

brought back word that the Indians received the word in good spirit and without any exhibition of ill feeling. They answered that they were then engaged in hunting buffalo and could not come in at present, but would return to the agency early in the spring. It does not appear that any of the messengers sent out by any of the agents were able to return to his agency by the time which had been fixed for the return of the Indians. It is very easy to understand why the most friendly Indians should hesitate to traverse a pathless country without ⁴²³ fuel and shelter at a time of year when fearful storms endangered human life, and with a knowledge that they would find a limited supply of provisions at the agency. In General Sheridan's report of November 25, 1876, we find that he states that on account of the > terrible severity of the Dakota winter the army was compelled to suspend operations. If our soldiers were frost bitten and unable to remain in the field, even with their comfortable clothing and supply train, we can judge whether it was practicable for women and children to cross this inhospitable wilderness in the dead of winter.

On the 1st day of February, 1876, the secretary of the interior notified the secretary of war that the time given the hostile Indians having expired, and they having failed to appear at the agencies as demanded, he formally turned them over to the military authorities for such action on the part of the army as the secretary of war might deem proper under the circumstances. General Sheridan at once instructed General Crook to reduce these Indians to subjection. On the 1st of March, at the head of an expedition amounting in all to 803 men, Crook started out on the old Bozeman trail, passed the abandoned Forts Reno and Phil Kearney, and thence northeast, scouting Rosebud and Tongue Rivers as far as the mouth of Red Clay Creek, thence turning southeast to Powder River, and on the head of Otter Creek, March 16th, divided his command, sending Colonel Reynolds, with six companies of cavalry with one days rations, to follow the trail of two Indians seen that day, and to join Crook at the mouth of Lodge Pole Creek, on Powder River, the next evening. Colonel Reynolds moved at 5 o'clock of the 16th and struck the camp of Crazy Horse the next morning. The Indians fled to the

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