

Headquarters Dist of Minn.
Department of the Northwest
Saint Paul Minn. July, 3^d. 1864.

Lieut Col. H. L. Duff
Asst. Surg. Genl.
Present.

Colonel,

That You may be correctly informed of the state of matters connected with the Indian war on the frontiers of Minnesota, Iowa and the Territory of Dakota, I beg leave to submit, very briefly, the following facts:

1st. Shortly after the Sioux outbreak of 1862 on the borders of this state, which was attended with untold horror, and the massacre of nearly eight hundred white men, women & children, I was placed in command of the raw levies hastily thrown forward to check the savages. The battle of Wood Lake a locality sixty or seventy miles above Fort Ridgely, resulted in the total defeat of the concentrated force of the bands concerned in the outrages. About two thousand prisoners of Indians

men, women & children were taken, of whom upwards of three hundred
of the former were tried by a Military Commission appointed by me,
found guilty of participation in the murders and other crimes, and condemn-
ed to be hung. The President subsequently ordered the execution of thirty
eight of these Criminals, who were accordingly hung, and the remainder who
have thus far survived the trying effects of close imprisonment are now in
Military custody at Oswego, Ind. Some two hundred and fifty or
three hundred of the warriors implicated in the outbreak escaped with
their families and joined the upper and powerful bands of Sioux or Dakota
who roamed over the great plains between the upper Missouri and the
British boundary line, subsisting on the Buffalo almost exclusively.
The Govt. recognized the necessity of inflicting proper chastisement upon the
murders, and those bands who had harbored and protected them,
and in pursuance of the Orders of Major General Pope, General Sully
ascended the Missouri river early in 1863, with a column of mounted
troops, and another mixed force of Infantry and Cavalry under my
Command, marched from this direction it being Gen. Pope's intention
that the two expeditions should cooperate and finally unite at Devils
Lake, with a view to such ulterior movements as circumstances might
indicate as proper to be made. In consequence of the extremely low

stage of water in the Missouri, Gen. Sully's Command did not reach
the point of junction designated, and upon my arrival within thirty five
miles of Devils Lake, I ascertained that the great body of the Indians
were on the Missouri bottom. I immediately changed the direction of the
march from Northwest to Southwest, and having one third of my force,
comprising the men & animals least efficient in consequence of fatigue and
over work, in an entrenched camp near Lake Sissie (see accompanying map)
I made forced marches in the direction of the Missouri, fell in with
and fought the concentrated strength of the upper and lower bands of
Sisus, and defeated them in three separate engagements, driving them
across the Missouri River with a great loss in warriors, Subsistence,
Buffalo robes & other clothing and all their transportation amounting
to one hundred and fifty one more waggons, carts etc. If it had been
possible for Gen. Sully to have interposed his force between the retreating
savages and the River, the destruction of the great body of the Indians
would have been rendered certain and the war soon thereafter ended,
But in spite of the efforts of that enterprising and active Officer, the great
obstacles in his way could not be overcome, and I could not open
communication with him. The season was one of unparalleled heat
& drought and both branches of the expedition suffered alike for the

want of good and sufficient water, and of grass for the animals.

Gen. Sully finally reached within a few miles of my line of march.

About a month subsequent to my return from the Missouri, and on the 3^d. of September fell upon and defeated a body of Sioux encamped near the James River, inflicting a severe loss upon them. Since these events occurred the hostile combination has been strengthened by other powerful bands of the Sisseton Sioux or Dakotas, from the South and West of the upper Missouri, who avowed their purpose to prosecute the war, and to put an entire stop to the migration to Idaho by way of the Missouri River and overland.

During the past winter most of the refugee murderers, being entirely destitute of food & clothing, which they lost during the engagements of the previous season as before stated, crossed into British territory, and made their way to Fort Gary and the surrounding settlements, where they were enabled to subsist themselves until spring, by exacting supplies for their ^{own} ~~own~~ subjects. These refugees have for the most part, since the opening of spring, crossed back into our territories and probably joined the hostile camp, which is said to be composed of two thousand lodges, or between four and five thousand Warriors. Genl. Sully is now advancing upon them with a force of nearly six hundred Cavalry & mounted Infantry dispatched by me in compliance with Genl. Pope's Order, to reinforce

him, and about the same amount of strength from his own Dist.
Should he be successful in meeting and inflicting upon these Indians a
severe defeat, it is my opinion, that the formidable Indian war could
soon thereafter be closed, so far as any great demonstrations of strength on
the part of the enemy are concerned, but the frontiers will require to be guarded
for some time to protect the settlers along the extensive line from petty raids.
Should unfortunately there happen a failure to meet and chastise these
Indians from any cause whatever, the whole border will be in great danger
of attacks by large bodies of the savages.

P.S. You have been furnished with an accurate statement of all
the Military forces in this Dist. from which You will perceive that there are
stations along a line several hundred miles in extent, varying from twelve
to twenty miles distant from each other, which are occupied by small detach-
ments. Daily communication is kept up between the small posts, in
order to detect the passage of Indians on their way to the settlements,
the stations being entirely outside and beyond them. In my judgment
it would be exceedingly unsafe to diminish this comparatively small
force, before the termination of the Indian war. The establishment
of a strong post on the James River, and another at Devil Lake,

both of which have been ordered and named by the War Dept.,
will tend greatly to a speedy suppression of hostilities on the part of
the Indians. The garrisons of these posts are to consist of four Comp^{ies}
each of Cavalry and four Companies of Infantry each, so that almost all
of the expeditionary force dispatched from this Dept. to join Gen. Sully,
will be required for the two posts, as the Companies of the 30th Wisconsin
Reg^t who are to build Fort Tadeuswerth, will as soon as relieved by
Companies of the returning expedition, march to join the remainder of
the Regiment under Gen. Sully on the Missouri.

I am Colonel

Very Respectfully

Your obed^t. servant

(sgd) A. A. Sibley

Brig. Gen. com^d



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