

File 57

Headquarters Powder River Expedition,
Cheyenne, W.T. January 8, 1877.

To the
Asst. Adjt. General.
Mil. Div. of the Missouri,
Chicago, Illinois.

Sir:

At the close of the Big Horn Expedition in October and while at Red Cloud Agency I became satisfied that many of the Indians from that Agency had been led to leave there by the reported appearances of large herds of buffalo on the Rosebud and Powder Rivers. When, therefore this expedition left Fort Fettermen, November 15th, 1876, I expected to move against the band located in that country under Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull. It transpired however that before this time the greater majority of buffalo had disappeared, if indeed they had been there in great numbers at all, from that locality so that Sitting Bull with several bands from the northern Agencies moved north down towards the Yellowstone.

Each of these warriors seemed to be alive to the necessity of splitting up into smaller bands and so far as practicable getting rid of all the mouths to feed they could, surrendering such useless warriors and their families they could while the leaders and worst cases remained out as a nucleus for next summers work. Of course this was not foreseen, but if it could have and the surrender of all or none been made the ultimatum, I believe the surrender of all would be a certainty.

My spies, who came in when the command reached Reno, brought with them a prisoner they had captured, who stated that when he left ~~near~~ the camp of Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull ~~never~~ had moved south and having met some troops on his way down he had made peace with the commanding officer, the conditions of which were that they should have a reservation for themselves on the Belle Fourche, and that in the meantime they were to be allowed to hunt buffalo 'till spring.

It was also evident that both Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse were unloading as far as they could with a view of tiding themselves through 'till next spring and I resolved to move against the latter one at once.

After leaving Reno another of our scouts, Sitting Bear, came in and reported that five lodges from the agencies who were moving over to join the Cheyennes reported to be in the Big Horn Mountains, had discovered us and fled towards the camp of Crazy Horse. This then changed my plan and I determined to attack the Cheyennes village first and with this view sent out Col. MacKenzie 4th Cavalry, with the cavalry of the command and the Indian Allies.

Colonel MacKenzie executed this movement with energy and skill attacking their village on the morning of the 25th of November, capturing and destroying it with all its contents; killing about twenty warriors and capturing about 500 head of ponies, with a loss on his part of one officer and five enlisted men killed, and twenty-six enlisted men wounded. For details of the movement see copy of Col. MacKenzie's report enclosed.