take charge of them at the earliest practicable date. The number of prisoners reported by the War Department, December 4 last, was as follows: 79 men, 178 women, and 174 children, making a total of 431. A few scattered members of the band were subsequently taken by the military and also sent to Fort Leavenworth.

The necessary provision having been made by Congress just before the close of the last session for the settlement of these Indians in the Indian Territory, this office, on the 9th of July last, recommended that the War Department be requested to cause the necessary orders to be issued to the commandant at Fort Leavenworth to deliver the prisoners to an agent, who would be designated by this bureau to receive them. Accordingly on the 21st of the same month they were delivered to United States Indian Inspector McNeil and United States Indian Agent H.W. Jones, who without military escort conducted them to the location selected for them in the Indian Territory. The number reported to have been turned over to the inspector and agent was 410, three of whom--children--died on the route.

Inspector McNeil reported that the camping place selected by the commandant for these Indians, and where he found them, was in the Missouri River bottom, about two miles above the fort, "between a lagoon and the river, the worst possible place that could have been selected; and the sanitary condition of the Indians proved it." The physician in charge said that "one half could be said to be sick, and all were affected by the poisonous malaria of the camp." After the arrival of Joseph and his band in the Indian Territory, the bad effect of their location at Fort Leavenworth manifested itself in the prostration by sickness at one time of 260 out of the 410, and within a few months they have lost by death more than one-quarter of the entire number. A little more care in the selection of a wholesome location near Fort Leavenworth would have saved very much sickness and many lives.

Since the location of these Indians in the Indian Territory, others belonging to the band have been arrested in Idaho, and with the approval of the department United States Indian Agent Monteith, of the Nez Perce Agency, has recently received instructions to take charge of and conduct them to the Indian Territory.

On the 15th of October last I visited the Nez Perce Indians at their camp, about three miles from Seneca, Mo., on the Quapaw Reservation. I found the sickness that had prevailed since their arrival in the Territory rapidly abating. Joseph had two causes of dissatisfaction, which he presented to notice in plain, unmistakable terms. He complained that his surrender to General Miles was a conditional surrender, with a distinct promise that he should go back to Idaho in the spring. The other complaint was that the land selected for him on the Quapaw Reservation was not fertile and that water was exceedingly scarce on it; that two wells had been dug to a depth of 60 to 70 feet without reaching water; and that he did not like the country. He thought it unhealthy and a very hard place for an Indian to earn his living by tilling the soil. He was pointed to the Modocs, who are his neighbors, and shown that they were actively engaged on their farms, and that they were prospering and getting ahead in the world.

After reflecting on the matter, and with the view of meeting his expectations, if it were possible to do so, with your consent I took him, with his interpreter and chief Husecruyt (Bald-Head), with me about 250 miles. I traveled with him in Kansas and the Indian Territory for nearly a week and found him to be one of the most gentlemanly and well-