

---

The Indian Border War of 1876

Author(s): Cynthia J. Capron

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (Jan., 1921), pp. 476-503

Published by: [University of Illinois Press](http://www.press.uillinois.edu) on behalf of the [Illinois State Historical Society](http://www.ishs.org)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40186797>

Accessed: 28/11/2011 22:54

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of Illinois Press and Illinois State Historical Society are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society (1908-1984)*.

## THE INDIAN BORDER WAR OF 1876.

BY MRS. CYNTHIA J. CAPRON.

(From letters written by her husband, Lieut. Thaddeus H. Capron.)

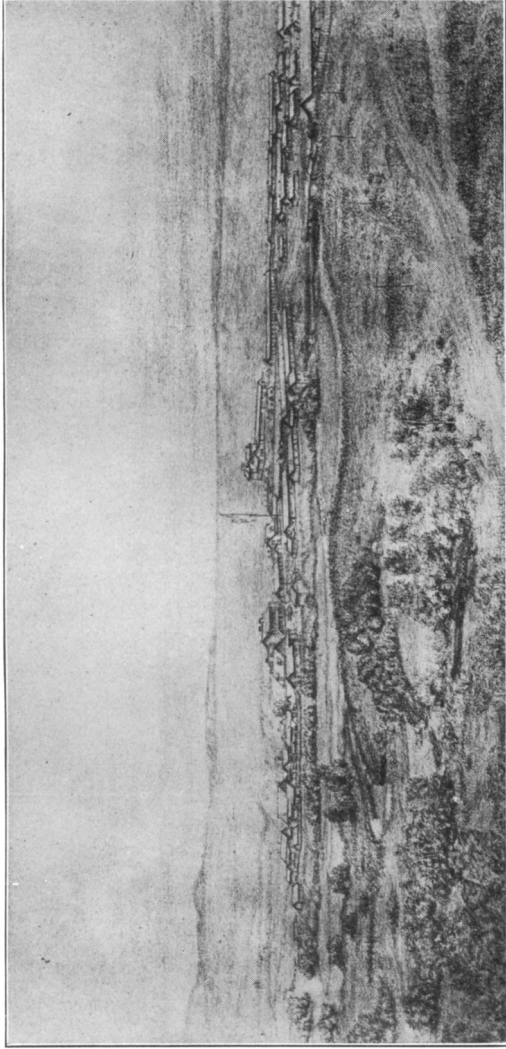
On the 7th of April of the centennial year a lieutenant of the Ninth Infantry was traveling northward from Cheyenne. The road was muddy and the weather cold, yet the family in the ambulance was in luxurious circumstances compared with the parties of men on their way to the Black Hills, who were passed every now and then. Most of them were on foot, with their baggage on wagons, some of which had been loaded too heavily and had broken down.

There was but one house the first twenty-five miles, and there they changed mules. The road to Chug Water was barren of interest, except the view of Chimney Rock. There was a small settlement at Chug Water, and the ambulance arrived there at 9 o'clock the first night, and at Fort Laramie before dark the second day. Hospitable doors were opened for the reception of the lieutenant and family, and old acquaintances welcomed them. In a few days they were domiciled in the best set of available quarters and the officers and ladies of the garrison called.

The commanding officer, General Bradley, had been detailed to assist in representing the army at the Centennial, and he with the members of his delightful family soon left, leaving Colonel Townsend in command.

For a little time things go on as usual in time of peace. The band comes out to guard mounting in the morning and the children play around, enjoying the maneuvers and the music; and again the band plays for an hour before sundown. Then the cannon boom announces the hour of "retreat" and simultaneously the flag is hauled down, and the sun disappears from the western horizon.

If there is no school the children recite their lessons to their parents. In mild weather people almost live on their



FORT LARAMIE.

porches, and generally, the houses were in those days built around a square—the parade ground—each house being in full view of the others.

There was a sense of nearness and a feeling of sociability which must be missed by the veterans now stationed in the large posts of the present day.

Fort Laramie is close to the Laramie River and not far from its confluence with the North Platte. There were adobe walls, with a corner house having small opening to shoot from, built by a fur company before the post was established. This was now the "corrall." Aside from this, there was nothing like fortifications at Fort Laramie.

There had been an expedition against the Indians in the winter before, which owing to the very cold weather at that time (30 degrees below zero), did not accomplish what was expected. Colonel Stanton, who had gone as a volunteer, and Captain Egan were the heroes of the expedition.

April 9th General Crook telegraphed that he should protect the road to the Black Hills, which was equal to a notification to the soldiers that they would have a summer in tents. Indians had begun to kill people on the road to the Hills, and just before, Mr. Brown of the firm of Brown & Gilmore, was shot on the stage about seventy-five miles from Fort Laramie. He had gone to the Hills to establish a stage line and was on his way back.

The slaughter house and corrall at Red Cloud had been burned by Indians the week before. Preparations were at this time being made to send out a large expedition. Supplies were being sent to Fort Fetterman, eighty-one miles northwest of Fort Laramie, where the expedition was to start out.

Scouting parties were constantly going out from Fort Laramie and escort duty was often in demand. Finally the order came detailing Companies C, G and H of the Ninth Infantry to go on the expedition. Lieutenant Capron moved his family from "Bedlam" to a more desirable set of quarters, which had been vacated, and on May 22d he started for Fetterman with the three companies of infantry, commanded by Captains Burt, Burroughs and Munson, and Lieutenant Robertson and Dr. Albert Hartsuff.

After marching over a rough country, some of the hills being bare of vegetation, and finding sage brush, stunted pines and groves of cottonwood trees at intervals, our infantry was joined by the cavalry under Colonel Royall, May 27th, opposite Fort Fetterman. There was no communication by mail between Laramie and Fetterman, although there was by telegraph. The cavalry left Laramie after the infantry, the officers calling on the families of those gone before and offering to take letters.

The command which left Fetterman May 29th consisted of ten companies of the Third Cavalry under Major Evans and five companies of the Second Cavalry under Major Noyes, all commanded by Colonel Royall. Three companies of the Ninth were under Major Burt, and Captain Luhn's and Captain Caine's companies of the Fourth Infantry, all commanded by Colonel Chambers. (This was written a number of years ago.) Of the officers mentioned in Lieutenant Capron's diary and letters one was Captain J. G. Bourke, aide to General Crook. He wrote much upon anthropology and folk lore and was president of the American Folk Lore Society of Philadelphia. Some of his works were "The Snake Dance of the Moqui," "An Apache Campaign" and "On the Border with Crook." He died in June, 1896.

Another aide of General Crook's was Lieutenant Walter S. Schuyler, late colonel of the Forty-sixth Infantry.

There was Lieutenant Lemly, now a retired captain; Lieutenant Emmett Crawford, beloved of his comrades, who was slain by Mexican troops in 1886; Lieutenant Charles King, adjutant of the Fifth Cavalry, now General King, the famous author.

General Crook died in 1890, regretted by all. Colonel Royall died a few years ago. Captain Guy V. Henry, who was seriously wounded, lived to be a general and governor of Porto Rico. He died October 27, 1899. General Merritt has been retired, a major general. General S. S. Sumner, now in the Philippines, was in 1876 the captain of a company in the Fifth Cavalry, which did good service. Captain Montgomery, now a major on the retired list, was also a captain in that regiment. His company, seated upon their gray

horses, was universally admired; handsome captain, a fit commander.

The good "Old Munson," as he was affectionately called, has joined the majority. The story of how, at the battle of Slim Butts, he at the risk of his life, rescued a squaw from among the flying bullets, has been told in print more than once.

Other officers mentioned are: Dewees, Andruss, Andrews, Furey, Q. M., Stanton, P. M., Foster, Luhn, Noyes, Nickerson, Burke, Seton, Sibley, Kingsbury, Caine, Carpenter, Van Vliet, Meinhold, Tobey, Vroom, Davis, Bubb and Rockefeller.

Reporters Strahorn, for the New York Times and Rocky Mountain News; Wasson, of the Alta California; Davenport, New York Herald; McMillan, Inter Ocean, and Finerty, of the Chicago Times.

At this time the Cheyenne papers represented the road to the Black Hills as guarded well, and a stream of fortune hunters was going through their city. Indians were committing depredations on the Sydney and Loup River routes as well as this, probably the same who drew rations at the agencies. Some of the most loyal Indians at Red Cloud agency stood guard every night for fear the northern hostiles would burn the agency buildings, as they threatened to do if they did not go with them. Red Cloud was supposed to remain only to get rations, guns and ammunition for the hostile Indians. There was no restriction as to ammunition. They could have all they could buy.

It was supposed that General Crook had a very narrow escape from a war party after he left Red Cloud agency, where he had tried in vain to enlist some Indians as soldiers to go with him on the expedition. Lieutenant Griffith and family expected to leave Red Cloud with General Crook, but were detained till nearly an hour after the general's party left, and could not overtake it. They took into the ambulance four of the general's escort, left on the way for them, and soon after met the mail carrier and asked him how far ahead the general was, and he said about a mile. A little farther on they met another man on horseback. This was ten or fifteen miles from Red Cloud.

The next morning after they broke camp a courier arrived from Red Cloud with dispatches to tell General Crook that the mail carrier had been found dead a short distance from where Lieutenant Griffith met him. The mail was not disturbed, but the horse was taken. The other man they had met was missing, but his horse was found. It was thought a party of Indians was after General Crook, as signal fires were sent up when he started in the morning.

Lieutenant Capron writes home: "Camp on Tongue River, June 8, 1876. We are making a halt here for today at least, and I avail myself of the first opportunity to write to the dear ones at home. I have been in excellent health and hope it may continue, and I return to you, ere many weeks, sound and hearty, if I am sunburnt and ragged.

"At Fetterman we were reduced to a wall tent to each company (the men in shelter tents), therefore Captain Munson and I tent together for the trip. During the evening at our first camp quite a number called upon us and we entertained them as well as our circumstances would admit, inviting them to take seats on the ground in front of our domicile. General Crook established his headquarters with our part of the command. Our march was over exceedingly poor country, there being little but sage brush and alkali upon the surface. Burt and Munson took their twenty-mile march on foot and were a little tired upon arriving in camp. We reached the South Fork of the Cheyenne River at 3 p. m., where we found a very good camping ground, with plenty of wood and water which was strongly tinctured with alkali. The night was cold and Captain and I decided to consolidate our bedding and sleep together. In the morning it was snowing. We left camp at 5:30, our company leading and I walking.

"The first casualty of the trip occurred that day. A man of the cavalry accidentally shot himself, receiving a wound of which he died the night before reaching our present camp—and was buried here last evening, the ten companies of the Third Cavalry turning out and attending the funeral.

"At Buffalo Wallow we found good grazing for our animals and plenty of alkali water. We have found very little game so far—an antelope or sage hen now and then.

“June 1st was a cold and disagreeable day. C. Company being with the train, the Captain and I rode our animals and the men occasionally rode on the wagons. We reached a high divide which the road followed for a long distance. From it we could see the Big Horn Mountains on one side covered with snow, and on the other Pumpkin Buttes, a succession of round hills apparently nearly flat on top. From their peculiar formation and their height they can be distinguished a long distance away. We could see Laramie Peak at the left. At 1:30 we camped on a fork of Powder River at the point known as Antelope Springs. Burt, who was out hunting, stated that he found a fresh trail of a small party of Indians, about fifteen in number. The two companies of the Third returned, not having found any practicable route shortening our present road.

“June 2d our road led down the valley of the Dry Powder for thirteen miles. This stream or dry run is quite heavily timbered with cottonwood and the valley is about one-fourth mile in width, while rugged high bluffs in most places form its boundaries. Occasionally we found water holes, and in one place found coal in the bed of the creek and also in the bank.

“After leaving this valley we crossed over a succession of hills for about three miles, coming into the valley of Powder River about one mile below Fort Reno, which is located on a table land on the opposite side of the river. The location was a good one from a military point of view, but it is a bleak, barren country, with nothing in natural scenery to attract, the water more or less alkali, and in the days of the post and garrison it was unsafe to leave without an escort. It must have been anything but a desirable place to be stationed. Little now remains of the post—a few adobe walls and the numerous graves of those who died from disease or fell victims to the Indians.

“General Crook rather expected to find 200 Crow Indians at this place and had sent two companies of cavalry ahead of us to meet them; but we found no Crow Indians, and the general sent his guides to their country, distant about 200 miles. They are expected to meet us on Tongue River. I was



on duty as "officer of the day" and was awake and watchful at night. On the morning of the 3d, the march before us being a long one, an early start was taken. The country we passed over was a nice rolling prairie, with a fair growth of grass and no sage brush. We were nearing the mountains and the scenery was grand, reminding me of California. We camped at Crazy Woman's Creek, having marched twenty-six miles. Captain Munson indulged in the walking exercise and upon arriving in camp was pretty well used up, at least for the day. I walked about one-half the distance. In the afternoon I was taken with sick headache, and till about 2 in the morning did not sleep. Upon waking found myself quite weak and miserable. I kept as quiet as possible during the day, marching with the command on the back of my pony.

"We continued our way to Fort Phil Kearney, the road leading but a few miles from the foothills at the base of the Big Horn Mountains. Antelope were seen quite often trotting over the hills and standing on the highest points watching our movements. A few were killed, but more escaped the shots of the few hunters we had out.

"We arrived at Clear Fork Creek at 2 p. m., having marched twenty-two miles. During the day it was quite warm and often a glance was cast toward the snow clad peaks, with a wish for a few moments in closer proximity. Clear Fork is a beautiful stream with swift current and rocky bottom. It was the first good water since leaving Fetterman. Fish were quite plenty. They could not be caught with hook and line and the men resorted to other means—shooting, seining and spearing.

"I sat on the bank of the stream for half an hour, watching the water bound its way over the rocky bed. Its music cheered me and I went to sleep that night listening to its murmur. Was awakened before 4 o'clock by Boyer announcing that breakfast was ready, and at 4:30 we were again on the road.

"From the heights a beautiful view presented itself. On one side the snow-capped mountains and foothills covered with bright verdure, and on the other a beautiful sheet of water nestling among the hills. At this point we made a halt

so that all might fully enjoy it. Our road then led us through little valleys covered with fine grass, amidst which were a profusion of wild flowers; then high hills, the ascent of which was gradual, but of considerable length, which I fully realized as I was leading the column and company on foot.

“At last we rounded a prominent point and in a beautiful little valley we saw the remains of Fort Phil Kearney, of which very little was left. A portion of the charred stockade and a few posts at the corner of an old brick yard, with a huge pile of broken brick; the sweeps and boxes for mixing the clay; and last the cemetery, which contains all that remains of those who met their fate at the Fetterman massacre. They lie buried in one large grave—eighty-one! The vandals had broken down the monument of brick that was erected to mark their resting place, but the immense grave had not been disturbed. The place was one of the worst that could have been selected for a military post, as it was almost surrounded by high hills, from which the Indians could fire into the post.

“After bathing in the cool stream and donning clean clothes, we felt like new beings, and Munson and I started off on our round to call on the officers of the cavalry camp. Returning to our tent at 10 o’clock, we were soon asleep. The announcement that breakfast was ready came at 4 o’clock.”

After a hasty toilet they emerged from their tent and partook of broiled buffalo steak, fried potatoes, hot biscuit and coffee. At 5 they were on the road and making for Tongue River.

Over the ridge was the rock that marked the spot where Fetterman’s command perished; and where it is said Colonel Fetterman and another officer shot each other. The position was a strong one, but the poor fellows were there with little or no ammunition, surrounded by thousands of Indians.

Lieutenant Capron wrote: “Their fate has taught us a lasting lesson, by which all will profit, and the care which we now take in having ammunition in abundance will prevent such a catastrophe again.” This the 8th of June, and the Custer massacre on the 25th by the same Indians. Crook’s command was pursuing and battled with on the 17th of the same month. It will be seen in the account of the battle that

the cavalry escaped Custer's fate by being recalled after they had started for the village.

The road followed the direction of Reno Creek and afterwards Prairie Dog Creek. They went into camp on a plateau with plenty of fine grazing and wood and water. During the day buffalo had been seen and some were killed. Major Noyes had left with an escort on a fishing excursion, but not finding the command that night he "camped in the country," as one of his men expressed it. During his absence he saw several elk and four grizzlies.

They were now in the very heart of the Indian country, yet they found no late Indian signs, and up to the time of their arrival at Tongue River could not be positive that an Indian had been seen. This was explained later when their large deserted camp on the Rosebud was found.

In coming down a hill near Phil Kearney, Sergeant O'Leary of Company C, Ninth Infantry, was tipped over in an ambulance and had his back hurt and an arm broken. With true soldierly pride he had walked every step of the way until this unlucky morning, and being quite unwell the surgeon ordered him into the ambulance. Nothing to do but obey orders in the army.

The first night after arriving on the Tongue River an Indian appeared on the bluffs across the river from camp and went through a harangue, only one question of which could be understood—whether there were any half-breeds or Crows with them. At first they thought he might be one of the friendly Crows they were expecting. There were all kinds of conjectures, but they finally concluded that he was a Sioux brave showing his daring in this way. Some feared the scouts had been captured and that he had come to brag of it. Scouts had been sent to friendly Indians, and Crows, Snakes and Utes were expected. These allies were to find out where the villages were and assist in fighting.

The afternoon of the 9th at six o'clock, just after inspection, the pickets, who were on the bluffs the same side of the river, but further down, commenced firing and signaling to the command. They had anticipated an attack from this direction, if there was one, and at first they were puzzled to tell in what direction the Indians were. Then they saw over

the river on the opposite bluffs several Indians who fired into the camp. He says: "The leaden missives came very near, but did no damage at first. Companies C, G and H were soon formed and counted off by fours, as if for drill or dress parade, and marched to the support of the pickets on the hills. As they marched along in good style and until they took a position in the hills, the Indians kept up a strong fire upon them, but for some reason no one was hit. Four companies of Cavalry mounted and crossed the river above camp, then dismounting they deployed a skirmish line, and advanced to the bluffs driving the enemy from his place in fine style. Two Cavalry men were slightly wounded, and two horses in our camp; one mule in the Cavalry camp." This little affair gave those who were inclined to be timid great confidence, and they were confirmed in the belief some people had those days, that a few white men could whip a large number of Indians.

Upon the troops leaving Fort Laramie, one captain who did not go, said that with his company he could repulse all the Indians who might attack him. When General Crook sent couriers with dispatches to Fetterman or Laramie, one letter from each officer was allowed, and a few from the private soldiers. These opportunities were very rare and one time the officers mail was forgotten when a messenger was sent. They soon raised a purse of \$75 with which another courier was hired.

At Fort Laramie reports often came in of Indians going from the agencies to join the hostiles. At one time agency Indians said there were 2700 lodges with Sitting Bull, that Sitting Bull sent his compliments to General Crook and General Crook would have no trouble finding him; to just follow the Indians; that there would be a midnight attack upon the troops every night after they left Fetterman. At another time Sitting Bull sent word to Red Cloud agency that he had plenty of reinforcements to fight Crook, but if they found they had not, they would turn back and destroy everything north of the Platte river—the agencies first.

Towards the middle of June some officers went down to Cheyenne to attend a court martial. They stopped at Philips' ranch one night, and while there, about forty Indians drove off a lot of stock from a ranch a mile north of them.

When General Sheridan came through Fort Laramie he was very anxious about Crook.

The news of the attack of the 9th came after he had left for Red Cloud, and the dispatch was sent to him. He visited the military post but not the agency. Upon this trip he saw but one Indian, and this satisfied the General that the Indians had gone north. Upon his return to Laramie he ordered the companies of the 5th Cavalry, that were there awaiting orders, to go nearby to the Black Hills, and then strike off for Powder River towards General Crook. It was supposed before this that they were going to Red Cloud.

General Sheridan left for the east June 20th, and the next day another dispatch came from General Crook, and as was customary, an orderly carried it to all the officers' quarters so that the families of those in the field might read it, as well as others who were interested. This is an exact copy: "Snakes and crows joined General Crook 15th inst. Crook left next day for Sioux encampment with four days' rations. Infantry all mounted went with him. Gibbon is near Sioux encampment. Crook hopes to meet him and Terry there and have a grand time. Gruard, Renshaw, and Big Bat, got through O. K. Came back with 180 Crows."

This was the expedition which encountered the Indians and fought them on the Rosebud June 17th, and returned to their camps the 19th.

The scouts, Frank Gruard and Louis Richard (pronounced Reshaw) were quite famous, and did good service throughout the summer.

Early in June Spotted Tail went through Laramie on his way to Denver. Whatever his chief business was he took back a large quantity of ammunition; but this was not known till later in the summer.

The remains of his daughter and those of another member of his tribe had reposed for years on two high platforms near the hospital. At this time it was not known whether Spotted Tail was really friendly to us.

From a letter I wrote June 23rd: "Gen. Crook's forces camped on the field the night of their fight with the Sioux; but owing to short rations, they were obliged to return to their camp. This is unfortunate as nothing less than exter-

ination will prevent Indians from claiming the victory. A decisive battle might have sufficed, but now the soldiers will have to be out all summer, hard at work, riding in hot weather, enduring hunger and thirst, and fighting warriors who number three for every soldier, and every one mounted and armed as well as the soldier.

No one can accuse the government of partiality for the white man on the frontier; for through its Indian traders it has supplied for years the best arms and ammunition to the Indians, so that their camps are perfect magazines.

The Sioux chief Spotted Tail was at this post a few days ago. When he passed through on his way to Cheyenne he said he was going to Denver, and told several different stories about the object of his journey. On his return, he sent the remains of his daughter home to the agency, which some consider a sign of future hostility.

His daughter requested him to be always the white man's friend, and that she might be left near the fort, where her spirit could hear the martial music. He has been friendly and has kept most of his people from the war path. He says he told Sitting Bull two years ago, he might live with him, but he would not, and he doesn't care now if Gen. Crook does whip him.

Spotted Tail is the best representative of his nation, as to sagacity, dignity and good manners. When invited to dine with a gentleman he regards all the niceties of etiquette as strictly as the gentleman himself. He was dressed in green pantaloons trimmed at the side with Indian ornamentation; a pair of small moccasins elaborately beaded, a large, dark blue blanket tidily disposed, having a white stripe down the middle of the back. His hair is smooth and black. One of the ladies invited him into her house and although he must have understood what was said, he answered only through an interpreter. Several ladies went in to see him, and made a good deal of him, giving him some polite compliments which pleased him. They asked how the ladies at the agency were when he left. He said the ladies had never invited him to their house, nor had they ever shaken hands with him. That seemed to imply that he didn't know how they were.

I asked if he remembered going out with Lieut. Capron after ponies. He said yes, and he hadn't found them yet; the white men had taken a good many of his ponies, but he didn't care.

Eight companies of the 5th Cavalry left yesterday for the North. Buffalo Bill goes with them as guide.

I remember his fine figure as he stood by the Sutler store, straight and slender, with his scarlet shirt belted in, and his long hair distinguishing him as the well known character so much more widely known since.

When Gen. Crook started out June 16th with cavalry and mounted infantry, it was to strike into the hills and overtake the Indians; so wagons and baggage were left in camp. The first day they saw large herds of buffalo. They camped about eight o'clock on the Rosebud.

The next morning they started with the expectation of making a fifty mile march but very soon Indian signs were discovered in the shape of cloths nailed to trees (which meant fight), and in a few minutes their Indians reported that they had found some Indians, and went out to skirmish with them.

In the meantime the command was halted, and ready for whatever might occur. Lieut. Capron writes: "The General waited for developments in order to make his disposition of troops. The developments soon came in the shape of a general attack upon us by the Sioux. They commenced the attack upon our front, but in a short time they were in all directions.

About 8:30 the battle fairly opened; the troops advancing in different directions to hold positions and repulse the attack. It was repulsed, our positions held, and assistance was given at a point where very strong resistance was made. Nine companies of the cavalry were made a party to go and charge the village supposed to be located about ten miles distant.

"Our command of mounted infantry were at first ordered to go with this party, but were afterwards ordered elsewhere. Burt and Burrowes were ordered to cover the withdrawal of some of the cavalry companies, in order to get them ready for the trip to the village.

“They made a nice advance and took the position they were ordered to proceed to. Two companies of the 4th Infantry and Co. C were ordered to drive the Indians from a position in our front. We deployed, and made an advance, driving the Indians for nearly two miles. Gen. Crook’s horse was shot under him when near our line. The party going after the village was ordered back, as the entire force of Indians was massing in front of their village, and it was thought that they would not be strong enough to maintain themselves. We fought nearly six hours. Col. Henry of the 3rd Cavalry is seriously wounded. Our loss was nine killed and twenty-one wounded. Loss of Sioux estimated to be one hundred.”

Letter of June 25th—Camp on Wind River: “We left our camp on Goose Creek the 21st. C. Co. and Luhns of the 4th are on our way to Fetterman with the supply train (104 wagons) and have with us the sick and wounded. Col. Chambers is in command. We travel with great care, and keep a continual lookout. Going back, we are to have six more companies—five infantry and one cavalry.”

Here was a week’s travel in army wagons, for the wounded men, and when they reached Fetterman there were 83 miles more to Rock Creek Station on the Union Pacific. When they returned to camp after the battle there were one and a half days of being dragged behind horses on small trees arranged so that a man could lie upon them. There was no alternative, for at any time, the whole command might be following after the Indians. Col. Henry, they said, bore all this without a murmur, and I have no doubt the others also did.

From diary of June 27th:

“Capt. Nickerson and I left the train and started ahead. When about twenty miles out, Nickerson being quite tired, I left him when within four miles of Fetterman and went on to see about ferry boat, and get news from home. Crossed but once when the cable broke, and no crossing except in a small boat. The wounded were all ferried over in this manner, and officers had to go to and from camp and post in the small boat. DeLaney has given up his leave and joins company 40. Expect him tonight.”



That night at 8 o'clock, with three men of his company who volunteered to go (Sergeant Butler, Dillon and Granberry), Lieutenant Capron left, riding on horseback until morning, when they hid themselves and rested three hours. They arrived at Fort Laramie at half past 2 in the afternoon, having ridden eighty-one miles in eighteen and a half hours without a change of horses. Having received the news of the death of his two-years-old son, he made this special trip home.

While Lieutenant Capron was in Fort Laramie a telegram came, of which the following is a copy: "Agent telegraphs from Red Cloud that Indians have come in and say that another fight has taken place between northern Indians and some troops, *not Crooks*, and that during the fight a village was entirely destroyed. (For General Crook.)"

When the news of the Custer fight reached Fort Laramie it was surmised that the report the Indians had given out—of victory for the government troops—had been for the purpose of leading Crook into an attack, for which they would be prepared.

An account of the Custer massacre, giving the statement of a trapper who says he was a prisoner in the camp of Sitting Bull and saw the fight, I copy from an old paper. Ridgely was taken prisoner in the Black Hills, but claimed to come from Fort Garry, and on account of being a British subject was treated kindly. He escaped just after the battle. Quotation:

"Ridgely says that Sitting Bull organized his forces to drive the miners out of the Black Hills. Mounted couriers from Sitting Bull's camp had for eight days watched every move of the military previous to Custer's attack. Ridgely says the Indians observed every movement of Custer's force, its division into small detachments being noted with manifestations of extreme delight. Ambuscades were at once prepared by the Indians, and Ridgely states that while the Indians stood ready for the attack, many of them climbed on the side hills overlooking Custer's line of march.

"The Indian camp was divided by a bluff or ridge, the point of which ran towards the Rosebud and in the direction of one of the available fords on the river. The Indians had crossed the river to camp by this ford, and Custer had followed their trail down to the water's edge.

“From this point of observation there were but twenty-five tepees visible to Custer, but there were seventy-five double tepees behind the bluffs not to be seen by the soldiers. Custer attacked the smaller village and was immediately met by a force of 1,500 or 2,000 Indians in regular order of battle.

“Ridgely says he stood on the side of a hill where he had a complete view of the battle, which was not more than a mile and a half distant. Custer began the fight in a ravine near the ford, and fully one-half his command seemed to be unhorsed at the first fire. Then the soldiers retreated towards the hill in the rear and were shot down on the way with surprising rapidity, the commanding officer falling from his horse in the middle of the engagement, which commenced at 11 a. m. and did not last more than forty-five minutes.

“After the massacre the Indians returned to camp with six prisoners, and delirious with joy over their success.

“Ridgely says Custer’s command had been slaughtered before a shot was fired by Reno’s force attacking the lower end of camp about 2 p. m.”

Lieutenant Capron returned from Fort Laramie to Fetterman, making the ride in one day and night. When he returned to the road after a rest in the hills where he was hiding with his men, he found a fresh trail of about twelve Indians who had passed since he had left the road.

He writes: “Col. Chambers informed me soon after my arrival that he wanted me as adjutant of the infantry battalion for the expedition and I have this duty to perform instead of company duty. In many respects it will be far pleasanter and I consider it something of an honor to be selected for the position, having as we have a command of ten companies.”

There was some delay in getting the stores ferried over the river but the train left July 4th.

July 8th he says: “Louis Richard joined us today and brought us fearful news, that of the death of Custer and most of his command. At first, we could hardly believe that such news was true. A few hours after, were received another dispatch confirming the first in most particulars. We all have confidence in our commanding general, and feel that he

will be careful in his movements, and look after his command."

July 9th: "The command was quite melancholy, and the topic of conversation was the loss of General Custer and his command. Louis Richard says that on Monday the 3d, twelve Cheyennes made an attack on five men, and without doubt it was the party whose trail I came across as I went on the road after my rest."

"July 11—When near Phil Kearney we saw in the distance a column of horsemen, whether Indians or Cavalry we could not make out. They proved to be Wells' and Rawolles' companies of the 2nd Cavalry, which had been ordered out to meet the train and assist in guarding it through the camp. We learned from them that Sibley and Finerty of the Times, had been out with a scouting party of twenty-five soldiers and two guides. A number of Indians attacked them, and they were obliged to make their escape on foot, taking to the timber and rocks, and fortunately getting through to camp."

They arrived at General Crook's camp on Goose Creek July 13th, and many came out to meet them. Here the scenery was fine—mountains in the background covered with dense forests of pine, and nearer, cliffs of granite several hundred feet in height. On the 24th word was received that the 5th Cavalry would not come as soon as expected. Washakie, a very fine looking and intelligent Indian, was there with 220 of his Snake Indians. Communication with General Terry was carried on by means of couriers, and cooperation planned. All was ready, and they were only waiting for the 5th Cavalry.

The General became very uneasy. General Crook's reply, accepting the offer to send him the 5th Cavalry, did not reach Laramie until July 17th. Just about this time, it was at Rawhide Creek, twenty miles from Laramie.

Supposing General Merritt was too far away to know of their movements, a party of from six to eight hundred Cheyenne Indians left Red Cloud for the north. General Merritt was notified, and he intercepted them, turning them back, and following to their agency. After this there was some delay, General Merritt fearing trouble at Red Cloud. He finally started about the time that General Crook received word of their delay.

A newspaper item tells how the Indians were located. "It was in the Sioux campaign, twenty-one years ago. Stanton (now General Stanton) with General Merritt and his command, had travelled twenty-five miles that day. It was mid-day at Rawhide Buttes, when a dispatch from Sheridan overtook them. He ordered Merritt to discover at once what the Indians at Red Cloud Agency were doing. Sheridan understood that they were making war medicine, and about to leave the agency and join Sitting Bull. Red Cloud Agency was just an even hundred miles from Rawhide Buttes as the crow flies, without trail or path between.

Stanton with twenty-five miles already behind him that day, took four of his scouts and started. They rode in on the Red Cloud Agency at midnight. They had covered the one hundred miles in just twelve hours—half of it in the dark."

The story of the surprise of the war party on their way to join Sitting Bull by the 5th Cavalry, as told by General King in the *Chicago Inter Ocean*, March 31, 1889, is the most brilliant bit of word painting I ever read. As it appears in "Campaigning with Crook" it is toned down and not so striking.

Meanwhile General Crook's command was patiently waiting.

The last of July, clouds of grasshoppers filled the air, and crawled on the ground as in the year 1874 in Nebraska. They remained only a short time, however.

"August 2nd, scouts came in with the information that the Indians were not far away, below them. The same day others came with the news that Gen. Merritt was approaching, and that all were well at Laramie but very anxious. Orders were issued to move the next day, which they did, and joined Gen. Merritt's command at their camp that night.

The 5th Cavalry and 9th Infantry had served together before, and there was a pleasant reunion and talk of Arizona campaigns.

Captains Mason, Montgomery, Price, Hayes, and Woodson, were among the officers who called at the infantry camp that evening.

“One day just before the news came of the Custer tragedy, there were but thirteen men reported for duty at Fort Laramie.

“Three companies were stationed there nominally, but escort duty, and guarding the road, and going after Indians, sometimes left a very small garrison.

There was a long time after this, that no one knew where the main body of Indians was, and it seemed quite possible that Sitting Bull might make a raid as he threatened to do. As the soldiers were in the North he could capture a post full of supplies for his army very easily. He did not choose to try this, but before the time Gen. Crook was ready to start out and push things, these cunning Indians had divided up and were getting supplies in the old way—from isolated ranches, and poorly guarded wagon trains.

Beginning about the 1st of August, after General Merritt was out of their way; small bands infested the country around Laramie, and further away.

They would run off stock between Laramie and Fetterman and from near Cheyenne to the Black Hills. They had a rendezvous from which it was supposed they sent captured horses to their headquarters. They were very rarely punished, for before a call for the one cavalry company left between Cheyenne and Gen. Crook, could reach them, and the cavalry start out, they were gone beyond hope of catching them—Captain Egan’s company was always going on these disappointing trips. There was no use saying nothing could be done even when every one knew it.

On August 5th the command again left the wagon train. This time the infantry on foot. Pack mules carried a blanket and overcoat for each man, and 150 rounds of ammunition. They took 15 days rations—field rations—which means hard bread, bacon, coffee and sugar.

Major Furey was left in charge of the train with 200 citizen employees. Major Arthur and two surgeons remained with him. The command consisted of 25 companies of cavalry under Gen. Merritt, ten companies of infantry under Col. Chambers, and about 300 Indians and scouts giving a total of about 2000 men.

The second day they marched along the Tongue River. The bluffs came down to the waters edge, frequently making it necessary to cross the river, which they did thirteen times that day. Lieut. Capron says in his diary that once in crossing, he was obliged to jump from his horse into the water above his knees, which seemed to cheer up the men a little who had to wade across. There was a chance to wash and dry their clothing when they arrived at camp. The next day they crossed over to the Rosebud. They continued with the hard marches along this river or creek, and on the 8th the scouts found large trails about ten miles farther down than the place of the fight of the 17th of June. It was very large and indicated that all the Indians were moving. At first they thought the trail more recent than they afterwards supposed it to be.

A night march was ordered hoping to overtake the hostiles. Lieut. Capron says: "At 6:30 the entire command started for a night march in pursuit, finding the trails easily. Before dark we passed the ground occupied by their village. At this place the valley was three-fourths of a mile in width, and the village had extended over the entire valley for nearly two miles. It was judged that at least 12,000 Indians had been in camp here.

There were high cliffs on each side from which approaches could be discovered and a strong position taken.

The moon arose about nine o'clock from behind a high bluff, a bank of clouds reflecting its light before it made its appearance.

Every little while we would come upon the deserted camps strewn with the bones of game, and with the remains of their wickeope.

Arriving at eleven o'clock near the canon of the Rosebud, the cavalry went into camp, and at 1. a. m. we arrived with a portion of the cavalry and the pack train.

The scouts ascertained that the trail was still down the Rosebud.

The next day couriers from Fetterman arrived, but they had left the mail with the train, as Major Furey thought it unsafe to send it on.

Gen. Terry's command joined them on the Rosebud 20 miles from the Yellowstone the 10th. Gen. Terry's command was nearly the same in number as Gen. Crook's, so there were about 4,000 when together. Their supplies were replenished from Gen. Terry's wagon train, and then they followed the trail over the Tongue River. Gen. Terry had two steamers on the Yellowstone, and the train with some troops left for the Yellowstone, where they would go by steamer to either the mouth of Tongue River or Powder River as desired. They found the trains scattering, and from this time on indications were that the Indians from the agencies had gone back, and those remaining with Sitting Bull, had gone North.

Lieut. Capron was the fortunate possessor of a rubber blanket which afforded some shelter from the rain when put up on stakes.

The 11th and 12th it rained, and every one was wet including Gen. Crook, who fared no better than others.

They arrived at the mouth of Powder River on the Yellowstone the 17th and waited in the vicinity till the 24th. One of the steamers went up to the Rosebud and brought more supplies. Some of the officers went along and reported that the place selected for the post at the mouth of the Tongue River, a very fine location.

The friendly Indians saw a steamer here for the first time, and gazed in wonder. Two boat loads of sutler goods supplied a few of the most pressing needs, for those who had money with them. Onions \$.04 a pound. Lieut. Capron writes: "For dinner yesterday we had a nice dish of beans, some onions, and our usual amount of bacon and hard bread. This is what we call luxury. Quite a number shared with us, accepting our hospitality, and enjoying the meal as much as under ordinary circumstances a meal at Delmonico's would be relished.

It is understood that Gen. Terry's infantry will leave this place for their respective posts. His cavalry will probably go with us for about 100 miles, then leave for one of their posts for supplies. We should do the same—go to our posts or the train." The friendly Indians left for their agencies, as they thought there was no possibility of a fight, and as their only remuneration was to be what was captured from the Sioux,

they thought it would not pay to use up their ponies, with no prospect of replacing them. Hard marching was beginning to tell, and Major Burrowes with some others who were unable to keep on, left for home on the steamer. Crook's command left the Yellowstone, going in the direction of the Little Missouri River, farther east, and in four days they came in sight of the bluffs along that river.

That night there was a dreadful hailstorm. Hailstones two-thirds as large as a hen's egg. Men stood with their backs to the storm, with no shelter. Officers were flooded out from the shelter they had made with their blankets. Several horses were stampeded in the storm and darkness, and three jumped over the bank into a creek and were drowned.

The men were becoming tired of hard bread and bacon for a steady diet, and tried fried cactus. Some could eat it.

September 1st Frank Gruard reported a large trail and a smaller one turning off towards the agencies.

On the 2nd the expedition crossed Stanleys trail of 1873. They camped on the Little Missouri the 4th and found a coal mine burning which looked as if it might have been burning a long time. It was covered with clay, and through it the smoke issued in places.

September 5th camped on the head waters of the Heart River. Here Gen. Crook decided to go to the Black Hills, distant about 180 miles. They had but about two days rations, and many were opposed to the move.

September 7th Rainy day; marched 33 miles and no wood. The next day, rained nearly all day. Marched twenty-five miles and found but little wood."

Account of the Battle of Slim Buttes. Letter of Sept. 10th. "Day before yesterday Col. Mills with four officers and one hundred and fifty soldiers, and a portion of the pack train was sent ahead to secure rations. On the evening of the 8th he discovered an Indian village, bid his command, and yesterday morning about 3:30 he charged the village, and captured it with about 180 ponies. A few Indians were killed, while some escaped to the hills. It was handsomely done, and Col. Mills, Lieut. Bubb, Lieut. Crawford, Lieut. Von Leutwitz, and Lieut. Schwotka, with others engaged,



deserve great credit. We were on the march and the rain pouring down, when we received the news, and the call for reinforcements. About the time we arrived, (at noon) it was discovered that Indians had secreted themselves in a ravine in the camp that was filled with brush. Some of the men crawled up to shoot, and one was killed and one wounded.

The General then tried through his interpreter to get them to come out and surrender. Failing, a party was made up and advanced upon the place, losing one man killed, and one wounded, but they forced the Indians to come out.

There were three bucks and six squaws besides four or five children. Five were found dead in the ravine. Our loss up to this time was Lieut. Von Leutwitz seriously wounded, and six men wounded. One soldier and one scout killed. Soon after this an alarm was given, and we saw the Sioux approaching from different directions, making an attack upon us.

The disposition of troops was soon made, and the Indians repulsed. They retreated into a very rough country, only appearing upon high cliffs. The fight continued about three hours. Burts' company did splendid service owing to the opportunity which Lieut. Rockefeller who was in command, improved.

Maj. Burts' company had one man wounded. I did some hard riding in carrying orders. Was not under very severe fire.

Shots came in a few times during the evening after we returned to camp. A portion of our command was sent out at break of day. About 6:30 our wagons started on the march. Quite a number of Indians showed themselves just before we left. We pulled out protecting our column by flankers. Sumner remained back for a time with his company and had a fight killing five Indians and wounding several. Our rations are not sufficient to follow the Indians, and the first thing to do is to get food and clothing. We left our train without a change of clothes. When we have an article washed we have to go without, until it is dried. It is not comfort—but enough. I am well and do not complain.”

### From Diary.

“Sept. 11th crossed Slim Buttes; Grand scenery. Then struck into “bad lands.” Marched 23 miles. Rained nearly all day. Bear Buttes in view. Sept. 12th it rained nearly all day. The trail was in fearful condition. Marched till nine o’clock in the evening, arriving at camp at Willow Creek. The command nearly all exhausted. About one third of the infantry battallion was left by the road side, but came in during the night. Large numbers of cavalry horses gave out, and the men were left. Marched 35 miles.”

Sept. 13th provisions from the Black Hills reached the command. The 15th they received the first mail for over 40 days.

The 16th Gen. Crook and his aides and Col. Chambers, Maj. Burt and Maj. Powell left camp for Fort Laramie.

### Letter from Fort Laramie.

Sept. 26th, “Gen. Sheridan arrived on Saturday the 16th, and as Gen. Crook did not come till Thursday, he had several days to wait. Fishing was the principal pastime. Gen. Sheridan proved himself a No. 1 sportsman in addition to his other accomplishments. Gen. Sheridan, Maj. Powell and our Japanese visitors left in the stage last Saturday.

Very few orders have been issued, but it is understood that the command which is at Custer City, will come in to be paid in two or three weeks. Whether the tired ones will be allowed to remain, and fresh troops be sent out for the fall campaign, is one of the mysteries carefully guarded.

Gen. Crook’s aides—Capt. Nickerson, Lieut. Schuyler and Lieut. Clark are here. Mr. Strahorn, Mr. Watson, and Mr. Finerty, newspaper correspondents are also here.

The supply train arrived from Fort Fetterman yesterday, and will go out tomorrow with the baggage of the troops in the field.

The late march from Heart River to the Black Hills, was one of almost unparalleled hardship in summer campaigns. They started out with two days rations to march a distance of nearly two hundred miles, over a country entirely unknown, except as information had been gleaned from Indians;

with no road or trail, and nothing but the sagacity of their guide and the general direction to guide them; and no knowledge as to where they would find wood and water.

They traveled on their weary way combating difficulties, not the least of which were the heavy storms of cold rain, making the prairies almost impassible from the unusual stickiness of the mud, which loaded down the feet of both men and horses; two nights camping without wood, and finally living on horse meat. Then the Indian village was captured, and the dried beef found there, helped them very much. With all these difficulties the infantry made an average of twenty-six miles a day—one day marching through the rain and mud thirty-five miles. They were marching for something to eat, and found it thanks to the people of Crook City. The shouts of joy that went up at the first approach of succor, in the shape of a beef herd were pleasant to hear.

Soon after, wagons and supplies arrived, and every man immediately was engaged in getting something to eat. It must have been an amusing sight—men mixing flour with water winding dough around sticks, and holding them in the fire to bake their bread.

Some few officers who could muster a frying pan, enjoyed the luxury of "slap-jacks"; and it is said that after the cooks were tried out, the officers went on with the cooking and eating. It took three hours to eat that supper, and they were up early in the morning for the purpose of eating breakfast. They say that after a rest they can again start out, if it is so ordered; but they do not desire to repeat the short ration part. Do not these soldiers who have been marching for nearly two months, who had only a blanket for a bed and bedding, the sky for a roof, and who did their very best to overtake the Indians, deserve the praise of their country men?

Some say the troops have been out generaled by Sitting Bull. Is it by a successful retreat before a smaller force than his own?"

Gen. Crook kept his plans to himself until he wished to reveal them. He remained at Fort Laramie until the middle of October when he left with lieutenants Bourke and Schuyler.

People were trying in every way to find out whether the troops would come in soon, or go out again. One lady asked

the General if she should get her husband ready for the winter campaign. He said "Yes, get him ready." Then her husband, who was home for a few days, asked if he should send his wife East, as he would do if he was to be away. The General said he hadn't better send her home.

It was not till October 13th that he gave a clue, yet that might mean either going out or coming in.

The commanding officer's wife whose guest he was, said in reply to a remark that the telegraph to Custer City would be completed by the next Sunday. "That will be convenient to communicate with our friends there." The General said "They will be gone by that time." The troops had probably already started for Red Cloud.

Gen. Crook with Capt. Egan's company as escort went to "the peak" for a week's hunt, returning October 10th with over sixty deer and antelope, besides other game.

Couriers were left to be sent immediately, if any dispatches came for him while away.

It was surmised that he had consulted Gen. Sherman about the disposal of the troops, and that he did not yet know what would be done; but he told no one, at least, no one but his aides.

He was a hard worker. When poring over a great pile of dispatches after he came in, he said he hadn't had time to read private mail yet.

Gen. Crook could endure almost anything himself, consequently his expeditions were not pleasure trips to any great extent.

Gen. Sheridan was a modest unassuming man. He made the acquaintance of all the officers and ladies at the post, calling soon after his arrival, and again before his departure.

The following are extracts from letters written while waiting in the Black Hills previous to the movement of the troops to Red Cloud, and from there to Fort Laramie where they arrived October 27th.

October 15th. "This morning Gen. Merritt left on a scout, taking with him the 5th Cav., and about two hundred men from the 2nd and 3d Cav. It is expected that they will be away ten or twelve days. Col. Royall is left in command

of the forces here. I am still adjutant of the infantry battalion."

"Some of the country we have passed over is rich in fossils.

Custer City is estimated to have five hundred inhabitants. The houses are mostly built of logs. There are many vacant houses—mining has been suspended to a great extent, for want of water.

I wish you could see us tonight as we are seated by our camp fires—at least a hundred of them in our battalion. I am on the ground with a fire on one side, and a flickering candle on the other. We are in a narrow valley, and upon either side, hills covered with lofty pines, with here and there precipitous rocks.

A small stream of water flows through the center of the valley which is marked by the miner's pick and shovel—reminders of the recent search for gold."

"Don't know whether we will start out on another trip before going to our posts, or not. We are waiting patiently for orders, and can tell nothing as yet of future movements. I am trying to write in a store in Custer City and about forty people are buzzing away.

Will write you a good long letter as soon as we get our tents and are somewhat comfortable."

Another—

"It is amusing to watch the effect of the hardships upon men; some taking to fault finding, and general grumbling, others keeping up under adverse circumstances, in many cases not approving of the movements and the condition all were brought to, but willing to do cheerfully what was inevitable, and trusting that all would end well. Since our arrival where food is abundant, there has been suffering for want of clothing. Our command is virtually in rags, and as to dirt, it is disgusting to all of us. There is plenty of wood but it is fallen and charred timber, which is dirty to handle, and in burning, gives forth a black smoke and soot that enters every pore and gives the command a decidedly dark appearance.

The result of all this hard work and exposure has not been the accomplishment of the end in view, but in my opin-

ion it has not been a failure by any means. We have kept the Indians continually moving, have occupied their best country for hunting, and have prevented them from accumulating any great quantity of stores. Many things might have been improved, but we can see now as we look back, much better than we could the future, months ago.”