

THE NINETEENTH KANSAS CAVALRY IN THE WASHITA CAMPAIGN

An Address by Col. Horace L. Moore Before the Twenty-first Annual Meeting of the Kansas State Historical Society, January 19, 1897.*

During the summers of 1868 and 1869 the western part of Kansas, the southeastern part of Colorado and the northwestern part of Texas were raided over and over again by war parties of what were called the Plains Indians. The Indians engaged in these forays were Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Kiowas, Comanches, northern Cheyennes, Brule and Ogallalla Sioux, and the Pawnees.

On the 10th of August, 1868, they struck the settlements on the Saline River. On the 12th they reached the Solomon and wiped out a settlement where the city of Minneapolis is now situated. In this raid fifteen persons were killed, two wounded and five women carried off. On the same day they attacked Wright's hay camp near Ft. Dodge, raided the Pawnee, and killed two settlers on the Republican. On the 8th of September they captured a train at the Cimarron crossing of the Arkansas River, securing possession of seventeen men, whom burned; and the day following they murdered six men between Sheridan and Ft. Wallace. On the first of September, 1868, the Indians killed four men at Spanish Fork, in Texas, and outraged three women. One of those women was outraged by thirteen Indians and afterward killed and scalped. They left her with the hatchet still sticking in her head. Before leaving, they murdered her four little children. Of the children carried off by the Indians from Texas in 1868, fourteen were frozen to death in captivity.

The total of losses from September 12, 1868, to February 9, 1869, exclusive of casualties incident to military operations, was 158 men murdered, sixteen wounded and forty-one scalped. Three scouts were killed, fourteen women outraged, one man was captured, four women and twenty-four children were carried off. Nearly all of these losses occurred in what we then called western Kansas, although the Saline, Solomon and Republican do not seem so very far west now.

In 1867, the Union Pacific Railroad was built as far west as Fort Hays and, as the graders were constantly being attacked by Indians, the Eighteenth Kansas Cavalry (a battalion of four companies) was mustered into the service of the United States for the purpose of furnishing protection to the laborers on the railroad and to keep the Santa Fe Trail clear for the passage of wagon trains and the overland coaches. The battalion was rendezvoused at Fort Harker,

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near where Ellsworth is situated, on the 15th of July, 1867, I was mustered in with the rank of major in command. At that time, the Asiatic cholera was epidemic on the Plains and the hospitals at Harker were full of soldiers and laborers sick with the cholera.

As soon as the command was mustered into the service and transportation and supplies could be obtained, it marched to the southwest to strike the Arkansas River near Fort Zarah, at the mouth of Walnut Creek. The sick were left at Harker. The afternoon march of the 15th of July developed no new cases of cholera. On the 16th, a long march was made and camp was pitched on the left bank of Walnut Creek, about ten miles above Zarah (Great Bend now). The day brought no new cases and everybody felt cheerful, hoping that the future had nothing worse in store than a meeting with hostile Indians. By eight p. m., supper was over and, in another hour, the camp became a hospital of screaming cholera patients. Men were seized with cramping of the stomach, bowels and muscles of the arms and legs. The doctor and his medicine were powerless to resist the disease. One company had been sent away on a scout as soon as the command reached the camp and, of the three companies remaining in camp, the morning of the 17th found five dead and thirty-six stretched on the ground in a state of collapse. These men had no pulse at the wrist, their hands were shrunken and purple, with the skin in wrinkles and their eyes wide open. The doctor pronounced them in a state of hopeless collapse. By sunrise, a grave had been dug and the dead buried.

Commissary and quartermasters stores were then thrown away and two of the sick (most favorable cases) were put into single ambulance with the command and the remaining thirty-four were put into wagons with blankets under them. A government wagon is wide enough for three men to lie side by side, and long enough for two men at the side, so that each wagon would carry six. In this way, all the sick were taken along. It was necessary to follow up Walnut Creek three or four miles before a crossing could be effected. While this was being done, the sick were examined and not one was found to have died since the cholera camp was left. On this the doctor took new courage and during the balance of the day he was unremitting in his attentions. He went from one wagon to another, giving stimulants where it was possible to get the patient to swallow and details were made to assist him in chafing the hands and feet to restore, if possible, the circulation.

A long march was made on the 17th and camp was finally made on the Arkansas River, above Pawnee Rock. Not a man had died during the day. A buffalo calf was shot, soup made and the sick taken from the wagons and made as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. The night was spent in the most assiduous care of these sick men and, in the morning, a detachment was sent to Fort Larned to notify the commanding officer of the post of the condition of the

command. On arriving at the crossing of the Pawnee Fork (now Larned), the sick were turned over to the United States surgeons, who had established a hospital at this place. Although the thirty-six men were in a state of collapse when they were loaded into the wagons at the camp on Walnut Creek, every one of them lived to be turned over to the doctors at Fort Larned, at noon on the 18th. Their circulation had been restored and they were able to take nourishment. I think this favorable result is entirely unprecedented in the treatment of Asiatic cholera. The doctor, a young contract surgeon, by the name of Squire, from New Hampshire, was attacked with cholera during the night of the 19th. As the command had to move in the morning, the doctor was given his choice, to move with it or remain in the hospital. He chose the latter and on the second day his case terminated fatally.

The command moved up Pawnee Fork without a medical attendant and, on the second day after leaving Fort Larned, one of the sergeants was attacked and died of cholera that night. This was the last fatal case in the command. The hospital steward was attacked at the same time but recovered.

The battalion served four months on the plains, marched about 2200 miles and fought a battle with the Cheyennes on Prairie Dog Creek, a branch of the Republican, in which it suffered a loss of fourteen officers and men killed and wounded.

The depredations of the Indians during the fall of the following year (1868) satisfied the War Department that something more effective than a summer campaign would have to be resorted to, to protect the frontier settlements and teach the Indians that the army was able to punish any tribe that made a pastime of robbery and murder. General Sheridan, who was then in command of the Department of the Missouri, determined on a winter campaign. If there is anything that strikes terror into the heart of the soldier it is a winter campaign. There is no feed for his horse except what he can haul in the train and the roads are generally impassable for trains and artillery. His camp equipage must be cut down all that is possible to save transportation. Tents, camp stores and clothing must give place to commissary stores and, as a general statement, the impediments of the army must be reduced to the lowest point possible.

The battle of Fredericksburg was fought December 13th and the army went into winter quarters where it remained until May 2d following. On the last of September, Mead retreated across the Rapidan from Mine Run, and did not move again until the 4th of May following, when Grant began the Richmond campaign and Sherman began the Atlanta campaign at the same time. The final campaign that resulted in the capture of Richmond began on the 29th of March. The battle of Borodino was fought on the 17th of September, and soon after Napoleon was forced to begin a winter campaign that lost him his army. In a winter campaign was the only hope of subduing

the Indians. In the summer the plains were covered with grass and buffalo. The Indians' forage and rations were everywhere. In the winter the buffalo were in the cañons and mountains, snow covered the grass and blizzards swept the plains.

On the 9th of October, 1868, General Sheridan called on Gov. S. J. Crawford, of Kansas, for a twelve-company regiment of cavalry to be mustered into the United States service for this winter campaign. On the 15th of October General Sherman wrote as follows to General Sheridan:

"As to extermination, it is for the Indians themselves to determine. We don't want to exterminate or even fight them. At best it is an inglorious war, not apt to add much to our fame or personal comfort; and for our soldiers, to whom we owe our first thoughts, it is all danger and extreme labor, without a single compensating advantage. . . . As brave men and as the soldiers of a government which has exhausted its peace efforts, we, in the performance of a most unpleasant duty, accept the war begun by our enemies, and hereby resolve to make its end final. If it results in the utter annihilation of these Indians it is but the result of what they have been warned again and again, and for which they seem fully prepared. I will say nothing and do nothing to restrain our troops from doing what they deem proper on the spot, and will allow no mere vague general charges of cruelty and inhumanity to tie their hands, but will use all the powers confided to me to the end that these Indians, the enemies of our race and of our civilization, shall not again be able to begin and carry on their barbarous warfare on any kind of a pretext that they may choose to allege. I believe that this winter will afford us the opportunity, and that before snow falls these Indians will seek some sort of peace, to be broken next year at their option; but we will not accept their peace, or cease our efforts till all the past acts are both punished and avenged. You may now go ahead in your own way and I will back you with my whole authority, and stand between you and any efforts that may be attempted in your rear to restrain your purpose or check your troops, (See Sen. EX. Doc. No. 18, XLth Cong., 3d Session, p. 5.

This letter of General Sherman's will be understood when it is remembered that the Indian Bureau is part of the Department of the Interior. The Indian Department appointed Indian agents, bought and issued supplies and had entire control of Indian affairs, till an outbreak occurred, when the War Department was called upon to force the hostiles into submission. As soon as the army struck the Indians, "the charges of cruelty and inhumanity," mentioned by General Sherman, were made and reiterated from one end of the country to the other, with the result that the army was called off. Now Sherman promised Sheridan to "back him with his whole authority" and stand between him and the querulous and impracticable humanitarians of the East.

The Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry was called into United States service under instructions received by his excellency S. J. Crawford, governor of Kansas, from Maj. Gen. P. H. Sheridan, dated October 9, 1868. The proclamation of the governor calling for volunteers was dated October 10, 1868, and the regiment was mustered, armed and the organization completed at Topeka, Kansas on the 4th day of

November, by the muster-in of Samuel J. Crawford as colonel. I was mustered in with the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

In obedience to orders from General Sheridan, Captain Norton, D Troop, and Captain Lender, G. Troop, were sent by rail to Fort Hays on the 5th, with their commands, and, under instructions from the same source, the remaining ten companies broke camp at Topeka and marched en route to the mouth of Beaver Creek (the north branch of the North Canadian), where a depot of supplies was to be established by General Sully on the 15th inst. Our route was via Camp Beecher (now Wichita), at the mouth of the Little Arkansas, distance 150 miles, which distance we were to make with a new organization, supplied with five days rations and depended upon procuring forage from the country through which we were to pass, as our limited transportation of fifteen wagons precluded the possibility of carrying any supplies with us. The command arrived at Camp Beecher on the 12th inst. This was the first experience of the regiment in making five days' rations do the work of ten, and, like all first efforts, it was not a complete success. General Sheridan says:

"On November 15 I started for Camp Supply to give general supervision and to participate in the operations. I deemed it best to go in person, as the campaign was an exceptional one—campaigns at such a season having been deemed impracticable and reckless by old and experienced frontiersmen—and I did not like to expose the troops to great hazard without being present myself to judge of their hardships and privations."

The regiment marched from Camp Beecher on the 14th of November, with five days' rations, enroute to Camp Supply; supposed distance 140 miles. On the night of the 16th the command camped on the Chicaskia, and the last of the forage was fed to the animals. On the night of the 18th the regiment camped on Medicine Lodge Creek. A stampede of the animals of B, I and K troops occurred here and about eighty horses were lost.

The regiment moved out of camp on the morning of the 19th without forage for the animals or subsistence for the men, marching through an unexplored region in search of a camp of supplies supposed to be situated somewhere on the Canadian River, and on the night of the 22d camped on Sand Creek, during a heavy fall of snow, in sight of the bluffs of the Cimarron. Buffalo were abundant and thus far the command had subsisted on them. Captain Pliley, A Troop, and Lieutenant Parsons, C Troop, with fifty of the best mounted men of the command, were sent forward from this point to find General Sheridan, if possible, and cause supplies to be sent back to the regiment.

November 23d a blinding snow-storm continued all day. The guides found it impossible to keep the direction and the command was forced to lie in camp.

November 24. The snow this morning was fifteen inches deep. the horses had subsisted on cottonwood bark and limbs and were, by

this time, so much exhausted that the men walked and led them. The country was so broken that, in some instances, ten miles were traveled winding around cañons to make two miles on the line of march. The regiment camped that night at Hackberry Point, on the Cimarron, so named by the men for the abundance of hackberries in the vicinity, which were used for food. The cañons of the Cimarron are not like those of Arizona, which are cut in solid rock and have perpendicular walls, but are like the cañons of the Llano Estacado, or Staked Plain. The Cimarron cuts its way through a plateau of clay or loess and the main stream, together with the innumerable side streams, have cut the whole country into a labyrinth of cañons or deep gulches that are almost impassable. The snow was a foot to eighteen inches deep everywhere. The guide knew no more about the country than any man of the regiment and the only course left was to continue the march, keeping a southwest course as nearly as possible, and keep going until the command got out of the cañon country. It happened about sundown the 24th a bunch of buffalo bulls were seen among the bluffs. The command was halted while the guides stole up on them and shot the whole number. The train failed to come up at night and the command bivouacked on the snow without the usual small supply of blankets.

November 25. The train got in by morning and the regiment was divided. Four hundred and fifty men (the best mounted) crossing the Cimarron at one p. m. and marched in a southwest course in search of Camp Supply. Those horses which were most nearly exhausted, together with the train and sick, were left in camp under command of Major Jenkins, with orders to remain until supplies reached them. The country on the south side of the Cimarron at this point is much broken and the command was forced to reach the table-land above by following up the dry bed of the stream which had cut its way down through the inaccessible bluffs. The men dismounted and leading, single file, wound their way around cliffs and over broken banks for several miles, till a little after sunset and just as the full moon came up they emerged from the cañon, and by climbing a precipitous cliff were enabled to overlook the inhospitable table-land covered with snow. To-night we bivouacked in a small ravine with the never-failing buffalo meat for supper, no salt.

November 26. Still southwest over rolling prairie and through deep cañons, horses perishing by the way, but with stout hearts the command moved forward, one company after another taking their place in front to break the road through the deep snow. The crust today in some places was strong enough to hold up the men. Bivouacked on a nameless stream fifteen miles north of the Canadian.

November 27. Crossed Captain Pliley's trail at noon and bivouacked at night on the Canadian, at a point supposed to be twenty-five miles below the mouth of Beaver Creek. Made supper from wild turkey.

November 28. Moved up the Canadian and at three p. m. the advance came back to the regiment with the welcome news that Camp Supply was in sight. The advance of the command took up the shout, and it was carried back along the column with a vigor which evidenced the fact that each had felt more anxious for the safety of the command than he cared to express. Made camp at sundown, canvas being furnished from the post by General Sheridan. Captain Pliley had arrived on the 25th instant and supplies had been sent to the detachment left at Hackberry Point on the 25th. The detachment arrived at Camp Supply on December 1st. The camp where the train was left was always known among the men as Camp Starvation.

After leaving Camp Beecher the regiment marched 205 miles on three days' forage and five day's rations, consuming fourteen days in making the trip; seventy-five horses perished from cold and want of food. The health of the regiment was good and it endured the hardships of the march without a murmur. We did not lose a man.

Touching the loss of the regiment in the Cimarron cañons, General Sheridan says in his "Memoirs":

"Instead of relying on the guides, Crawford had undertaken to strike through the canons of the Cimarron by what appeared to him a more direct route, and in the deep gorges, filled as they were with snow, he had been floundering about for days without being able to extricate his command. Then, too, the men were out of rations though they had been able to obtain enough buffalo meat to keep from starving."

This was written in 1888. It is better to quote from the general's official report, made at the time, twenty years before he wrote his "Memoirs":

"On November 25, I was relieved from great anxiety by the arrival of Captain Pliley and about thirty men. The regiment had lost its way, and becoming tangled up in the canons of the Cimarron, and in deep snow and out of provisions, it could not make its way out and was in a bad fix. Provisions were immediately sent and good guides to bring it in. It had been subsisting on buffalo for eight or nine days."

The word "good" is important, as it implies that the one sent to Topeka was "no good" and the statement from Colonel Crawford did not rely on the guide till the guide got lost is without foundation. The report was current in the command that when the guide met Sheridan the said guide picked up considerable information as to the way English was spoken by the British army in Flanders on a certain occasion. The general report of the regiment; "Officers and men behaved admirably in the trying condition in which they were placed."

When the regiment arrived at Camp Supply it found a camp prepared. The snow had been cleared off the ground, "A" tents pitched for the men and wall tents for the officers, with hay in every

tent for bedding. This was a palace hotel compared with the cañons of the Cimarron, and General Sheridan had captured the regiment at one blow.

On the 6th of December Captain Norton, D Troop, reported at Camp Supply and was ordered to the command, Captain Moody, M Troop, being detailed for escort duty in his place.

Captain Norton reached Fort Hays on the 4th of November and escorted a train to Camp Supply, arriving on the 22d inst; returned to Fort Dodge and escorted a train to Camp Supply, arriving on the 6th. On the same day, Maj. Chas. Dimon, with one captain, three lieutenants, and 250 men, were detached from the command and left at Camp Supply; this included the dismounted and sick. This detachment was employed during the winter in garrisoning the post and escorting supply trains.

On the morning of the 23d, Custer had been ordered to follow on the back track a trail that came up from the southwest and crossed the Fort Dodge road between Supply and Dodge. The trail led him to an Indian camp on the Washita, some seventy-five miles south of Supply. Custer attacked the camp at daylight on the morning of the 27th of November, and had a hard fight. He lost nineteen officers and men, killed and wounded, with Major Elliott and fifteen men missing. He killed 103 Indian warriors and some of the squaws and children were killed and wounded in the excitement. He captured saddles, buffalo robes, provisions, and 875 horses. These were surrounded and shot. General Custer returned to Camp Supply November 30.

On the 7th of December the whole command marched for Fort Cobb. This included the 19th Kansas, 7th U. S. Cavalry and a company of Osage Indian scouts. The first day's march was to the south bank of Wolf Creek, a distance of ten miles. The snow was still deep and when the command left Supply the temperature was below zero. The second day's march was a little more than thirty miles, and camp was made on Hackberry creek, with plenty of wood for fires. During the night the wind rose, and by morning a fullfledged norther, or blizzard, was on the boards, billed for two nights and a matinee. The country seemed to be full of blizzards. The first had struck the regiment in the cañons; the second while it was in camp at Supply; this was the third. General Sheridan says of No. 3:

“We camped in excellent shape on the creek (Hackberry), and it was well we did, for a norther, or blizzard, struck us in the night. It would have been well to remain in camp till the gale was over, but the time could not be spared. We therefore resumed the march at an early hour next morning, with the expectation of making the south bank of the main Canadian, and there passing the night, as Clark, the guide, assured me that timber was plentiful on that side of the river. The storm greatly impeded us, many of the mules growing discouraged, and some giving out entirely, so we could not get to Clark's ‘good camp’ for with ten hours of utmost effort, only about a half day's distance could be covered, when at last, find-

ing the struggle useless, we were forced to halt for the night in a bleak bottom on the north bank of the river. But no one could sleep for the wind swept over us with unobstructed fury, and the only fuel to be had was a few green bushes. As night fell, a decided change of temperature added much to our misery. The mercury, which had risen when the 'norther' began, again falling to zero. It can easily be imagined that, under the circumstances, the condition of the men was one of extreme discomfort; in truth, they had to tramp up and down the camp all night long to keep from freezing. Anything was a relief to this state of things, so, at the first streak of day, we quit the dreadful place and took up the marsh.'

The next morning the command crossed the Canadian, which was about half a mile wide, by first breaking up the ice with axes and then marching the cavalry through. It took till noon to get the command over. Luckily there was timber on the south side of the stream. Fires were built and clothes thawed out and dried. General Sheridan says in his official report: "We moved due south until we struck the Washita, near Custer's fight on November 27, having crossed the main Canadian with the thermometer about eighteen degrees below zero." The command marched in the afternoon and made camp on the Washita about dark. As wood was abundant, it was determined to lay over here until the storm subsided. The next day, December 11, General Sheridan, with several officers of the Nineteenth and Seventh, visited the battle field to determine, if possible, the fate of Major Elliott and his men. It took but a few moments to discover the bodies on the bank of the tributary of the Washita, called Sergeant-major Creek (as the sergeant-major of the Seventh was one of the killed), on the south side of the battle field. They were lying in a circle, feet in center, and a pile of empty cartridge cases by the side of each man told how dearly he had sold his life. The bodies were stripped of clothing, except the knit undershirt, and the throat of every one of them had the appearance of having been cut. This was caused by the Indians having cut out the thyroid cartilage. None were scalped, and none of the bodies had been molested. The men all lay with their faces down and the back was shot full of arrows. Wagons were sent for and the dead buried that night in a grave dug on the north bank of the river, opposite the scene of battle.

On his way back to camp, Doctor Bailey, of Topeka, surgeon of the Nineteenth, discovered the body of a white woman and a little boy two years old. The woman had been shot in the forehead, and the child killed by striking his head against a tree. The mother had a piece of bread concealed in her bosom, as though she had attempted to escape from camp. The next morning the woman was laid on a blanket on her side and the boy on her arm and the men ordered to march by to see if possibly some one might identify her. It was Mrs. Blinn, captured by the Kiowas, October 6, with a train going from Lyon to Dodge. Her husband was killed at the same time. The body of the woman and child were taken along and finally buried in the government cemetery at Fort Arbuckle. On the 2d of November, a number of Mexican traders had been in Kiowa camp and

she had taken the opportunity to send out a letter by them. It is dated Saturday, November 7, 1868, and reads as follows:

"Kind friends, whoever you may be: I thank you for your kindness to me and my child. You want me to let you know my wishes. If you could only buy us from the Indians with ponies or anything and let me come and stay with you until I can get word to my friends, they would pay you and I would work and do all I could for you. If it is not too far to their camp, and you are not afraid to come, I pray that you will try. They tell me, as near as I can understand, they expect traders to come and they will sell us to them. Can you find out by this man and let me know if it is a white man? If it is Mexicans, I am afraid they would sell us into slavery in Mexico. If you can do nothing for me write to W. T. Herrington, Ottawa, Franklin County, Kansas, my father; tell him we are with the Cheyennes, and they say when the white men make peace we can go home. Tell him to write to the governor of Kansas about it, and for them to make peace. Send this to him. We were taken on the 9th of October on the Arkansas, below Fort Lyon. I cannot tell whether they killed my husband or not. My name is Mrs. Clara Blinn. My little boy, Willie Blinn, is two years old. Do all you can for me. Write to the peace commissioners to make peace this fall. For our sake do all you can and God will bless you. If you can let me hear from you again; let me know what you think about it. Write my father; send him this. Goodbye. Mrs. R. F. Blinn.

"I am as well as can be expected, but my baby is very sick."

The command marched on the morning of the 12th, following the Indian trail down the Washita. This was a hard day. It is well to see what so old a campaigner as General Sheridan thought of it:

"At an early hour on December 12, the command pulled out from its cozy camp and pushed down the valley of the Washita, following immediately on the Indian trail which led in the direction of Fort Cobb, but before going far it was found that the many deep ravines and canons on this trail would delay our train very much, so we moved out of the valley and took the level prairie on the divide. Here the traveling was good and a rapid gait was kept up until midday, when another storm of sleet and snow coming on, it became extremely difficult for the guides to make out the proper course; and, fearing that we might get lost or caught on the open plain without food or water—as we had been on the Canadian—I turned the command back to the valley, resolved to try no more short-cuts involving a risk of a disaster to the expedition. But to get back was no slight task, for a dense fog just now enveloped us, obscuring the land marks. However, we were headed right when the fog set in, and we had the good luck to reach the valley before nightfall, though there was a great deal of floundering about, and also much disputing among the guides as to where the river would be found. Fortunately we struck the stream right at a large grove of timber, and established ourselves admirably. By dark the ground was covered with twelve or fifteen inches, of fresh snow, and as usual, the temperature rose very sensibly while the storm was on. But, after nightfall, the snow ceased and the skies cleared up. Daylight having brought zero weather again, our start on the morning of the 13th was painful work, many of the men freezing their fingers while handling the horse equipment, harness and tents. However, we got off in fairly good season and kept to the trail along the Washita, notwithstanding the frequent digging and bridging necessary to get the wagons over ravines."

Three day's march brought the command within striking distance of a Kiowa camp. The Indians did not suppose it possible for soldiers to move in such weather and were taken by surprise. While

the command was being taken across a bad ravine, some of them appeared with a flag of truce and delivered a letter from General Hazen saying the Kiowas were friendly. The soldiers represented the War Department and Hazen the Indian Department. It was exactly this back-fire and this influence that General Sherman had promised to guard against. There was no way out of it now, however, and Sheridan accepted the promise of the chiefs, Satanta and Lone Wolf, to move their families to Fort Cobb at once, and said the warriors would go with the command. So the march was resumed. In a little while the warriors began to drop out one by one. At last Satanta tried to get away, when he and Lone Wolf were both put under guard. The command reached Fort Cobb on the evening of December 18, and General Sheridan reported only two sick men in the Seventh Cavalry and six in the Nineteenth. He said: "The whole command is in shelter tents as we could not spare transportation for others, but the men now prefer the 'shelter,' even at this season of the year. Everybody is feeling well and enthusiastic."

On the march from Camp Supply to Fort Cobb the command lost 148 horses, perishing from cold and want of food. Brigadier General Forsythe, assistant inspector-general, Department of Missouri, inspected the regiment on the 22d of November and said in his report:

"The soldierly bearing and military appearance of this regiment has made rapid and marked improvement since my inspection at Camp Supply; for this favorable condition of affairs the field officers are entitled and are deserving of special mention and praise. I have the pleasure, in concluding this report, to mention particularly the military bearing and soldierly appearance of Captain Norton's Company D of this regiment. Next to Captain Norton's company, I have the pleasant duty of bringing to your notice Capt. A. J. Pliley's Company A. By reference to the table before given, it will be seen that Captain Pliley was the only officer either in the Seventh Cavalry or Nineteenth Kansas that made the march through from Camp Supply to this post without losing a single horse."

Perhaps some of you have never made the acquaintance of a "shelter" tent. During the war it was always called a "dog" tent. It is made of ducking, and very thin, is about six feet long and five or six feet wide. To pitch the tent the soldier must first hunt a couple of sticks with a fork or crotch, stick them in the ground with the fork a couple of feet from the ground. Now he hunts another stick that will reach from one fork to the other and then stretches the cloth over this, pinning the edges as close to the ground as he can. This leaves his tent open at both ends, with an open space of three or four inches between the cloth and the ground on each side. It always seemed to me that, in zero weather, this tent sacrificed a great deal in the interest of ventilation.

When the command reached Cobb they found no Kiowas, but Sheridan told Satanta and Lone Wolf that he would hang them both on the day following if the tribe did not report by that time. Satanta was put into a Sibley tent with an armed guard around it. He

would wrap his blanket around himself and come out and sit down by the side of the tent, then swaying back and forth, chant the most doleful and monotonous death-song. Then stooping over he would scoop up sand and dirt and put into his mouth. Then he would go around to the south and west side of the tent and, shading his eyes with his hand, would sweep the horizon to discover if possible the approach of his people.* But Satanta's hour had not yet struck. Before sundown the advance of his tribe came in, and before morning the Kiowas were camped around Fort Cobb ready to obey orders. This settled the Kiowas and the Comanches had all reported except one small band. General Evans struck this band on the western base of the Wichita Mountains on Christmas day, killing twenty-five warriors; then what was left reported, some at Fort Cobb and some at Fort Bascom. Messages were sent to Yellow Bear, of the Arapahoes, and Little Robe, of the Cheyennes, to report and the former finally got his band in. This left nothing but the Cheyennes.

The command now moved south to Wichita Mountains, and established Fort Sill, on Cache Creek. The Indians were all required to accompany the command. It was impossible to obtain forage for the animals that had survived the severe winter and hard service, and after the arrival of the command on Cache Creek the horses of the Nineteenth were turned in to the regimental quartermaster, Capt. L. A. Thrasher, and taken to Fort Arbuckle.

While we were in camp at Fort Sill, General Custer took a scout of about fifty picked men and, passing along the southern foot of the Wichita Mountains, marched to the west a distance of one hundred miles or more. He got into a desolate country of sage brush and mesquite, entirely destitute of game and almost without water. As he could discover no signs of the Indians he returned to camp.

On the 12th inst. Colonel Crawford received a leave of absence for twenty days and resigned his commission as colonel to take effect at the expiration of his leave of absence. He left the command on the 15th of February, carrying with him the best wishes of the regiment, both officers and enlisted men. I assumed command of the regiment by virtue of seniority of rank.

On the 2d of March, 1869, the Nineteenth Kansas and the Seventh Cavalry marched from Fort Sill with intention to find Little Robe's band of Cheyennes. The command marched to the west, and on the second day out camped at Old Camp Radziminski, a camp where the Second Cavalry, (now Fifth Cavalry), under Major Van Dorn, wintered, before the war. The course was still west across the North Fork of the Red River and across the Salt Fork of the Red River, till the command reached Gypsum Creek. Here the command was divided. Most of the train, and all the footsore and dis-

* When the Kiowa people had failed to come to Fort Cobb as they had promised, General Sheridan had threatened to hang Lone Wolf and Satanta if their people did not come in and Satanta's son had been sent with a messenger to the tribe to that effect.

abled were sent to the north up the North Fork and along the state line, with orders to procure commissary stores and halt on the Washita till joined by the balance of the command.

The Seventh and Nineteenth then pushed on up the Salt Fork and on the 6th of March struck the trail of the Indians. It was as broad and easy to follow as an ordinary country road. The scanty rations were now reduced one-half, and the pursuit began in earnest. At the head waters of the Salt Fork the trail turned north and skirted along the foot of the Llano Estacado. The trail led through a sandy mesquite country, entirely without game, although the streams coming out of the staked plains furnished abundance of water. By the 12th of March rations were reduced again. The mules were now dying very fast of starvation, as they had nothing to live on except the buds and bark of cottonwood trees cut down for them to browse on. Every morning the mules and horses that were unable to travel were killed by cutting their throats, and the extra wagons were run together and set on fire. On the 17th the command came onto Indian camp fires with the embers still smouldering. The rations were all exhausted on the 18th, and the men subsisted from that on, on mule meat, without bread or salt.

On the afternoon of the 20th, the Nineteenth Kansas came in sight of a band of ponies off the west of the line of march, which was now in a northeast direction. In a few minutes Indians began to cross the line of march in front of the command, going with all haste towards the herd. The regiment quickened its pace and I directed the line of march to the point from which the Indians were coming. In another mile the head of the column came upon a low bluff overlooking the bottom of the Sweetwater and saw a group of 250 Cheyenne lodges stretching up and down the stream and not more than 100 yards from the bluff. The men thought of the long marches, the short rations, the cold storms, of Mrs. Blinn and her little boy, of the hundred murders in Kansas, and, when the order "left front into line" was given the rear companies came over the ground like athletes. But "there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip." Lieutenant Cook, Seventh Cavalry, rode up to the commanding officer, and, touching his hat, said, "The general sends his compliments, with instructions not to fire on the Indians." It was a wet blanket, saturated with ice water. In a minute another aide came with orders to march the command a little way up stream and down into the valley to rest. The order was executed and the regiment formed in columns of companies with orders to rest. The men laid down on the ground or sat on logs but always with their carbines in hand. Custer was close by, sitting in the center of a circle of Indian chiefs holding a powwow. In two or three minutes an officer of the Seventh came up and in a low tone asked that a few officers put on their side-arms and drop down one at a time to listen to the talk. While Custer talked he watched the officers as they gathered around, and in a few minutes he got up onto his feet and said, "Take these In-

dians prisoners." There was a short but pretty sharp struggle, and a guard with loaded guns formed a line around these half-dozen chiefs, and Custer continued the talk. But he had pulled out another stop. The tone was different. He told them they had two white women of Kansas, and they must deliver them up to him. They had denied this before, but now they admitted it, and said the women were at another camp, fifteen miles further down the creek. He told them to instruct the people to pick up this camp and move down to the camp mentioned and we would come the next day and get the women.

As soon as the chiefs were taken prisoners, the warriors mounted their ponies, and armed with guns or bows and arrows, circled around the bivouac of the troops. They looked very brave and warlike. They wore head dresses of eagle feathers, clean buckskin leggings and moccasins, and buckskin coats trimmed with ample fringe. Lieutenant Johnson, commissary of the Nineteenth, watched them awhile and then remarked: "This is the farthest I ever walked to see a circus." In a surprisingly short time after Custer gave them permission the whole camp was pulled down, and loaded onto the ponies, and not an Indian was in sight except a half-dozen held by the guards.

Another night of stout hearts but restless stomachs, and in the morning the command began a march of fifteen miles down the Sweetwater to the other camp. The trail was broad and fresh for five miles and then it began to thin out and get dimmer and dimmer, until at the end of ten miles not a blade of grass was broken. At the end of fifteen miles an old camp was reached, but no Indians had been there for two months. The regiment bivouacked for the night and General Custer had the head chief taken down to the creek, a riata put around his neck and the other end thrown over the limb of a tree. A couple of soldiers took hold of the other end of the rope, and, by pulling gently, lifted him onto his toes. He was let down, and Romeo, the interpreter, explained to him that, when he was pulled up clear from the ground and left there he would be hung.

The grizzly old savage seemed to understand the matter fully, and then Custer told him if they did not bring those women in by the time the sun got within a hand's breadth of the horizon the next day he would hang the chiefs on those trees. He let the old chief's son go to carry the mandate to the tribe. It was a long night but everybody knew the next afternoon would settle the matter in some way. As the afternoon drew on the men climbed the hills around the camp, watching the horizon, and about four p. m. a mounted Indian came onto a ridge a mile away. He waited a few minutes, and then beckoning with his hand to some one behind him he came onto the next ridge, and another Indian came onto the ridge he left. There was another pause, then the two Indians moved up and a third came in sight. They came up slowly in this way till at last a group of a dozen came in sight, and with a glass it could be seen that there were

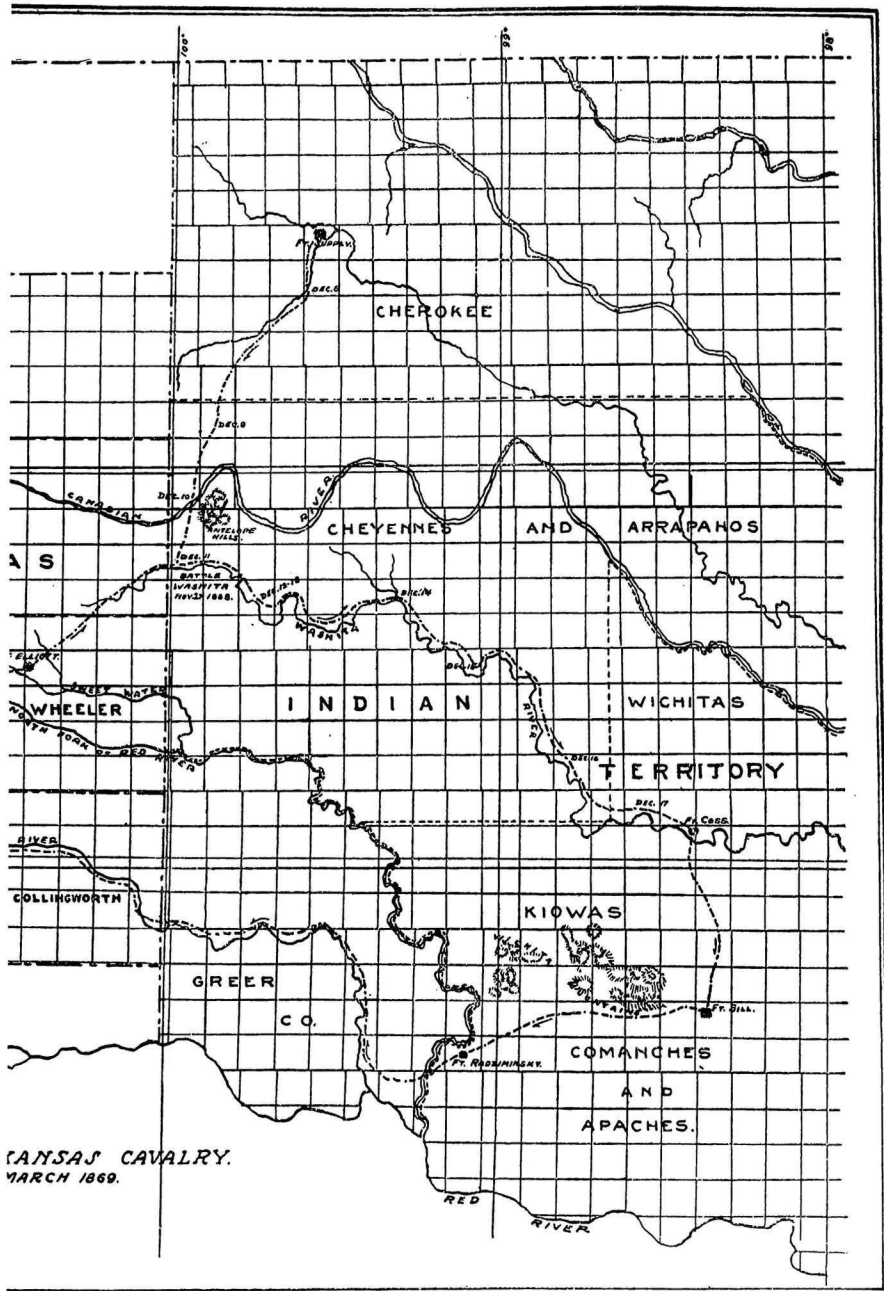
two persons on one of the ponies. These were the women. The Indians brought them to within about 200 yards of the camp, where they slid off the ponies, and Romeo, the interpreter, who had met the Indians there, told the women to come in. They came down the hill clinging to each other, as though determined not to be separated whatever might occur. I met them at the foot of the hill, and taking the elder lady by the hand asked if she was Mrs. Morgan. She said she was and introduced the other, Miss White. She then asked, "Are we free now?" I told her they were and she asked, "Where is my husband?" I told her he was at Hays and recovering from his wounds. Next question: "Where is my brother?" I told her he was in camp, but did not tell her that we had to put him under guard to keep him from marring all by shooting the first Indian he saw. Miss White asked no questions about her people. She knew they were all dead before she was carried away. Custer had an "A" tent, which he brought along for headquarters, and this was turned over to the women.

I forgot to say that on the trip a scouting party had chased an Indian who got away from them, but he lost a bundle, which was thrown into one of the wagons. On examination it proved to be some stuff that he had bought of some of the traders at the Fort. It contained calico, needles, thread, beads and a variety of things. The bundle was given to the women, and in a surprisingly short time they had a new calico dress apiece. The story the women told us of their hardships, the cruelty of the squaws, the slavery to which they were subjected, their suffering during the long flight of the Indians to escape the troops, ought to cure all the humanitarians in the world. The women told us the Indians had been killing their dogs and living on the flesh for the last six weeks.

At the retreat that night, while the women stood in front of their tent to see the guard mounted, the band played "Home, Sweet Home." The command marched the next morning for the rendezvous on the Wichita. It was a couple of days' march, but when the end came there was coffee, bacon, hard bread and canned goods. Any one of these was a feast for a king. From Washita to Supply, Supply to Dodge, Dodge to Hays, where the women were sent home to Minneapolis, and the Nineteenth was mustered out of the service. The Indian prisoners were sent to Sill and soon after the Cheyennes reported there and went onto their reservations.

The generals had a good word for the Kansas volunteers and the work they had done. General Sheridan:

"I am now able to report that there has been a fulfillment of all the conditions which we had in view when we commenced our winter's campaign last November, namely, punishment was inflicted; property destroyed; the Indians disabused of the idea that winter would bring security; and all the tribes south of the Platte forced on the reservations set apart for them by the Government, where they are in tangible shape for the good work of civilization, education, and religious instruction. I cannot speak too



highly of the patient and cheerful conduct of the troops under my command; they were many times pinched by hunger and numbed by cold; sometimes living in holes below the surface of the prairie, dug to keep them from freezing; at other times pursuing the savages and living on the flesh of mules. In all these trying conditions the troops were always cheerful and willing and the officers full of esprit."

General Custer says in his official report:

"The point at which we found the Cheyenne village was in Texas, on the Sweetwater, about ten miles west of the state line. Before closing my report, I desire to call the attention of the major general commanding to the unwavering good conduct of this command since it undertook the march. We started with all the rations and forage that could be obtained, neither sufficient for the time which we have already been out. First, it became necessary to reduce the amount of rations; afterwards, a still greater reduction was necessary and tonight most of my men made their suppers from the flesh of mules that had died on the march today from starvation. When called upon to move in light marching order, they abandoned tents and blankets without a murmur, although much of the march has been made during the severest winter weather I have experienced in this latitude.

"The horses and mules of this command have subsisted day after day upon nothing but green cottonwood bark. During all these privations the officers and men maintain a most cheerful spirit, and I know not which I admire most, their gallantry in battle or the patient but unwavering perseverance and energy with which they have withstood the many disagreeable ordeals of this campaign.

"As the term of service of the Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry is approaching its termination, and I may not again have the satisfaction of commanding them during active operation, I desire to commend them—officers and men—to the favorable notice of the commanding general. Serving on foot, they have marched in a manner and at a rate that would put some of the regular regiments of infantry to blush. Instead of crying but for empty wagons to transport them, each morning every man marched with his troop, and, what might be taken as an example by some of the line officers of the regular infantry, company officers marched regularly on foot at the head of their respective companies; and now, when approaching the termination of a march of over three hundred miles, on greatly deficient rations, I have yet to see the first straggler.

"In obtaining the release of the captive white women, and that, too without ransom or the loss of a single man, the men of my command and particularly those of the Nineteenth Kansas, who were called into service owing to the murders and depredations of which the capture of these women formed a part, feel more fully repaid for the hardships they have endured than if they had survived an overwhelming victory over the Indians."

The expedition resulted in forcing the Kiowas, Comanches, Cheyennes and Arapahoes onto their reservations, and since then the frontier settlements of Kansas have been practically free from the depredations of Indians.

The campaign was a most arduous one, prosecuted without adequate camp equipage in the midst of winter, and much of the time with an exhausted commissariat. The regiments of Kansas have glorified our state on a hundred battle-fields, but none served her more faithfully or endured more in her cause than the *Nineteenth Kansas Cavalry*.