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BAD HAND: THE MILITARY CAREER OF  
RANALD SLIDELL MACKENZIE, 1871-1889

By  
Lessing H. Nohl, Jr.

A Dissertation  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in History

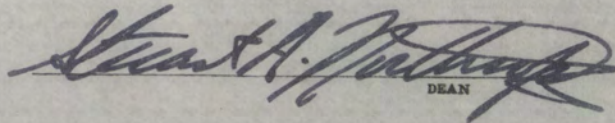
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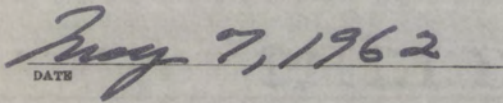
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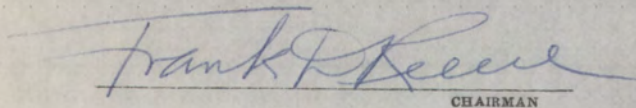
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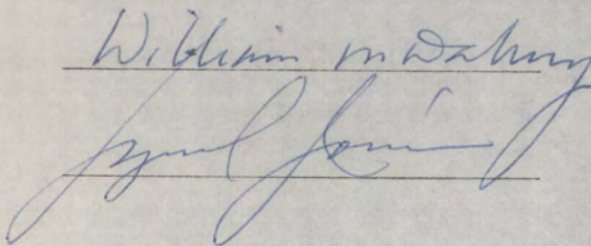
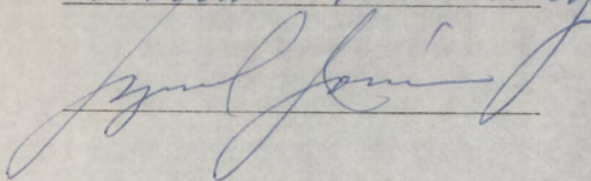
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## MAPS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Although abbreviations used in the text are explained in footnotes, the following list may prove helpful for quick reference. A fuller explanation of the sources will be found in the bibliography.

- ACP The Appointment, Commission, and Personal files of Record Group 94, National Archives.
- AGO The Office of the Adjutant General. This is Record Group 94, National Archives.
- DAB Dictionary of American Biography.
- OR Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies.
- RG Record Group. The major file divisions used in the military records of the National Archives.
- RSI Report of the Secretary of Interior.
- RSW Report of the Secretary of War.



## PREFACE

Few army officers of the post-Civil War era contributed more to the destruction of the Indian barrier to westward expansion than did Brig. Gen. Ranald Slidell Mackenzie. Yet, despite his importance to the military history of the American frontier, little is known of the man. Few if any students have exploited archival materials, while an absence of Mackenzie's personal papers has encouraged superficial sketches of his career.

While the general's personal papers remain undiscovered, this dissertation attempts the first extended synthesis and interpretation of Mackenzie's military career from 1871 to 1889--the years of his maturity, decline, and death. The absence of personal correspondence naturally required a dependence on the memoirs of contemporaries and, especially, on archival sources. This study therefore incorporates much new data: items such as the heretofore missing report made by Mackenzie on the campaign of 1874 and the fight in Palo Duro Canyon. It also offers, for the first time, a synthesis of the confused stories of the Dull Knife battle in 1876--which accounts for the greater amount of detail in that chapter. The work further includes the hitherto unwritten description of Mackenzie's mental breakdown, its probable cause and effects. In most cases, secondary works were used only for



background and the primary data they contained. But, despite the varied material embraced by the study, or whatever its merit as a synthesis, it does not greatly alter existing interpretations of Mackenzie. Neither does it purport to be a biography of the general, or the definitive word on his military career. Such is not possible until personal papers come to light.

In keeping with the utilization of new material, the dissertation includes several rare photographs and maps. The frontispiece photograph of Mackenzie--taken at about age 25--is part of the Brady Collection in the National Archives. The second photograph (on page 297) of the general was taken when he was about 40 years old. The original may be found among the Signal Corps pictures in the National Archives. Also, the photographs of the Dull Knife battlefield (on pages 184 and 185) are probably the best ever taken of the site. They appear in the following issues of Motor Travel magazine: Volume XXII, 3 (June, 1930), 16; XXII, 6 (September, 1930), 9; XXII, 8 (November, 1930), 17; XXIII, 3 (June, 1931), 20. In addition, the sketch map of the Dull Knife battle (on page 201)--despite inaccuracies--is probably the best ever published. Drawn in 1930 by James S. McClellan, an ex-sergeant who participated in the engagement, the map may be found in Motor Travel, XXII, 1 (February, 1931), 21. Even rarer are the maps on pages 35 and 65. They were accidentally found in the Still Photograph Section of the National Archives and probably have never been pub-



lished. The map on page 35 is an exact duplicate of the original, while that on page 65 required re-touching and minor modification to make it more legible. Finally, the map of the Mackenzie campaign area of 1872-74 (on page 109) is a variation of one found in the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, Texas.

As in any such undertaking, many people contributed to its completion. Had it not been for the devoted labors of Lucille Nohl, the study could not have been started. Without the generous assistance of Mr. and Mrs. Oscar B. Huffman of Nambe, New Mexico, Mrs. W. C. Duncan of Wichita Falls, Texas, and Mr. Louis Nohl of Olive, California, it would not have been completed. Moreover, the technical and material aid extended by James B. and Jaffa D. Craig of Albuquerque, New Mexico, proved of great value. Mr. Edward S. Wallace of East Haddam, Connecticut offered his knowledge of the subject, as did Truman Smith of Fairfield, Connecticut. The generous cooperation of Wyllis E. Wright, librarian at Williams College, is also gratefully acknowledged. Not a little appreciation is due Dr. Minna C. Wilkins of the Staten Island Historical Society for unearthing information on Mackenzie's years of retirement. Mr. W. B. Booth of San Antonio, Texas, and Mrs. John J. Woodriff of Somerset, Virginia also unselfishly offered valuable data. For the Dull Knife portion of the study, Mr. O. W. Judge of Casper, Wyoming graciously extended the fruits of his research. Mrs. Sara K. Jackson and Mr. Milton Chamberlain at the National



Archives proved invaluable assistants by keeping a steady flow of documents crossing the researcher's table. The problems of research were also eased by the fine cooperation of the personnel in the reference department of the University of New Mexico library. And, finally, thanks are due Dr. Frank D. Reeve of the University of New Mexico, for directing the study, as well as to Doctors William Minor Dabney and Miguel Jorrin for serving on the dissertation committee.



## CHAPTER I

### THE COLONEL AND THE REGIMENT

The 4th U. S. Cavalry opened the most famous chapter in its history on February 25, 1871 when Brevet Brig. Gen. Ranald Slidell Mackenzie assumed command of the regiment at Fort Concho, Texas. Probably few men in the outfit had not heard of their new colonel, that beardless beau sabreur whose exploits in the Civil War led General Grant to regard him as "the most promising young officer in the army."<sup>1</sup> Young he was, for at less than 31 the dashing Mackenzie assumed his new command as the second youngest colonel in the service.<sup>2</sup> Despite his youth, Ranald S. Mackenzie brought to the 4th Cavalry a character and energy that, for the next 12 years, was to forge the finest mounted regiment in the army.

Although Mackenzie's reputation as a man of action

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<sup>1</sup>Ulysses S. Grant, Personal Memoirs, ed. E. B. Long (2 vols.; Cleveland & New York: The World Publishing Co., c1952), II, 541.

<sup>2</sup>G. W. Cullum, Biographical Register of the Officers and Graduates of the U. S. Military Academy, 1802-1890 (2 vols.; 3rd ed.; Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1891), II, 843. Cf., Capt. Robert G. Carter, On the Border with Mackenzie, or: Winning West Texas from the Comanches (Washington: Eynon Printing Co., 1935), p. 540. Carter was Mackenzie's field adjutant in the early 1870's, and his book is the standard work on Mackenzie.



preceded him to the 4th Cavalry, the regiment must have been impressed by the handsome, erect figure who rode into Fort Concho on that February day in 1871. While he weighed no more than 145 pounds, Ranald Mackenzie stood 5 feet 9 or 10 inches in height.<sup>3</sup> Beneath straight brown hair his "piercing" light gray eyes gave direction to quick but graceful movements. His frank, esthetic face revealed both a deep sensitivity and a determination that brooked no compromise. But, the colonel also owned a pleasant, "human smile," although he seldom laughed or spoke loudly. He seemed too busy for conversation.<sup>4</sup>

Nor could the regiment fail to notice Mackenzie's nervous animation, movements that warned of an unstable temperament. The men would soon learn the danger signals of its eruption. Whenever agitated, the colonel betrayed his "explosive" irascibility by snapping the stumps of the first two fingers of his right hand, a disfigurement left by a Confederate projectile at the siege of Petersburg in

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<sup>3</sup>Capt. Robert G. Carter, "General Ranald Mackenzie," Corral Dust (Washington Westerners), II, 1 (Mar., 1957), 1-6. Letter from Charles A. P. Hatfield in Motor Travel, XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 19, 22. John F. Finerty, Warpath and Bivouac, or: The Conquest of the Sioux (Chicago: Donohue & Henneberry, c1880), p. 291.

<sup>4</sup>Hatfield's letter in Motor Travel, XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 19, 22. Carter, On the Border, passim.



1864.<sup>5</sup> This mannerism--often accompanied by a piping, "reedy" voice, almost like that of a woman--revealed the colonel's excitement or displeasure.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Mackenzie's abbreviated hand became a trademark that led the regiment to dub him "Three Finger Jack" and the Indians of the northern plains to know him as "Bad Hand."<sup>7</sup> This then was Ranald S. Mackenzie. Irritable, nervous, an exacting disciplinarian, but a leader of men who was neither petty nor malicious.<sup>8</sup>

"Mad Mackenzie" possessed a genius for command, and came to the 4th Cavalry well equipped by heritage and training to lead a fighting regiment.<sup>9</sup> He was born in New York

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<sup>5</sup>Joseph H. Dorst, "Ranald Slidell Mackenzie," Twentieth Annual Reunion of the Association of Graduates, U. S. Military Academy, 1889 (East Saginaw, Michigan: Evening News & Binding House, 1889), p. 6. Dorst probably enjoyed a closer friendship with the general than any of Mackenzie's subordinates. Dorst doubtless used the general's letters and papers to write this article. Capt. Robert G. Carter, The Old Sergeant's Story (New York: Frederick H. Hitchcock, 1926), p. 22. Hatfield's letter in Motor Travel, XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 19, 22. James Parker, The Old Army: Memories, 1872-1918 (Philadelphia: Dorrance & Co., c1929), p. 48. Parker also served as a lieutenant in the 4th Cavalry.

<sup>6</sup>Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 22. Neil Erickson, "Sgt. Neil Erickson and the Apaches," The Westerners Brand Book (Los Angeles Corral, 1948), p. 122.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. James S. McClellan's statements in Motor Travel, XXI, 12 (Mar., 1930), 20. Finerty, Warpath and Bivouac, p. 291.

<sup>8</sup>John B. Charlton's comments in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 62. Carter, On the Border, pp. 218-219, 459-460. Maj. William A. Thompson, "Scouting with Mackenzie," Cavalry Journal, X, 39 (Dec., 1897), 433.

<sup>9</sup>John Chapman, "Fort Concho," Southwest Review, XXV, 3 (Apr., 1940), 272. Quotes an old sergeant.



City on July 27, 1840, the eldest son of Alexander Slidell Mackenzie and Catherine Alexander Robinson. His father, a prominent naval officer, added the name Mackenzie out of regard for a maternal uncle.<sup>10</sup> Besides a career in the navy, the elder Mackenzie enjoyed popularity as the "sprightly and humorous" author of A Year in Spain, as well as books on the lives of John Paul Jones and Oliver Hazard Perry.<sup>11</sup> Most Americans, however, probably knew Ranald's father as the erratic and suspicious disciplinarian who, as captain of the brig Somers in 1842, hanged the young son of the Secretary of War for plotting mutiny. Although a court martial upheld Commander Mackenzie's action, he seems to have transmitted his diffident and uncompromising nature (if not emotional instability) to young Ranald--without developing his own literary talents and sense of humor in the boy.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Allen Johnson, et al. (eds.), Dictionary of American Biography (22 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, c1928), XII, 90. Hereinafter this work will be cited as DAB. Edward S. Wallace, "Border Warrior," American Heritage, IX, 4 (June, 1958), 22-25.

<sup>11</sup>DAB, XII, 90-91. E. B. Parsons, Secretary of the Class of 1859, Williams College, Class Report for 1884 (Located at the library of Williams College). Hereinafter these documents will be cited as Class Reports. Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 1. Wallace, American Heritage, pp. 22-25.

<sup>12</sup>Apparently Mackenzie kept au courant with the best literature and was an "acute and discriminating critic." See Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, p. 73. Cf., Army and Navy Journal, XXVI (Jan. 26, 1889). Wallace, American Heritage, pp. 22-23. DAB, XII, 90-91.



The mother's side of the family probably contributed more tender influences. Catherine Mackenzie, granddaughter of Lady Catherine Alexander and Col. William Duer of Revolutionary War fame, was the daughter of John Duer, one of the ablest jurists in the United States.<sup>13</sup> Under his mother's guidance, Ranald learned truthfulness, honor, and that he must never hurt anyone weaker or smaller than himself.<sup>14</sup> It is therefore probable that the strong vein of gentleness and sensitivity that ran through Ranald's character stemmed from his mother.

Ranald also felt the influence of several lawyers. One of them, a paternal uncle named John Slidell, later served as Confederate commissioner to France during the Civil War and became famous for his involvement in the Mason-Slidell incident of 1862.<sup>15</sup> Another uncle, Thomas Slidell, whose sister married Commodore Matthew C. Perry, was a Yale graduate and later Chief Justice of Louisiana.<sup>16</sup> Other legal influences probably came from Ranald's maternal grandfather, Judge John Duer, and his brother William Alexander Duer, who made his mark in both jurisprudence and education.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 1. Wallace, American Heritage, pp. 22-23. DAB, V, 485-486.

<sup>14</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, pp. 1, 19.

<sup>15</sup>DAB, XII, 90-91. Wallace, American Heritage, pp. 22-23.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid. DAB, XII, 90-91.

<sup>17</sup>DAB, V, 485-486.



Be that as it may, the military tradition held sway in the Mackenzie family. Both of Ranald's brothers followed in the maritime footsteps of their father. Alexander Slidell Mackenzie, Jr., two years younger than Ranald, entered the navy in 1855 as a midshipman. After rising to the rank of lieutenant commander, however, "Sandy" Mackenzie died leading a charge against Formosan natives in 1867.<sup>18</sup> The youngest brother, Morris Robinson Slidell Mackenzie, was graduated from the Naval Academy in 1866 and attained the rank of rear admiral before his death in 1915.<sup>19</sup> Ranald's only sister, Harriet, remained a spinster. It was "Aunt Hattie Mac," as she was known in the family, and her brother Morris, who tended Ranald when insanity haunted the last six years of his life.<sup>20</sup>

Although very little is known of Ranald's childhood (as indeed his entire personal life), it is certain that after his birth the Mackenzies moved to a farm along the Hudson River between Tarrytown and Sing Sing, New York.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Appleton's Cyclopedia of American Biography (7 vols.; New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1888-1901), IV, 132. DAB, XII, 90-91. Letter from Mrs. John J. Woodruff, Somerset, Virginia, to Nohl, Nov. 10, 1961. As a child Mrs. Woodruff visited "cousin Ranald" and his sister.

<sup>19</sup>Who Was Who in America (3 vols.; Chicago: A. N. Marquis Co., 1943-1960), I, 763. DAB, XII, 90-91.

<sup>20</sup>Class Report for 1887, Williams College. Letter from Minna C. Wilkins, Staten Island Historical Society, to Nohl, spring, 1961. Mrs. John J. Woodruff to Nohl, Nov. 10, 1961.

<sup>21</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 1. Class Report for 1884, Williams College. Wallace, American Heritage, pp. 22-23.



The boy spent the first nine years of his life on the farm where, at age three, he suffered a slight sunstroke that doctors later thought might have damaged his brain.<sup>22</sup> At any rate, he was never thoroughly strong for the next 12 years. Any long confinement to the house brought on headaches and depressed spirits.<sup>23</sup> To make matters worse, the death of his father in 1848 visited financial hardship on the family. Unable to maintain residence on the Hudson, Ranald's mother moved her children--in the spring of 1848--to or near the home of her uncle, William Alexander Duer, in Morristown, New Jersey.<sup>24</sup> This change of fortune seems to have had little or no effect on Ranald's education, however. At age 15, after he had "fitted" for college at Maurice's School at Sing Sing, the lad agreed with his uncles that law should be his career. So, in the fall of 1855, the frail, shy, Ranald entered Williams College.<sup>25</sup>

With his quiet manner and modest speech (with just a trace of a lisp), he soon won the respect and affection of his classmates at Williams College.<sup>26</sup> "Good fellow" that he was, Ranald joined the Kappa Alpha Society. And, on at

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<sup>22</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, pp. 1, 18.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 2. Wallace, American Heritage, pp. 22-25.

<sup>25</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 2.

<sup>26</sup>Letter, Washington Gladden to L. W. Spring, July 15, 1913, in Leverett Wilson Spring, A History of Williams College (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1917), p. 205.



least one occasion, he paid a fine of two dollars for disturbing the rooms of freshmen.<sup>27</sup> But Ranald failed to demonstrate at Williams the intellect with which he was later credited. Instead, he preferred to bask in his youngest brother's "brilliance of mind and manner."<sup>28</sup>

During his third year at Williams, however, Mackenzie wrote a paper entitled "Military Tactics" which he was to present at the Junior Rhetorical Exhibition on or about June 1, 1858.<sup>29</sup> He failed to appear. Although the death of William A. Duer on May 30 probably explains Mackenzie's absence from the Exhibition, he had already decided to leave Williams College. To relieve his mother's financial burden, Ranald asked her to get him an appointment to the United States Military Academy.<sup>30</sup> She did so, and on July 1, 1858 young Mackenzie began his career at West Point.<sup>31</sup> His classmates at Williams College felt both proud and sorry to lose

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<sup>27</sup>Letter from Wyllis E. Wright, Librarian at Williams College to Nohl, Dec. 6, 1960. Mr. Wright gleaned his information from college records, class and faculty reports.

<sup>28</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 2. Washington Gladden to Spring, in History of Williams College, p. 205.

<sup>29</sup>Wright to Nohl, Dec. 6, 1960.

<sup>30</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 2. Class Report for 1884, Williams College.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid. Letter from West Point Library to Nohl, spring, 1961. Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 2.



such a "frank and popular" student.<sup>32</sup>

At West Point Mackenzie displayed much the same character. He remained just as "shy and reserved," his speech still "slow and a little indistinct," his manner "diffident and hesitating."<sup>33</sup> But, unlike the irascibility of his later years, Ranald was slow to anger--unless he suspected intentional insult to his honor. In fact, cadets knew him as "sociable" and "full of good nature," characteristics that earned him more than the average number of demerits.<sup>34</sup> Instructors, on the other hand, found him an apt student, much to the surprise of his mother and uncles. Under Oliver O. Howard and G. K. Warren, Mackenzie became a "master" of mathematics.<sup>35</sup> He grew so proficient with numbers that his senior year found him an acting professor of mathematics.<sup>36</sup>

By that time the Civil War was in full swing. But, while Mackenzie labored with chalk and pen, older cadets

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<sup>32</sup>Washington Gladden in Spring, History of Williams College, p. 205.

<sup>33</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>35</sup>Letter from Lt. Col. G. K. Warren to Adj. Gen. R. C. Drum, Oct. 29, 1880, in Records of the Office of the Adjutant General (Record Group 94), Appointment, Commission, and Personal File of Ranald S. Mackenzie, National Archives, Washington, D. C. Hereinafter this important source will be cited as AGO, ACP File. Record Groups will be shortened to RG.

<sup>36</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 3.



like George A. Custer (class of 1861) dashed off to the front and glory. Mackenzie's chance did not come until July 1, 1862 when he took his diploma at the head of a class of 28 graduates.<sup>37</sup> Seventeen days later Mackenzie found himself posted as a second lieutenant of Engineers in the Army of the Potomac. And, on August 2, 1862, at Kelly's Ford, the young subaltern faced enemy fire for the first time.<sup>38</sup>

From then until Appomattox Courthouse, Ranald S. Mackenzie amassed a record perhaps unparalleled in the annals of the United States Army. For almost three years his was a constant diet of violence. He fought at Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg--in short, nearly every major engagement of the Eastern theater found Mackenzie present, "altogether heroic and totally indifferent to danger."<sup>39</sup> He shed much blood along the way. From

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid. Letter from West Point to Nohl, spring, 1961.

<sup>38</sup>Statement of service in AGO, ACP File, National Archives. This five-page resumé of his career is a part of the regular ACP File. Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 840. Cf., Francis B. Heitman, Historical Register and Dictionary of the U. S. Army (2 vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1903), I, 672.

<sup>39</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 840. Heitman, Historical Register, I, 672. For more specific data, see U. S., War Department, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (129 vols.; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1900), Index volume. Hereinafter this work will be cited as OR. See statements of Hatfield and McClellan in Motor Travel, XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 19, 22.



Second Bull Run on August 29, 1862, until Cedar Creek on October 19, 1864, the impetuous Mackenzie collected six wounds.<sup>40</sup> Only a Comanche arrow awaited on the Staked Plains of Texas to round out his assortment of scars and make him probably the "best wounded man in the army."<sup>41</sup>

Such service brought an almost phenomenal series of promotions. He became colonel of the 2nd Connecticut Volunteer Heavy Artillery before his twenty-fourth birthday.<sup>42</sup> By his twenty-fifth, he rose to the rank of brevet major general of volunteers.<sup>43</sup> Mackenzie also numbered a regular army commission as brigadier general among his seven brevets for "gallant and meritorious service."<sup>44</sup> These promotions, as those of his entire career, came with little or no personal solicitation<sup>45</sup>—although politicians showed an interest

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<sup>40</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 840-843. Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, pp. 4-10. Class Report for 1884, Williams College. Ibid., 1865.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 1875. Cf., Wallace, American Heritage, pp. 22-25.

<sup>42</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 840-842. Heitman, Historical Register, I, 672. Theodore F. Vaill, History of the Second Connecticut Volunteer Heavy Artillery, Originally the Nineteenth Connecticut Volunteers (Winsted, Connecticut: n. p., 1868), passim.

<sup>43</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 840-842. Heitman, Historical Register, I, 672.

<sup>44</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>45</sup>Grant, Memoirs, II, 541. Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 842. Albuquerque Review, Oct. 28, 1882, p. 3.



in his advancement during the latter years of his service. He could have gained greater recognition throughout his career had it not been for modesty, an almost "temperamental aversion" to publicity that Mackenzie carried to his grave.<sup>46</sup>

In the weeks that followed Appomattox, however, there was little publicity to dodge. As a brevet major general of volunteers, Mackenzie merely conducted the routine administration of a cavalry corps he commanded. He gave up active duty on August 11, 1865, and awaited orders for a new assignment. When none came by mid-January, 1866, the general mustered out of the service--only to return six weeks later at his permanent rank of captain of Engineers. Although he doubtless preferred a regiment of the line, February 28, 1866 found Mackenzie en route to Portsmouth, New Hampshire where, for the next 14 months, he served as Assistant Engineer of the harbor defenses.<sup>47</sup>

A chance to lead troops on the frontier came on March 11, 1867 when Mackenzie accepted the colonelcy of a Negro regiment, the 41st Infantry--a command already rejected by several other officers.<sup>48</sup> Within two weeks after a doctor

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid. DAB, XII, 95-96. James S. McClellan in Motor Travel, XXI, 12 (Mar., 1930), 20.

<sup>47</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 841-843.

<sup>48</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 842-843. Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, passim.



pronounced him fit for active duty, Mackenzie began his trip to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, to join the 41st Infantry. In the year that followed he commanded both the regiment and the Sub-District of the Rio Grande. Most of his service centered around Brownsville, Texas, although he served in no less than four other posts in Texas.<sup>49</sup> While not exciting, this tour afforded the young colonel much knowledge of people and affairs along the Mexican border, experience that would pay dividends during the next decade.

No doubt Mackenzie's most trying task was transforming a collection of ex-slaves and unlettered fieldhands into a small but competent regiment. To achieve this, he improved the quality of his soldiers by having their recruiting station transferred to the North.<sup>50</sup> And, with the help of his lieutenant colonel, the capable William R. Shafter, he forged one of the best Negro units in the service. His success became apparent in 1867 when the 41st Infantry boasted the lowest desertion rate in the army.<sup>51</sup> But, for all its improvement, and a dispersion among at least seven posts in

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<sup>49</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 841, 843. Report of the Secretary of War, 1868, House Exec. Doc. 1, 40th Cong., 3rd Sess., Vol. III, Part 1, p. 709 (Serial 1367). Hereinafter these documents will be cited as RSW and will include the serial numbers.

<sup>50</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, passim. Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 843. Wallace, American Heritage, pp. 22-25.

<sup>51</sup>RSW, 1868 (Serial 1367), p. 769.



Texas, there is no evidence that the regiment ever engaged hostile Indians.<sup>52</sup>

The humdrum tempo of Mackenzie's frontier service remained unaffected on March 3, 1869 when a major reorganization decreased the size of the army. Among other changes, a parsimonious Congress consolidated the 38th and 41st Regiments of Infantry--a merger that gave birth to the 24th Infantry.<sup>53</sup> So, on March 15, 1869 Colonel Mackenzie transferred to the newly-created regiment of Negro troops. The change proved little more than administrative. Garrison duties of construction and repair continued. Guard, escort, and scout dragged on, with but one short expedition into the field.<sup>54</sup> During those days of dullness, the young colonel must have yearned for his first love--the mounted arm. Cavalry better suited his restless energy than did plodding columns of foot soldiers. His fortunes took a new tack in April, 1870 when he began an extended leave in the East. It was during this period or, at the latest, between October and January--when he served on a special board in Washington--that

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 709, 711-716. U. S., Office of the Adjutant General, Chronological List of Actions, etc., with Indians, from January 1, 1866 to January, 1891 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1891), passim.

<sup>53</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Heitman, Historical Register, I, 123. Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 843.

<sup>54</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Heitman, Historical Register, II, 435-436. Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 843.



Mackenzie was offered command of the 4th U. S. Cavalry by General Grant.<sup>55</sup> Grant's decision was to have an impact, not only on the young colonel and his regiment, but on the Indian barrier to Western settlement as well.

While no doubt elated by his good fortune, Mackenzie probably realized that the 4th Cavalry had never been the darling of the service. It was a good outfit, but one with little to distinguish it from the other mounted units of the army. It had always been so. Since its creation as the old 1st Cavalry in 1855, the regiment counted as its colonels Edwin V. Sumner, Robert E. Lee, John Sedgwick, and L. P. Graham.<sup>56</sup> Such leadership notwithstanding, favor and fortune conspired to deny the fame accorded other regiments of horse before the Civil War. In August, 1861, moreover, a reorganization renamed it the 4th Cavalry. Although from then until the end of the Civil War the regiment engaged the enemy 76 times, its greatest laurels lay ahead.<sup>57</sup> So,

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<sup>55</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Heitman, Historical Register, I, 672. Cullum, Biographical Register, II, 843. Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 9.

<sup>56</sup>Heitman, Historical Register, I, 70. Dixon S. Stanley, Personal Memoirs of Major General D. S. Stanley, U. S. A. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1917), pp. 40-76. John K. Herr and Edward S. Wallace, The Story of the U. S. Cavalry (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1953), pp. 75-82.

<sup>57</sup>General Orders 5, War Dept., Aug. 10, 1861, in OR, Series III, Vol. I, p. 403.- Parker, The Old Army, pp. 20-21. Herr and Wallace, Story of U. S. Cavalry, p. 116.



after Lee surrendered, when the regular army trudged out to garrison the scores of little posts that dotted the Western frontier, the 4th Cavalry still boasted little to set it apart from its sister units. And, scattered among half a dozen posts in Texas for six years after the Civil War, the regiment saw limited and undistinguished action against hostile Indians.<sup>58</sup>

Like most outfits in the regular army, the 4th Cavalry was a cosmopolitan organization. Irishmen comprised a high percentage of the rank and file; while Germans, Swedes, and "Galvanized Yankees" (ex-Confederates) rounded out a polyglot membership. Not a few thieves and drunkards sullied its roster, making discipline difficult to maintain.<sup>59</sup> With much drudgery and little excitement to quicken the monotonous tempo that was frontier garrison duty, desertion and malingering flourished. On paydays sergeants of the 4th Cavalry herded at least ten percent of the regiment into the guardhouse on charges ranging from drunkenness to attempted murder. Sometimes the number of troops under lock and key soared to one-quarter of the command.<sup>60</sup>

Many officers exhibited only slightly more enthusiasm

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<sup>58</sup>RSW, 1868 (Serial 1367), pp. 711-716. Chronological List of Actions, passim.

<sup>59</sup>Parker, Old Army, pp. 15-24. Herr and Wallace, Story of U. S. Cavalry, pp. 144-145. For a good survey of the post-Civil War army, see Fairfax Downey, Indian-Fighting Army (New York: Bantam Books, 1957), pp. 14-32.

<sup>60</sup>Parker, Old Army, pp. 15-24.



than their men for the life of a frontier soldier. They rarely studied their profession, arguing that sound training came only from service in the field.<sup>61</sup> Moreover, officers had little incentive to become proficient. They often found advancement frustrated by a policy of the War Department that maintained incapacitated officers on the roster even though they did not serve with the regiment. So, finding promotion blocked, not a few officers withered on the vine, squandering their time at cards, drinking, and hunting.<sup>62</sup> Ranald S. Mackenzie would correct this policy by purging the muster rolls of inept or incapacitated officers.<sup>63</sup>

But if the colonel was to make promotions in the 4th Cavalry faster than in any other regiment, he would also make life in the outfit more strenuous.<sup>64</sup> He resolved that if the performance of the 4th Cavalry fell below that of other units, it would be through no laziness on his part.<sup>65</sup> The regiment got its first taste of what service under Mackenzie would be like on February 25, 1871, when he ordered

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 9.



the storage of all sporting rifles and shotguns.<sup>66</sup> Although the colonel enjoyed the chase as much as any man, he intended that the 4th Cavalry devote its energies to hunting Indians.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Cf., Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., May 11, 1876, in AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Carter, On the Border, p. 57.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER II

### MORE BAYONET AND LESS BIBLE

For the hunter of hostile Indians, Texas furnished an abundance of game. Bands of Kiowas, Comanches, and Cheyennes ravished the northern and northwestern frontiers of the state. Not content with harrassing the outer circle of settlements, bold tribesmen occasionally penetrated the heart of Texas. At the same time, Mescalero Apaches, Lipans, and Kickapoos emulated Comanche marauders along the Rio Grande border. In a vain effort to contain the raiders, units of the weak regular army spread themselves some 490 miles from the Red River to the Mexican border, and along the Rio Grande 816 miles from Ringgold Barracks to Fort Bliss--a total of 1,300 miles.<sup>1</sup> In the spring and summer of 1871, however, military eyes focused on the Indian Territory, especially on the Kiowa-Comanche agency at Fort Sill.

A proving ground for President Grant's "Peace Policy," the Fort Sill reservation represented an effort to "conquer by kindness" the tribes of the southern plains. Grant launched this often suggested but hitherto untried experiment

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<sup>1</sup>U. S., Adjutant General's Office, Notes Illustrating the Military Geography of the United States, 1813-1880, comp. Raphael P. Thian (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1881), passim. Report of Col. J. J. Reynolds in RSW, 1869 (Serial 1412), pp. 143-144.



within a few months after his inauguration in 1869. He wanted Indians settled on a large reservation where they would not only enjoy federal protection, but a system of land severalty and territorial government as well. At the same time, Grant agreed with a group of Quakers that the appointment of religious men as agents would elevate the morality of the Indian Service. Thus was born the "Quaker Policy," a practice of appointing Indian agents from a panel nominated by religious denominations, and a significant if not integral part of the Peace Policy.<sup>2</sup>

With the Kiowa-Comanche agency at Fort Sill as a showcase for the experiment, President Grant appointed Lawrie Tatum as agent. A sincere Quaker of modest talents, Tatum exhibited extreme naivete towards the Kiowas and Comanches during the first months of his administration. His wild wards, who seethed with discontent over the corruption and inefficiency of the Indian Service, sneaked from the Fort Sill reservation and fattened their larder by raiding in Texas. As the Peace Policy decreed that Indians must not be molested unless caught off the reservation, the tiny regular army could do little to halt the incursions. So, the Fort Sill agency acted as a base of operations for sorties into Texas. Agent Tatum refused to believe his

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<sup>2</sup>Robert M. Utley, "The Celebrated Peace Policy of General Grant," North Dakota History, XX, 3 (July, 1935), 121-142. Aubrey L. Steele, "The Beginning of Quaker Administration of Indian Affairs in Oklahoma," Chronicles of Oklahoma, XVII, 4 (Dec., 1939), 363-392.



flock guilty at first. But by the spring of 1871, the cauldron of discontent bubbled so ominously at Fort Sill that even he saw that stringent measures would have to be applied to the warlike tribesmen. Tatum then became a staunch advocate of "more bayonet and less Bible."<sup>3</sup>

So, on March 25, 1871 Colonel Mackenzie received orders to relieve the 6th Cavalry at Fort Richardson. A 10-company post that stood adjacent the town of Jacksboro, Fort Richardson was the most northerly of the Texas forts and the nearest to the Kiowa-Comanche reservation. On March 27, therefore, five companies of the 4th Cavalry marched out of Fort Concho and began the 230-mile trek to their new station.<sup>4</sup>

The trip proved uneventful until early April, when a herd of buffalo stampeded near the column. As the shaggy mass thundered closer, many of the troopers gave in to the excitement of the moment. A rattling fusilade broke out all along the line until, irritated by the lapse of discipline, Mackenzie snapped a stern order to cease fire. But, almost at once, he revealed the tender side of his nature when a dog sank teeth into a wounded buffalo and refused to

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid. Utley, North Dakota History, pp. 121-142.  
William H. Leckie, The Military Conquest of the Southern Plains Indians (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation; Department of History, University of Oklahoma, 1954), passim. W. S. Nye, Carbine and Lance: The Story of Old Fort Sill (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937), pp. 99-122.

<sup>4</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 59.



turn loose. Moved by the agonized roar of the tormented beast, the colonel sent someone to end its misery.<sup>5</sup> Then the 4th Cavalry resumed its march, arriving at Fort Richardson on April 8.<sup>6</sup> And, on the morning of April 20, the last four troops of the 6th Cavalry rode out of Richardson, leaving Mackenzie and his men to await the annual tour of inspection by General-in-Chief of the Army, William Tecumseh Sherman.<sup>7</sup>

General Sherman, accompanied by Inspector General Randolph B. Marcy, rode into the post on the afternoon of May 17, 1871.<sup>8</sup> As one who had regarded stories of Indian depredations on the Texas frontier as exaggerations, the General-in-Chief found his trip a revelation. He noted the ruins of several ranches not far from Fort Richardson, and Colonel Marcy pointed out that fewer people inhabited the area than when he traveled through it 18 years before.<sup>9</sup> If Sherman harbored any further doubt about the extent of

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 63, 65.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 69. Cf., H. H. McConnell, Five Years a Cavalryman: or, Sketches of Regular Army Life on the Texas Frontier Twenty-Odd Years Ago (Jacksboro, Texas: J. N. Rogers & Co., 1889), p. 232.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 232-233.

<sup>8</sup>For excerpts from the diary of Randolph B. Marcy, see Carl Coke Rister, "Documents Relating to General W. T. Sherman's Southern Plains Indian Policy, 1871-1875," Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, Part I, Vol. IX (1936), 18. Carter, On the Border, p. 76.

<sup>9</sup>Marcy's diary in Rister, Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, p. 19.



Indian raids in Texas, they vanished the day after his arrival at Richardson when a teamster named Thomas Brazeale staggered into the post hospital with a tale of horror. Brazeale told how he escaped when a band of some 100 Kiowas attacked 10 wagons loaded with corn on the prairie about 10 miles east of Salt Creek. After a desperate fight, the warriors butchered 7 teamsters, wounded another, and ran off with 41 mules.<sup>10</sup> A glance at the map showed General Sherman that the slaughter occurred about four miles from where he met his escort of the 4th Cavalry. In fact, the tribesmen spied the General-in-Chief's party, but elected to strike the lumbering wagons instead.<sup>11</sup>

After hearing Brazeale's story, Sherman ordered Mackenzie to investigate the massacre at once and, if possible, to chastise the raiders.<sup>12</sup> So, while the General-in-Chief prepared for his trip to Fort Sill, Cos. A, B, E, and F drew rations for 30 days and followed Mackenzie through a blinding rainstorm to Salt Creek Prairie. Arriving at the site of the massacre on May 19, Mackenzie discovered that, while the storm almost obliterated the trail of the Kiowas, it failed

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid. Nye, Carbine and Lance, pp. 124-131. U. S. Army, Military Division of the Missouri, Records of Engagements with Hostile Indians within the Military Division of the Missouri from 1868-1882 (Chicago: Military Division of the Missouri, 1882), pp. 102-103.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 128. Carter, On the Border, pp. 80-81.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 81. Steele, Chronicles of Oklahoma, pp. 377-379.



to cleanse their handiwork of its horror.<sup>13</sup> There, on Salt Creek Prairie, the colonel received a gruesome introduction to Indian warfare. Seven naked bodies sprawled in grotesque positions, riddled with bullets or arrows. Some, bristling with Kiowa shafts, resembled giant porcupines, while all were either mutilated or bloated beyond recognition by the water. Several of the corpses had fingers, toes, and privates crammed into their mouths, while others lay beheaded--their brains scooped out. As the rain beat down, the soldiers noticed one body more mutilated than the rest. It was that of Samuel Elliot, the trainmaster, whose tongue had been cut out, and who lay bound by a chain face-down over what had been an open fire. Owing to the charred condition of the "soft parts," however, Mackenzie could not tell whether Elliot had been roasted before or after his death.<sup>14</sup> To a man unable to witness the suffering of a wounded buffalo, the carnage of Salt Creek Prairie might have proved something of a trauma.

Whatever his reaction, Mackenzie did not overlook faint pony tracks that headed in the direction of Fort Sill. He therefore dispatched a messenger to Sherman at that post with

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<sup>13</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, June 17, 1871, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Carter, On the Border, pp. 82, 84.

<sup>14</sup>Asst. Surgeon J. H. Patzki to Mackenzie, June 17, 1871, in Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 131. Cf., Steele, Chronicles of Oklahoma, pp. 378-379. Carter, On the Border, pp. 82-84. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, June 17, 1871, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



details of the massacre, and sent Lt. Peter M. Boehm and 25 troopers to follow the Kiowas. The next day Boehm overtook four of the warriors near the Big Wichita and killed one of them. Believing the Kiowas to be hunters from the main party, Mackenzie and his men labored in vain pursuit through heavy rains and mud to the Red River.<sup>15</sup>

Not until the column slogged into Fort Sill on June 4, did Mackenzie confront his quarry--in the post guard-house.<sup>16</sup> Then he learned that on the afternoon of May 27 the Kiowas rode into the agency. As they drew their rations, Satanta (White Bear) arrogantly claimed sole credit for leading the attack on the teamsters. When he heard of the boast, General Sherman called a council at the home of Col. Benjamin H. Grierson, post commander and colonel of the 10th Cavalry. On the front porch of Grierson's house, with "buffalo soldiers" hiding behind its shuttered windows, the General-in-Chief met a delegation of surly Kiowas. He confronted Satanta, Satank (Sitting Bear), and Big Tree with their deed and promised punishment. Tension mounted. And, after Sherman refused Kicking Bird's offer to barter the stolen mules for the Kiowa chiefs, the well-armed warriors made threatening gestures. Just as a fight seemed inevitable, the General-in-Chief signaled. Shutters banged open, revealing

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<sup>15</sup>Maj. J. K. Mizener to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, June 11, 1871, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Carter, On the Border, pp. 82-84.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 84.



the black faces of Grierson's "brunettes," their two-score carbines at full-cock. Although some of the tribesmen bolted from the porch and escaped, Satanta, Satank, and Big Tree trooped off to the guardhouse in double irons.<sup>17</sup>

Before ending his historic interlude at Fort Sill on May 30, Sherman ordered the prisoners tried and executed by a civil court in Jack County.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, he decreed that after Mackenzie escorted the prisoners to Fort Richardson, all cavalry in Texas would operate towards the Red River. The General-in-Chief directed that these troops act in concert with others from Fort Sill to hound back to the reservation any Indian who crossed the Red River. The arrest of the chiefs, Sherman believed, would impress his determination on the Kiowas and Comanches at the agency.<sup>19</sup>

So, when Mackenzie arrived at Fort Sill on June 4, he found the captives awaiting transport back to Fort Richardson. He lost no time ordering two wagons drawn up in front of one of the company quarters, and sending troopers to bring the Kiowas from their prison in the basement.<sup>20</sup> When Satank climbed into the first wagon under guard of Corporal Robinson

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<sup>17</sup>Marcy's diary in Rister, Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, pp. 22-24. Nye, Carbine and Lance, pp. 132-142.

<sup>18</sup>Marcy's diary in Rister, Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, p. 26.

<sup>19</sup>Sherman to Mackenzie, quoted in Carter, On the Border, p. 88.

<sup>20</sup>John B. Charlton quoted in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 78.



and Private Cannon, Satanta and Big Tree settled themselves next to Corp. John B. Charlton and Private Beals in the second wagon.<sup>21</sup> As the six-mule teams pulled out of Fort Sill, the post interpreter approached Corporal Charlton and warned him to expect trouble from Satank.<sup>22</sup> The aged Kiowa, who held membership in the warlike Kaitsenko,<sup>23</sup> loudly proclaimed that he was too old to be treated like a child, and began to chant his death-song.<sup>24</sup>

As the wagons descended to ford a small creek about a mile south of the post, Satank again addressed his fellow captives. "I shall never go beyond that tree," cried the old chief in Kiowa.<sup>25</sup> He called to George Washington, a Caddo Indian scout who rode beside the wagons, and said:

I wish to send a message to my people. Tell my people that I am dead. I died the first day out from Fort Sill. My bones will be lying on the side of the road. I wish my people to gather them up and take them home.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 78-79.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>A military organization limited to the 10 bravest warriors of the Kiowa tribe who vowed never to return from a foray without honor. James Mooney, "Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians," Seventeenth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1895-1896 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898), I, 329. Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 144.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 144-145. Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, pp. 78-79. Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, pp. 329-331.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 329-332. Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 145.

<sup>26</sup>Lawrie Tatum quoted by Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, pp. 331-332. Carter, On the Border, p. 95.



Satank resumed the death-chant. No one noticed that under his blankets the old Kiowa struggled to free himself from his handcuffs. Suddenly, he brandished a concealed knife and lunged at Corporal Robinson. Slightly wounded in the leg, Robinson dropped his Spencer carbine and somersaulted backwards from the wagon, followed immediately by Private Cannon. Satank scooped up the fallen Spencer, and as he tried to lever a cartridge into the chamber, Corporal Charlton snapped a shot from the rear wagon. The old warrior dropped, only to struggle back to a sitting position and continue his efforts to jack a shell into the carbine. Charlton fired a second time, sending a .50 caliber bullet into Satank's right side. He did not rise again.<sup>27</sup>

Lieutenant Thurston, who commanded the escort, rode up to investigate. Seeing the body of the Kiowa chief, he fired his pistol into the wagon. Corporal Charlton confessed to Trumpeter Oxford that he had been the one who killed Satank but, knowing Mackenzie's temper, feared that he would "catch \_\_\_\_ for it." About that time, the colonel, who had lingered at Fort Sill, rode up and demanded an explanation of the shooting. He did not reprimand Charlton, but neither did he praise him; for Mackenzie indulged in scathing criticism far more than commendation.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, pp. 79-80, 62. Lieutenant Thurston's account in Nye, Carbine and Lance, pp. 145-146.

<sup>28</sup>Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, pp. 62, 79-80. Thurston's account in Nye, Carbine and Lance, pp. 145-146.



Before pushing on to Fort Richardson, the colonel ordered Satank's body placed beside the road for burial, no doubt observing that the Tonkawa scouts had already appropriated the old Kiowa's scalp as a rich prize.<sup>29</sup> For the rest of the trip, Mackenzie took no chances with the two prisoners. He placed a heavy guard around Satanta and Big Tree and, each night when the command bivouacked, ordered them spread-eagled on the ground. With arms and legs bound to stakes, the Kiowas fell prey to clouds of mosquitoes.<sup>30</sup> Their torment ended on June 15, when the column rode into Fort Richardson. A crowd gathered to stare at the captives as soldiers dragged Satanta and Big Tree to the guardhouse.<sup>31</sup>

While the prisoners awaited trial, Mackenzie girded his regiment for a campaign against all Kiowas and Comanches found off the reservation. He called in companies from far-flung outposts until, for the first time, 10 troops of the 4th Cavalry congregated at one point. Then the colonel found himself in command of the largest concentration of soldiers in Texas.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, he gained the administrative and logistical genius of 1st Lt. Henry W. Lawton, an officer that he transferred from the 24th Infantry.

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<sup>29</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 95.

<sup>30</sup>Charlton quoted in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 81.

<sup>31</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 97.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 105-106. RSW, 1871 (Serial 1503), p. 96.



Lawton, who later would become a brigadier general and die in the Philippines during the Spanish-American War, was destined to play an important role in Mackenzie's campaigns as regimental quartermaster.<sup>33</sup>

As the command grew in numbers, Mackenzie dispatched three companies to establish a supply base and camp of observation on Gilbert's Creek, a small tributary of the Red River. From there troops would scout up and down the stream, especially alert for Kicking Bird's migratory village.<sup>34</sup> Kicking Bird, a chief more disposed towards peace than many Kiowas, had promised to return the 41 mules taken in the Salt Creek Prairie massacre. But when he arrived at his camp, he found that frightened women had run off with all but eight of the animals. Kicking Bird followed his people and, in what appeared as a break from the reservation, became a prime target of the expedition.<sup>35</sup>

While three companies moved out towards Gilbert's Creek, Mackenzie awaited the arrival of two others at Fort Richardson. He became so engrossed in preparations for the field that he disobeyed orders--the only recorded time when he did so. On July 1 the colonel invoiced 46 pack-mules to

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<sup>33</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 106. Heitman, Historical Register, II, 620.

<sup>34</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 105. Leckie, Conquest of Southern Plains Indians, p. 252. Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 143.

<sup>35</sup>Leckie, Conquest of Southern Plains Indians, pp. 252-253.



the officers of 4 companies, instead of to the post quartermaster as prescribed by regulations.<sup>36</sup> Then he submitted a requisition for \$50,000 worth of ordnance equipment to Col. J. J. Reynolds, commanding the Department of Texas. This "remarkable action" infuriated the department commander, who reported it to higher headquarters and ordered Mackenzie to rectify his error.<sup>37</sup> The colonel corrected his "culpable oversight" and, in view of the impending campaign, Reynolds furnished some of the ordnance material.<sup>38</sup> The incident was but one in a chain of aggravations that brought the relationship between Mackenzie and his superior to the breaking point. The crisis would come within five months, when the department commander learned that, on June 28 and 30, Mackenzie sent letters directly to the commander of the Division of the South, correspondence that implicated Reynolds in the corrupt purchase of forage and wood for military posts.<sup>39</sup>

While Reynolds fumed in San Antonio, early in July, Jacksboro bustled with excitement over the trial of Satanta and Big Tree. In an unprecedented action, the State of Texas

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<sup>36</sup>Special Orders 153, Ft. Richardson, July 1, 1871, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>37</sup>Col. J. J. Reynolds to War Dept., in Ibid. Cf., Lt. Gen. W. T. Sherman's endorsement in Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., May 11, 1876, Ibid. Reynolds to War Dept., Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., May 11, 1876, Ibid.



tried for murder wards of the federal government.<sup>40</sup> When the court convened, Mackenzie took time from his campaign preparations to join Lawrie Tatum and Thomas Brazeale as principal witnesses for the prosecution.<sup>41</sup> The colonel gladly informed the "cowboy jury" of his findings on Salt Creek Prairie, because he felt that the massacre demanded the death penalty for Satanta and Big Tree.<sup>42</sup> Yet, he did not think that they would be executed--not when the jury foreman announced: "We figger'em guilty," nor when the judge sentenced the Kiowas to be hanged on September 1, 1871.<sup>43</sup> Aside from wanting "justice" done, the colonel seemed to feel that the execution would avert a "general war."<sup>44</sup> He had yet to understand the revenge motive behind many Indian outbreaks.

Planning his forthcoming expedition, Mackenzie figured that his main problem was to separate the bands of Kiowas and Comanches that raided together. To further this end, he must not only try to recapture the stolen mules, but also attempt

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<sup>40</sup>For an excellent discussion of the episode, see Carl Coke Rister, "The Significance of the Jacksboro Indian Affair of 1871," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXIX (1926), 181-200. Robert A. Dodson, "The Trial of Satanta and Big Tree," The Westerners Brand Book (Los Angeles Corral, 1949), 229-236.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 232. Carter, On the Border, p. 99.

<sup>42</sup>Mackenzie to Col. B. H. Grierson, July 4, 1871, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. Carter, On the Border, p. 102. Rister in Southwestern Historical Quarterly, pp. 181-200.

<sup>44</sup>Mackenzie to Grierson, July 4, 1871, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



an arrest of Eagle Heart, Big Bow, Fat Bear, and White Horse. Until these warriors surrendered, Mackenzie believed, the Kiowas should not be allowed to return to Fort Sill. For unless the hostiles came in "through fear of consequences," they would give no end of trouble in the future.<sup>45</sup>

After the trial of Satanta and Big Tree, Mackenzie started four companies of the 4th Cavalry and one of the 11th Infantry towards the supply base on Gilbert's Creek. He then made a hasty trip to Fort Concho, where he appeared as a witness before a court martial.<sup>46</sup> Upon his return, the colonel hurried to join his troops on Gilbert's Creek. In the process, he neglected to report his departure time to the department commander.<sup>47</sup>

August 2 (the day that Governor Davis commuted the Kiowas' sentence to life imprisonment) found Mackenzie and two companies of the 4th Cavalry riding northward across the undulating prairie.<sup>48</sup> After they arrived at Gilbert's Creek, slightly less than 300 horsemen drew provisions before continuing their ride northward.<sup>49</sup> Along the route game abounded,

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>"Charges and Specifications Preferred against Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie," 1871, Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>Dodson, Westerner's Brand Book, p. 232. Carter, On the Border, p. 119. Report of J. J. Reynolds in RSW, 1871 (Serial 1503), p. 65.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid. Carter, On the Border, p. 118. Mackenzie to Grierson, July 4, 1871, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



and Tonkawa scouts kept "Big Chief" and his officers well supplied with fresh meat. The only real excitement came when a great prairie fire threatened the command with destruction. Fortunately, the wagons lurched into the dry bed of the Red River just in time to escape the flames.<sup>50</sup> After the fire passed, the column rode north to West Cache Creek, then northwest to Otter Creek where Colonel Grierson waited with most of the 10th Cavalry. The two commanders discussed their plans, then parted. Grierson's force moved northwest to Sweetwater Creek while Mackenzie and his men headed for Rainy Mountain Creek, a fine stream having its source in the Wichita Mountains. On that creek, said Matthew Leeper, the agency interpreter, the Kiowas might be found.<sup>51</sup>

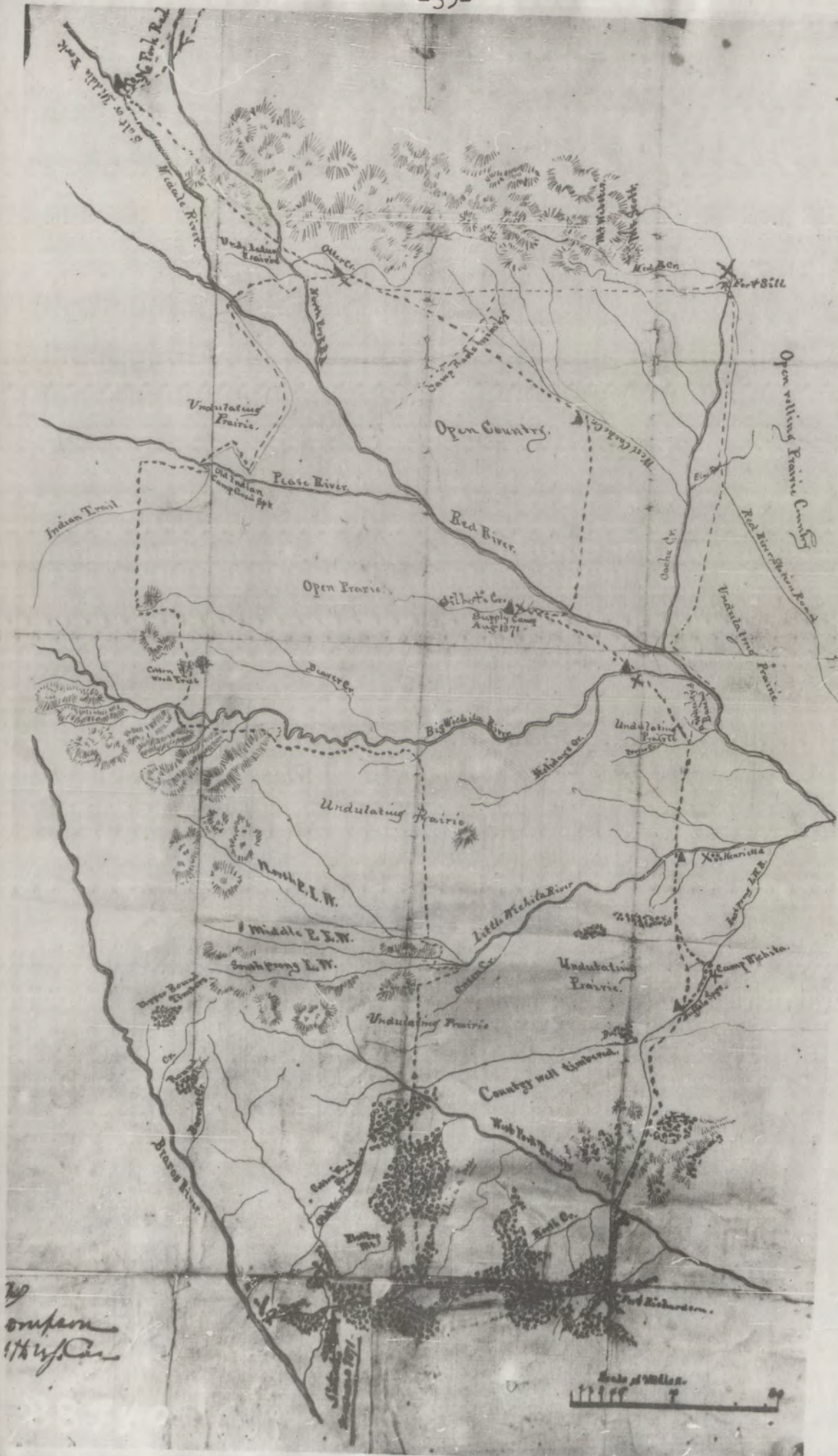
Whatever Mackenzie's optimism about finding the hostiles, he became increasingly nervous and irascible after fording the North Fork of the Red River. His irritation grew more pronounced after he received a dispatch from higher headquarters. Although none of his officers knew it, the message in effect countermanded Sherman's previous orders. The "Indian Ring" in Washington, fearing that if Mackenzie attacked Kicking Bird he would touch off a full-scale conflict, arranged for a new set of instructions. The orders gave Colonel Grierson command of both forces in the field,

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<sup>50</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 119-121.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., pp. 122-124. Leckie, Conquest of the Southern Plains Indians, p. 253.







and directed him to avoid war with the Indians.<sup>52</sup> What Mackenzie did not know was that on August 11, true to his word, Kicking Bird had turned over the stolen mules to Agent Tatum at Fort Sill. The Kiowa chief also assured the agent that his people wanted peace. Tatum therefore forwarded the information to Colonel Grierson, who immediately sent an interpreter to the Kiowa camp with a warning for Kicking Bird and his band to hurry back to the safety of the reservation. Grierson did not inform Mackenzie of this action, however.<sup>53</sup>

So, unaware of Grierson's activities, Mackenzie and his men floundered along Marcy's Creek, or Elm Creek as it was also known.<sup>54</sup> As they fought rugged terrain and balky mules, the colonel grew more irritable and exacting. He spared no one, least of all his interpreter and adjutant whom he kept at his beck and call. His officers noted that the colonel slept little and, on occasion, snapped the stumps of his amputated fingers with "more than usual vigor."<sup>55</sup> Physical discomfort added to Mackenzie's agitation. Much of the time the command rode under a sun so hot that to touch the barrel of a carbine or pistol meant blistered hands. No one suffered sunstroke or heat prostration, however, because the

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<sup>52</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 123-124, 134.

<sup>53</sup>Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 149. Carter, On the Border, p. 142. Leckie, Conquest of Southern Plains Indians, p. 253.

<sup>54</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 125-126.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 134, 143.



colonel required every man to keep a wet sponge in his campaign hat and an extra canteen of water to moisten it.<sup>56</sup> Whatever its properties as a cooling agent, the water proved unfit for consumption. Often impregnated with raw, rank gypsum--seasoned with buffalo excrement and urine--the water sickened even the animals. The foul fluid defied the addition of citric acid, lime juice, or brandy to make it palatable. Although perhaps the sickest of all from the water, Mackenzie made light of its qualities. "Gentlemen," he joked, "we shall all have a new stomach when it gets thoroughly coated with a crust of gypsum. I think my coating is about that thick."<sup>57</sup> Yet, as sick as he was, the colonel gave the only brandy in the command to ease the suffering of one of his captains.<sup>58</sup>

The animals also suffered greatly, both from the water and a shortage of grass. They began to falter on the way back to Otter Creek and, on August 31, the rigors of campaign forced Mackenzie to abandon 10 horses and 2 mules.<sup>59</sup> Men and mounts got a chance to rest on September 1, when the column limped into the camp on Otter Creek. The commander of the infantry company stationed there informed Mackenzie that Colonel Grier-son had gone on to Fort Sill the previous day.<sup>60</sup> Now the full

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 125-126, 137.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., pp. 125-126.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 127.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., pp. 130-132, 139.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 141.



realization of failure brought bitter disappointment to Mackenzie, disappointment that seemed to "possess his soul and disturb his peace of mind."<sup>61</sup>

The colonel's spirits must have lifted on September 19 when orders arrived for the 4th Cavalry to march to Fort Griffin.<sup>62</sup> There Mackenzie would plot a new expedition against the bold Kwahadis (Antelope Eaters), the "wildest and most intractable" portion of the Comanche tribe.<sup>63</sup> Since 1867, when they refused to sign the Medicine Lodge Treaty, the Kwahadis roamed outside any designated reservation.<sup>64</sup> Under such warriors as Quanah Parker and Mow-way,<sup>65</sup> these Comanches lorded over their favorite haunt--the Llano Estacado, or Staked Plains. A high, almost treeless plateau, the Staked Plains sprawled about 400 miles from northwest Texas into eastern New Mexico.<sup>66</sup> Covered with thick, short buffalo grass, the Llano presented a "...vast dreary, and monotonous waste of barren solitude." In the eyes of one

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<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid. Reynold's report in RSW, 1871 (Serial 1503), p. 65.

<sup>63</sup>Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, p. 201. Gen. Nelson A. Miles, Personal Recollections and Observations (New York: The Werner Co., 1897), p. 179.

<sup>64</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 153, 157. Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, p. 201.

<sup>65</sup>Nye, Carbine and Lance, passim. Carter, On the Border, p. 157.

<sup>66</sup>Gen. Nelson A. Miles, Serving the Republic (New York & London: Harper & Bros., 1911), p. 125.



veteran campaigner, this "ocean of desert prairie" differed from all regions of the world except the Steppes of Siberia.<sup>67</sup> With an annual rainfall of less than 20 inches, water could be found only in lagoons or during the "rainy season" from April to June. Moreover, from early fall until well into the spring, cold northern winds lashed the Llano. Causing amazingly rapid drops in temperature, these "northers" were the "grizzly of the Plains."<sup>68</sup> The Llano therefore presented a formidable obstacle to troops ignorant of its secrets. On the other hand, it provided a refuge for those wise in the ways of nature. The Comanches were such a people.

Preparations for a campaign against the Kwahadis progressed as eight companies of the 4th Cavalry and two of the 11th Infantry pitched their tents around Fort Griffin.<sup>69</sup> About 20 Tonkawa scouts, some 600 soldiers, and almost 100 pack-mules awaited to take the field on October 3 when Mackenzie arrived at the post.<sup>70</sup> Eager to erase the failure of his first sally, the colonel gave the order to move out. The blue column swung into the saddle and rode from Fort Griffin, bellowing the old regimental song of the 4th Cavalry: "Come

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid. Col. Randolph B. Marcy, Thirty Years of Army Life on the Border (New York: Harper & Bros., 1868), p. 169.

<sup>68</sup>Walter P. Webb, The Great Plains (New York: Ginn & Co., 1931), pp. 19-23.

<sup>69</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 158-159.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.



Home, John, Don't Stay Long; Come Home Soon to Your Own Chick-a-Biddy."<sup>71</sup>

They set a course across the Clear Fork of the Brazos River, over Paint and California Creeks, and finally to Cañon Blanco on the edge of the Staked Plains.<sup>72</sup> Before they reached their destination, however, a tremendous thunder of hooves alarmed the camp one night. A herd of buffalo bore down on the picket-line as troopers scrambled from their blankets. In the confusion, Mackenzie shouted orders to hold fire. Fearing that shots might betray his presence to the Comanches, or at least stampede his horses, the colonel ordered the men to wave blankets in the face of the ponderous legions. The tactic narrowly saved the command from disaster, and may have kept the hostiles ignorant of the expedition.<sup>73</sup>

Mackenzie did not keep his presence a secret for long, however. On October 9 his enemy probably learned the location of the soldiers when four Comanches escaped a detachment of Tonkawa scouts. Later that day, as the column pushed along the Fresh Fork of the Brazos (sometimes called White River or Catfish Creek), the Kwahadis gained further warning when a soldier accidentally discharged his carbine.<sup>74</sup> That night, on the fringes of the Staked Plains at or near the mouth of Cañon Blanco on the Fresh Fork of the Brazos, Mackenzie went

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., pp. 205-206.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., pp. 160-161.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 164.



into camp.<sup>75</sup> Although he had every reason to suspect that the Comanches knew his location, the colonel bivouacked in a narrow "pocket" valley lined by small bluffs along one side and a treacherous quicksand creek on the other. While he wisely ordered the horses "cross sidelined" to picket-pins driven deep in the ground, Mackenzie compounded his error by allowing the men to build fires.<sup>76</sup>

He paid for his mistake at 1:00 a.m. on October 10 when the foothills came alive with Indians. Shrieking and waving blankets, the Comanches raced for the picket line. Crazy cavalry mounts snapped lariats like twine, as groggy troopers stumbled out of their blankets. Dodging whistling picket-pins more dangerous than Comanche bullets, the men fought with rope-seared hands to prevent a stampede. Somehow they managed to beat off the attackers and save all but 65 horses and mules in this, Mackenzie's first encounter with hostile Indians.<sup>77</sup> The loss of the animals would interfere greatly with the campaign and, as an added insult, the Comanches made off with a fine gray pacer that the colonel prized

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<sup>75</sup>Mackenzie used this area as a base of operations for his campaigns of 1872 and 1874. The supply camp is often reported on the Fresh Fork, but at other times on Duck Creek. Both sites were undoubtedly used, but the exact locations and changes of base are not found in the documents.

<sup>76</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 164-165.

<sup>77</sup>Mackenzie's report to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Nov. 15, 1871, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Carter, On the Border, pp. 165-167. Letter from Capt. Wirt Davis in Ibid., pp. 210-211.



highly.<sup>78</sup>

When the first streaks of day brightened the Texas sky, small bodies of troops searched for runaway horses in the breaks of the Staked Plains. Seeing the movement, Comanche scouts galloped into their village on White River (not far from Quitaque) and shouted that the soldiers were coming. Chief Para-a-Coom, a huge man with curly hair, cried: "Get all your good horses up." The camp became a hive of activity as warriors wrapped sheets about their waists and ran to get war shields. Then the Comanches tied up the tails of their ponies and held a parade, before riding to meet the Long Knives.<sup>79</sup>

Two or three miles from Mackenzie's bivouac, a party of Kwahadis hovered just out of carbine range of 12 soldiers under Capt. E. M. Heyl and 2nd Lt. R. G. Carter. The detachment (about half of them recruits) chased the Indians until pursuit became ambush.<sup>80</sup> As scores of Comanches boiled out of a canyon, the troopers fell back, leading their exhausted horses towards a ravine that lay hundreds of yards in the rear. The hostiles charged to within about 250 yards when the fire of Spencer carbines forced them into their traditional circling movement. Although armed only with muzzle-loaders, lances, and bows, the Indians loosed a rain of arrows that slowed the

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>79</sup>Statement of Cohaya, an old Comanche, in Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 151.

<sup>80</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 168-182.



retreat of the blue-coats to the gulch. Suddenly, without notice, Captain Heyl withdrew his recruits to the arroyo. A hail of arrows kept Lieutenant Carter and his men from joining them. Carter therefore ordered his men to lure the attackers in closer by using the "Stabler cutoffs" of their Spencers to fire single shots. When the Comanches ventured closer, Carter's soldiers unlocked their magazines and drove back the enemy with rapid fire.<sup>81</sup> During the retreat, a trooper named Gregg fell behind his comrades. Seeing his horse stumble, a warrior (said to be Quanah Parker) easily overtook Gregg and dropped him with one shot. An Indian later said that, despite its "inferior quality," the soldier's scalp provided much celebration in the Comanche village.<sup>82</sup>

Just as it seemed that Carter and his men would share Gregg's fate, the hostiles fled. The reason for their hasty departure appeared in the form of Lt. Peter Boehm and a large party of Tonkawas decked in their paint and finery. And, behind the scouts, a cloud of dust announced the van of 500 cavalry.<sup>83</sup> So, with characteristic skill, the Kwahadis galloped into the hills and bushy ravines that ascend to and

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., pp. 168-182, 290.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., pp. 168-182. Cf., Cohaya's account in Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 151. Mackenzie mentions the fight in his report to the Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Nov. 15, 1871, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>83</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 168-182.



clearly define the edge of the Staked Plains. Before disappearing into the Llano, however, the hostiles glided from rock to rock, sniping as Mackenzie and his cavalry rode up on jaded mounts. With horses too exhausted for pursuit, the colonel reluctantly ended his second encounter with the Comanches.<sup>84</sup> Lieutenant Carter's role in the fight won him the Congressional Medal of Honor and a brevet first lieutenancy.<sup>85</sup>

Mackenzie sent Tonkawas to decipher the cryptic tracks left by the Kwahadis, and returned to camp. As he prepared for another bout with the hostiles, on October 11, the colonel ordered all dismounted or injured men back to a supply base on Duck Creek.<sup>86</sup> He therefore stood ready to take the saddle unencumbered when scouts reported the trail of an entire Indian village leading out on the Staked Plains. So, on the overcast morning of October 12, the blue column snaked up the steep ascent and on to the Llano where, "...as far as the eye could reach, not a bush, or tree, or a twig or stone, not an object of any kind or a living thing was in sight."<sup>87</sup> A "norther" brewed on the wasteland, and its icy wind slashed through summer clothing as the soldiers moved cautiously

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid., pp. 212-213. Mackenzie's report to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Nov. 15, 1871, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Cf., Chronological List of Actions, p. 27.

<sup>85</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 212-213.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 188.



through the dry buffalo grass. Kwahadi warriors led their pursuers up and down canyons and bluffs in a desperate effort to lure the blue-coats away from the lodge-pole trail that led to their families. Mackenzie refused to take the bait, and clung tenaciously to those twin furrows that would lead him to the Comanche women and children.<sup>88</sup>

The trail grew fresher. Swarms of hostiles hovered on the flanks, forcing skirmishers and flankers to draw closer to the command that now closed into a column of fours. Although the Comanches threatened to charge on several occasions, they could not find a weak spot in the compact mass of horsemen. The Tonkawas daubed cream and claybank on their faces and adorned themselves with feathers, while troopers counted off and stuffed pockets with carbine and pistol ammunition. Unlike some commanders, Mackenzie never allowed the 4th Cavalry to store spare cartridges in saddle bags, where a stampeded horse could mean empty weapons. As an added precaution, the colonel formed two companies in a hollow square and herded the precious pack train inside.<sup>89</sup>

As the chase wore on, the day grew colder. Rain, laced with snow and sleet, bit into exposed skin. And, just as the Indian village hove into view (at or near the

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., pp. 188-192.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., pp. 189-192. Capt. Robert G. Carter, "General Ranald Mackenzie," Corral Dust (Washington Westerners), II (Mar., 1957), 1-6.



present town of Plainview, Texas), the "inky blackness of night" dropped over the column. Unable to distinguish forms a foot or two away, Mackenzie elected **not** to press the issue. He dismounted the command and formed a large defensive circle with pack-mules in the center. The Kwahadis rode derisively around the perimeter, then melted into the gloom as a squadron of cavalry dashed after them.<sup>90</sup> After the hostiles escaped into the storm, huge hailstones bombarded the command. Chilled to the marrow, many soldiers dragged tarpaulins from the mules while others huddled beneath buffalo robes and blankets for the remainder of the night. Mackenzie, who neglected his clothing and health while on campaign, and whose wounds made him incapable of enduring such exposure, nearly froze to death until someone wrapped him in a buffalo robe.<sup>91</sup>

As he sat out the storm, the colonel must have pondered the wisdom of his action. While he lost perhaps his best chance of capturing an entire village of Kwahadis, the odds seemed to rule against attack. For one reason, Mackenzie's jaded mounts would not take much more punishment, while those of the hostiles were fresh. For another, slim rations reminded him that the supply base lay a hundred miles away. Faced by a menacing storm and the equally menacing attitude of the Comanches who were prone to desperate measures, cau-

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<sup>90</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 193-195.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 195. Carter, Corral Dust, pp. 1-6.



tion seemed Mackenzie's wisest choice.<sup>92</sup> Despite personal recklessness, the colonel often moved cautiously when the lives of his men were on the block. It is also noteworthy that his official report made no mention of his failure to do battle.<sup>93</sup> At any rate, judgment day for the Kwahadis remained many moons away.

The morning of October 13 dawned clear, but not clear enough to dispel the gloom of disappointment that hung over the command. Mackenzie picked up the trail of his quarry and followed it until the next day when the tracks diverged from a point about 40 miles west of the Fresh Fork of the Brazos. With exhausted animals, and rations growing shorter, the colonel turned his command back towards the supply camp on Duck Creek.<sup>94</sup> His disappointment became agony after returning to Cañon Blanco, on October 15, when the Tonkawas spotted two Comanches stalking the column. The scouts gave chase, forcing the Indians to dismount and take cover in some bushy ravines. A detachment of cavalry rode up to oust the hostiles, but when the soldiers moved too slowly to suit the colonel, he impatiently pushed to the fore. Just then a barbed arrow buried itself in the upper fleshy part of his leg. As soldiers helped Mackenzie to the rear where the

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<sup>92</sup>Cf., Carter, On the Border, p. 193.

<sup>93</sup>See Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Nov. 15, 1871, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid. Carter, On the Border, pp. 196-198.



surgeon cut out the arrow and dressed the wound, a rattle of musketry announced the death of the Comanches in the gulch.<sup>95</sup> The colonel may have been ashamed of his impetuosity, because his report of the incident to department headquarters merely stated that "...one soldier was wounded."<sup>96</sup>

The agony of Mackenzie's wound ruled out further pursuit of the Kwahadis. This realization, coupled with intense pain, soured the colonel's disposition even more. By the time the column limped into the supply camp at Duck Creek on October 28, the "Old Man" was so irritable and "onery" that no one wanted to go near him.<sup>97</sup> His irascibility prompted Acting Assistant Surgeon Gregory to attempt a joke. Doctor Gregory went to the colonel's tent and told him that unless his disposition improved, it would be necessary to amputate his leg. Fortunately, the doctor was an agile man and ducked the crutch that Mackenzie swung at his head. Needless to say, the surgeon left the tent faster than he had entered.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup>Ibid., pp. 196-198. Carter, Corral Dust, pp. 1-6.

<sup>96</sup>Dorst says that Mackenzie was wounded because of his concern for a young officer who had gone "well to the front." Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 10. But Carter stood next to Mackenzie when he was wounded. See On the Border, pp. 196-198. Cf., Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Nov. 15, 1871, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Chronological List of Actions, p. 27, lists Mackenzie as wounded but did not get the information from his official report.

<sup>97</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 202.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., pp. 202-203.



Too sick for scouting on October 29, Mackenzie sent Maj. Clarence Mauck and a battalion of cavalry to reconnoiter the area around the Pease River. Then he crawled into an ambulance and headed for Fort Richardson.<sup>99</sup> The rest of the command waited in camp until Major Mauck returned a few days later, before taking the trail for home. Lashed by blizzards, the column coaxed weary animals through the drifts until about November 18 when they struggled into Fort Richardson.<sup>100</sup>

The 4th Cavalry returned with the knowledge that, if measured in tangible results, the expedition had failed. Although few if any hostile Indians penetrated northern Texas during the next six months,<sup>101</sup> winter was not the raiding season anyway. Besides, the Kiowas were still cowed by the imprisonment of Satanta and Big Tree. No, the real value of the campaign lay in more subtle factors. That is, Mackenzie learned much about weather and terrain while testing the caliber of his command. The young colonel not only grappled with the ever-present problem of logistics in the field, but also experienced the Indian tactics that always proved so baffling

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., pp. 205-206. Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 70. Mackenzie wrote that "sickness" forced him to leave the command. See his report to the Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Nov. 15, 1871, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>100</sup>Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, pp. 70, 206-207.

<sup>101</sup>Brig. Gen. C. C. Augur to Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, May 30, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



to veterans of the Civil War. In short, the expedition acted as a dress rehearsal for future performances.



### CHAPTER III

#### COMANCHES, COMANCHEROS, AND CORRUPTION

If the abortive campaign against the Comanches depressed Mackenzie's spirits, it doubtless damaged the morale of his men as well. A feeling of defeat, aggravated by extreme privation, and capped by the monotony of garrison duty, brought on a rash of desertions that soon reached "epidemic proportions." On November 29, for example, 10 men from Co. B departed en masse.<sup>1</sup> To halt desertions and other infractions, troop commanders applied stern disciplinary measures. Either under the direct or indirect supervision of the ailing Mackenzie, drunkards drew a "dip" in the waterhole or, if lucky, 24 hours confinement to the orderly room. A "sweatbox" accommodated those imbibers who became abusive or insubordinate. Other offenders suffered the torments of a "thirty pound log on a ring" or were spread-eagled on the spare wheel of a caisson.<sup>2</sup> Such punishments were typical of the 4th Cavalry. But, while conceding that Mackenzie could be harsh and difficult to serve under, his officers swore that he was never a martinet.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Carter, Old Sergeant, pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. Thompson, Cavalry Journal, p. 433. Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 19. Carter, On the Border, pp. 218-219, 468.



As Mackenzie wrestled with problems of discipline, the department commander prepared to administer some punishment of his own. By late November, Colonel Reynolds could contain no longer his anger and humiliation over Mackenzie's behavior of the past two years. He might have forgotten the illegal issue of ordnance stores, or the colonel's failure to report his departure for the field, or even the fact that Mackenzie arrived at Fort Richardson on November 8 but did not report his return until the 23rd.<sup>4</sup> But Reynolds could not ignore the damning letters that linked him with fraudulent practices. He therefore drew up court martial charges against Mackenzie and asked that they be placed before President Grant.<sup>5</sup>

The growing antagonism between Reynolds and the commander of the 4th Cavalry dated back several years. During the spring and summer of 1868, while presiding over a general court martial in San Antonio, Mackenzie became convinced that the contracting firm of Adams and Wickes conducted an "illegitimate" business with the army.<sup>6</sup> While he knew that certain government officials connived with the San Antonio contractors, Mackenzie did not yet suspect Colonel Reynolds.<sup>7</sup> He

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<sup>4</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Nov. 15, 1871, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Cf., Reynolds to Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Nov. 23, 1871, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., May 11, 1876, Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.



began to grow suspicious in the fall of 1869 when Adams and Wickes supplied Fort McKavett with a load of corn that contained about 15% dirt. As post commander, Mackenzie detailed a board of officers to test the shipment and reported their findings to the department commander. Reynolds ignored the evidence and ordered payment at full contract price. Thinking that his superior had misunderstood the problem, Mackenzie wrote a letter of explanation. The department commander repeated his instructions to pay for the corn.<sup>8</sup>

Not long afterwards, Mackenzie left Texas. But on his return in January, 1871 he heard a "prevalent report" that Adams and Wickes had presented Reynolds with a lot and house in San Antonio.<sup>9</sup> Mackenzie did not forget the rumor. His suspicions grew stronger late in March when he transferred headquarters to Fort Richardson and found that Adams and Wickes supplied the post with corn and wood. The colonel noted that no one in the vicinity of the fort knew of bids for fuel and forage until 48 hours before the Department of Texas awarded contracts.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, the wood furnished by Adams and Wickes cost almost double its price of the year before. Yet, Reynolds not only approved the contract for

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid. Cf., Testimony of Lt. Col. Alexander McDowell McCook in Report on the Management of the War Department, House Report 799, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. VIII (Serial 1715), pp. 103-105.

<sup>10</sup>Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., May 11, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



wood, he awarded another to the same firm for about 1,500,000 pounds of shelled corn. To make matters worse, on June 5 and 15, he ordered another 4,300,000 pounds of grain from Adams and Wickes. In excess of requirements by 35,000 bushels (and \$70,000), this supply was held in reserve by the contractors.<sup>11</sup>

While the corn rotted in the warehouses of Adams and Wickes, late in June, Mackenzie grew concerned over his supply of forage. Because the present contract expired in three days, and because Reynolds had not notified him of arrangements for the coming month, the colonel ordered 2,000 bushels of oats from another source. On June 28, however, the department commander informed him that Adams and Wickes would supply all grain for Fort Richardson, and ordered Mackenzie to cancel his order for forage.<sup>12</sup> The instructions not only arrived too late to stop the contract for oats, but goaded Mackenzie into writing directly to the commanding officer of the Division of the South on June 28 and 30. Asking for an investigation of purchases in the Department of Texas, the colonel wrote: "The whole thing is monstrous...I will not allow myself to be quietly made an actor in what I consider

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, July 11 and 19, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



to be a fraud."<sup>13</sup>

Fraud or no, Adams and Wickes delivered the first load of corn in early July, about the time that Mackenzie and Reynolds exchanged correspondence over the invoicing of pack-mules. As might be expected, the corn proved unfit for issue. To prevent total waste, however, Mackenzie used as much as he could and sold the rest.<sup>14</sup> Reynolds added further insult, late in August, by notifying him that the new contractor--a man named O'Brien--had failed to execute bond. As a matter of fact, the contractor sent his bond into the Department of Texas on July 5, but when Reynolds claimed default, O'Brien did not bother to renew it.<sup>15</sup> So, it came as no surprise when Adams and Wickes supplied corn from the 4,300,000 pounds they held in reserve for just such emergencies. Nor did it surprise Mackenzie that his protests went unheeded.

By this time the department commander became aware of Mackenzie's letters to the Division of the South and, to protect himself, initiated court martial proceedings against the colonel. The charges read: "Disobedience of Orders; Contempt

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid. "Charges and Specifications Preferred against Colonel Ranald S. Mackenzie," AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Testimony of McCook and Lt. R. G. Carter in Report on Management of War Department (Serial 1715), pp. 103-105, 135-136.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 135-136. Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., May 11, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.



and Disrespect Towards His Commanding Officer; Conduct Unbecoming an Officer and Gentleman; and Conduct Prejudicial to Good Order and Military Discipline."<sup>16</sup> Reynolds sent the accusations to Lt. Gen. Philip H. Sheridan who commanded the Division of the Missouri, under which the Department of Texas now operated. On December 18, 1871 Sheridan forwarded the papers to Sec. of War W. W. Belknap, an official who would someday resign under charges of corruption. Secretary Belknap turned the documents over to the Judge Advocate General who ruled that it was "clearly not expedient to prosecute...." Belknap concurred in the decision and, on January 12, 1872, directed that Mackenzie merely be admonished for his conduct towards a superior officer. The papers returned to the Division of the Missouri and disappeared.<sup>17</sup> The controversy ended--for the moment. In slightly over three years, however, it would flare up again. So, for future reference, Mackenzie carefully filed a document that he obtained shortly after Reynolds preferred charges against him. It was a deed to the house that Adams and Wickes bestowed on the department commander.<sup>18</sup>

In all other respects, Mackenzie passed a quiet winter at Fort Richardson. Except for a brief skirmish or two early

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<sup>16</sup>"Charges and Specifications," Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Memorandum in Ibid. Adj. Gen. to Heister Clymer, Chairman of Committee on Expenditures in the War Dept., Mar. 29, 1876, Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., May 11, 1876, Ibid.



in 1872, the 4th Cavalry saw no action until late March.<sup>19</sup> On the second of that month, Mackenzie rode out of Fort Richardson with orders to preside over a general court martial at Fort Sill.<sup>20</sup> His escort caught a glimpse of the colonel's sensitivity at one point in the five-day trip when they stumbled on the nude and scalped body of an Indian. Perhaps recalling his grisly experience on Salt Creek Prairie, Mackenzie grew "quite excited," "unusually" nervous and irritable. He became very agitated again one night when he thought an officer failed to picket the horses securely.<sup>21</sup> The colonel would not soon forget the stampede of the previous October. Except for his disposition, however, nothing marred the remainder of the trip but the howling sandstorm that ushered the detachment into Fort Sill.<sup>22</sup>

While Mackenzie conducted the court martial and enjoyed the hospitality of Colonel Grierson and his officers, a minor incident occurred that proved of great significance to the settlement of the Texas frontier. On March 25, 1872 a detachment of Troop I, 4th Cavalry, fought a hot little engagement in which they killed 2 Indians, wounded 3 others,

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<sup>19</sup>Record of Engagements, pp. 31-33.

<sup>20</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 253.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 255.



and captured 19 horses.<sup>23</sup> But the real importance of the encounter lay in the 17 or 18 year-old captive who rode back to Fort Concho with the soldiers. The boy, named Polonio Ortiz, confessed that he was one of 50 New Mexicans who regularly stole cattle in Texas. Besides giving the name of his employer, Ortiz surprised his interrogators by stating that thieves drove stolen cattle to New Mexico over a good wagon road that abounded with permanent water and grass. The boy also stated that, except for three days in the entire trek across the Staked Plains, only short marches separated water-holes. To support his story, Polonio Ortiz gave explicit directions, complete with descriptions and distances. He also mentioned that a band of Comanches under Mow-way made their camps around Cañon Blanco and Cañada Resgata.<sup>24</sup>

In view of the boy's testimony, Brig. Gen. Christopher C. Augur--now commanding the Department of Texas--directed Mackenzie, in May, to establish a supply camp on the Fresh Fork of the Brazos from which he would operate with his cavalry.<sup>25</sup> At or near the base of the previous year, and almost equi-distant from Forts Concho and Griffin, the camp

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<sup>23</sup>(RG:94) Medical History of Fort Concho, Book 205, pp. 58-59, National Archives. Record of Engagements, p. 32. Report of C. C. Augur in RSW, 1872 (Serial 1558), pp. 55-56.

<sup>24</sup>Ortiz's statement, May 21, 1872, in Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Augur's report, RSW, 1872 (Serial 1558), pp. 55-56. (RG:94) Medical History of Fort Concho, Book 205, pp. 58-59, National Archives.

<sup>25</sup>Augur's report in RSW, 1872 (Serial 1558), pp. 55-56.



would facilitate the transport of forage and rations to the field. From that point, Mackenzie hoped to stop Indian incursions into western Texas, except those emanating directly from the Fort Sill reservation. Moreover, he wanted to stamp out the illicit traffic in cattle over the Quitaque Road to New Mexico.<sup>26</sup> This "Comanchero" trade flourished in regular stations between Spur, Texas, and Forts Sumner and Bascom in New Mexico. Comancheros encouraged marauding by providing a market for stolen livestock, not to mention their trade in firearms. So, with Indian raids and illicit trade as but two sides of the same coin, Mackenzie concluded that the only sure way to strangle Comanchero traffic was to corral Indians on territorial reservations.<sup>27</sup>

With this dual mission, Mackenzie departed Fort Richardson on June 14, 1872 with Troops A, D, F, and L of the 4th Cavalry, and Co. I, 24th Infantry. At the head of 12 officers and 272 enlisted men, plus a contingent of Tonkawa scouts, the colonel followed his route of the previous year --a trail that would someday bear his name.<sup>28</sup> After leaving

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<sup>26</sup>Augur to Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, May 30, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>27</sup>J. Evetts Haley, "The Comanchero Trade," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXVIII, 3 (Jan., 1935), 157-176. Report of the Committee of Investigation Sent in 1873 by the Mexican Government to the Frontier of Texas (New York: Baker & Godwin, 1875), pp. 372-375.

<sup>28</sup>Mackenzie's report to Augur, Oct. 12, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Carter, On the Border, p. 376.



Fort Griffin and crossing the Big Bend of the Clear Fork of the Brazos, the command moved over Paint and California Creeks, thence to the Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos, and from there to Cottonwood Springs. Finally, early in July, the column reached its base of operations on the Fresh Fork of the Brazos.<sup>29</sup>

Mackenzie opened the campaign by sending Capt. Napoleon B. McLaughlin and two troops of cavalry some 90 miles south to search for Comancheros or stolen cattle in the area of Mucha Que.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, other detachments ranged north and west from the supply camp, generally following the line of the Staked Plains. Also keeping the Llano in sight, a force under Mackenzie scouted to an unknown point north of the Red River. But, when heavy rains obliterated the only trail that held promise, they returned to base. Although the command marched 208 1/3 miles between July 9 and 19, they sighted neither Indians nor Comancheros.<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, scouting reports and Polonio Ortiz convinced Mackenzie that hostiles camped at Quitaque or on the head of the Palo Duro. He felt confident that many "incorrigibly hostile" Indians pitched their lodges about the headwaters of the North Fork of the Red River. As his first pro-

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Army and Navy Journal, X (Nov. 16, 1872), 213. Carter, On the Border, p. 376.

<sup>31</sup>Mackenzie's report to Augur, July 22, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



ject, therefore, the colonel planned to comb those streams that emptied into and formed the head of the main Red River. After scouting that area, he would return to the supply camp before going to McClellan's and Sweetwater Creeks.<sup>32</sup>

Such an ambitious itinerary posed logistical problems. Even after July 21, when the wagons of Lieutenant Lawton rattled into camp, Mackenzie figured that his forage and rations would last only until September 1. He therefore lost no time unloading the provisions, and sent back 21 wagons to Fort Concho for a new load, while 13 others left to pick up another cargo at Fort Griffin. In the event that the campaign took him to the North Fork of the Red River, the colonel asked General Augur to place at his disposal 9,000 rations and from 60,000 to 80,000 pounds of short forage at Camp Supply in the Indian Territory. That precaution insured provisions through October, the month that Augur expected Mackenzie to return if he found no Indians.<sup>33</sup> Certainly neither officer foresaw the trek that would carry the 4th Cavalry far enough west to draw supplies from forts in New Mexico.

After the wagons pulled out of the supply camp, Mackenzie ascended the Staked Plains and took up an old wagon road which he supposed led to Quitaque. Before long, however, the

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, to Dept. of Texas, Aug. 7, 1872, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Augur to Mackenzie, Aug. 14, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



road merged with a very large cattle trail. Electing to pursue this course, the colonel followed it to Laguna Salada, where it joined the Mucha Que Trail. Although he had not intended to scout this section of the country, the trail proved so clearly defined that Mackenzie could not resist its lure. He therefore continued across the Staked Plains which, as Polonio Ortíz promised, provided good grass and water. In fact, the Llano furnished too much water. Heavy rains made it impossible to tell the precise date of large trails, and obliterated smaller ones. Nevertheless, Mackenzie's optimism grew.<sup>34</sup>

August 7 found the command camped on Las Cañaditas, just east of Fort Sumner, New Mexico. While Lieutenant Lawton purchased forage at the post, Mackenzie looked forward to arresting "traders" on the morrow.<sup>35</sup> On August 8, therefore, the column broke camp and followed the trail until it forked about a mile west of Alamogordo. Although rains made it impossible to date tracks made by the most recent herd, Mackenzie chose the fork that led within a mile of Puerta de Luna, a settlement south of Las Vegas. There the trail disintegrated.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, the command moved towards Puerta de Luna to arrest the men (possibly the firm of Hughs and Hartman) whom Polonio Ortíz knew as leaders or equippers of

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<sup>34</sup>Mackenzie's report to Augur, Aug. 7, 1872, Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, Aug. 15, 1872, Ibid.



raiding parties the previous winter.<sup>37</sup> But Mackenzie arrived at the village to find the suspects gone. They probably fled to escape a party of citizens who were arresting cattle thieves and confiscating their livestock.<sup>38</sup>

No doubt disappointed, Mackenzie pushed on to Fort Bascom. Arriving there on August 16, he learned that Colonel Gregg and a column of the 8th Cavalry departed the post on August 7 to scout the headwaters of the Red River.<sup>39</sup> Mackenzie nevertheless decided to recross the Staked Plains by a northern route unless he encountered Gregg's command on the way. The colonel lingered at Fort Bascom long enough to draw supplies and for his troopers to reduce the post sutler's stock of whiskey. They were therefore a very "dilapidated set of men" the next morning when the trumpeter sounded "Boots and Saddles."<sup>40</sup> Aching heads found no relief on the night of August 17, about 20 miles southeast of Fort Bascom, when a thunderstorm bombarded their bivouac. Bolts of lightening knocked one man senseless, and killed the prized horse of 2nd Lt. John A. McKinney--a newcomer to the regiment, and destined to become

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<sup>37</sup>Mackenzie's report to Augur, Aug. 15, 1872, Ibid.  
Henry W. Strong, My Frontier Days and Indian Fights on the Plains of Texas (n. p. [1924]), p. 34.

<sup>38</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, Aug. 15, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid. Strong, My Indian Fights, p. 34.



a favorite of Mackenzie.<sup>41</sup> On the following day, the column slogged over the Santa Fe-Fort Smith Road, before taking the Palo Duro or Quitaque Trail at Plaza Larga. True to Polonio Ortiz's prediction, the Palo Duro route provided good grass and permanent spring water all the way to Texas, with waterholes not over 30 miles apart.<sup>42</sup>

Although the 4th Cavalry did not encounter Colonel Gregg on the Palo Duro Trail, Tonkawa scouts reported several parties of Indians. Once, Mackenzie's hopes leaped when a Mexican guide told him of a large camp of hostiles nearby. So, following the general course of the Palo Duro, the cavalry rode rapidly for 10 or 15 miles until the Tonkawas (who had followed the guide) reported the Indians as nothing more than a small party of hunters a long way from home. Disappointed, Mackenzie and his men returned to the Quitaque Trail.<sup>43</sup> The colonel's frustration increased as the column plodded across the Staked Plains. By September 2, when the command coaxed its weary horses into the supply camp on the Fresh Fork, Mackenzie considered his campaign a failure.<sup>44</sup>

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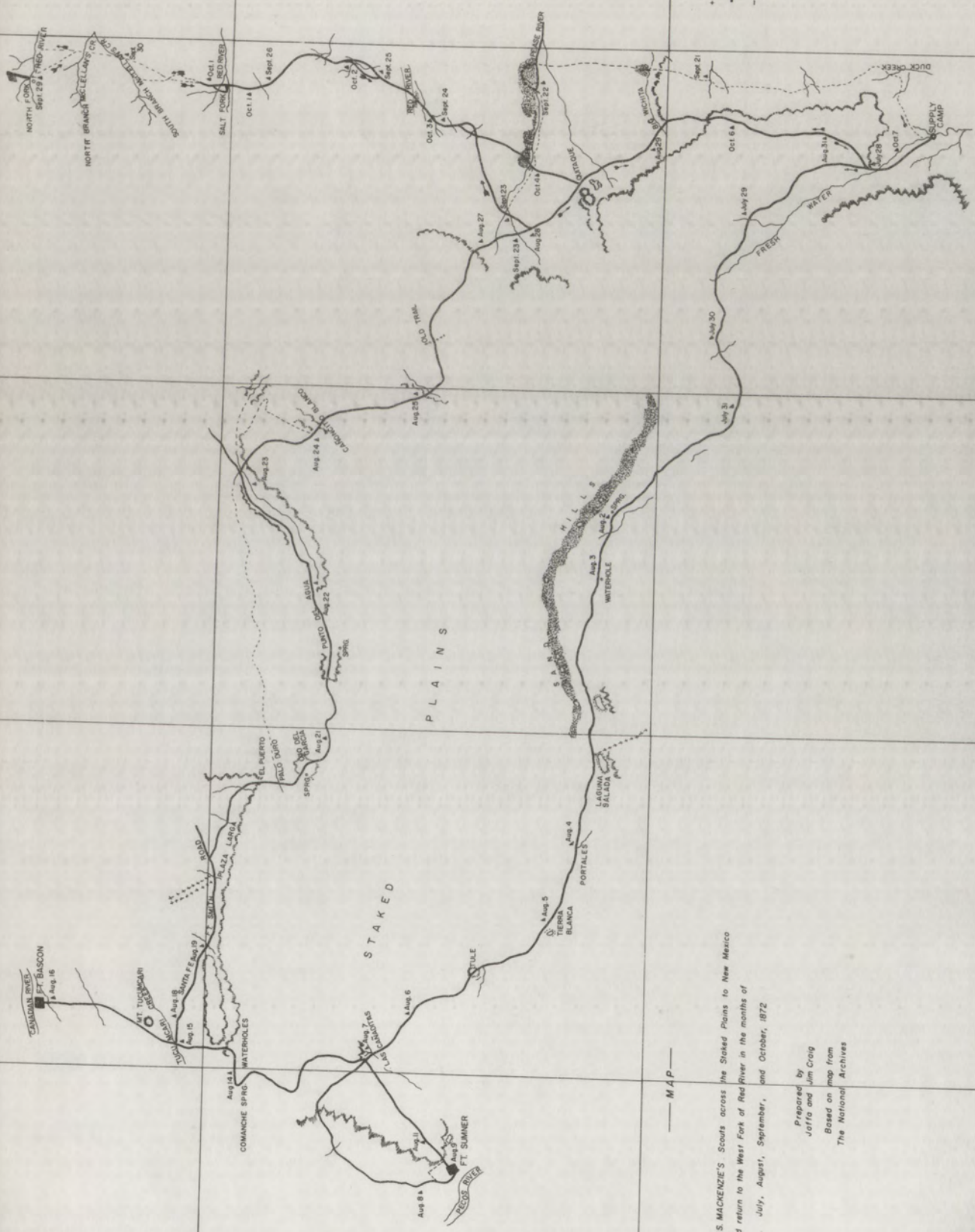
<sup>41</sup>Army and Navy Journal, X (1872), 212.

<sup>42</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, Sept. 3, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Cf., Augur's report in RSW, 1872 (Serial 1558), p. 56.

<sup>43</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, Sept. 3, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.





- \*\*\*\*\* OLD ROADS AND TRAILS
- WAGON
- - - CANYON
- TRAIL OF MACKENZIE'S COMMAND
- BATTLEFIELD of SEPTEMBER 29, 1872
- SPRINGS
- CAMP SITES

Colonel A.S. MACKENZIE'S Scouts across the Staked Plains to New Mexico and return to the West Fork of Red River in the months of July, August, September, and October, 1872

Prepared by  
Jaffa and Jim Craig  
Based on map from  
The National Archives



Perhaps too preoccupied with thoughts of chastising hostile Indians to fully appreciate the long-range significance of his trek, the colonel nevertheless realized that it shattered the myth of the Staked Plains. For years men had argued that the Llano would not support a large body of Indians for any length of time. The expedition showed, however, that the headstreams of the Brazos, Pease, and Wichita Rivers were very well suited to the needs of Indians during the winter. And Mackenzie objected to the Brazos country only because it supported no buffalo in the summer. Although the Palo Duro Trail depended less on rain than did the route followed to New Mexico, both proved superior in almost every respect to the Pecos roads.<sup>45</sup> On the basis of his discovery, the colonel believed that if higher authority ordered it, he could make the trails across the Staked Plains safe for legitimate cattle traffic.<sup>46</sup> General Augur, on the other hand, applauded the journey as the first time to his knowledge that troops successfully crossed the dreaded Llano Estacado.<sup>47</sup>

Be that as it may, with Augur's October deadline looming closer, and still no Indians engaged, Mackenzie felt that he must "do something" before giving up the expedition.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie's report of July 22, 1872, Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Augur's report in RSW, 1872 (Serial 1558), p. 56. Carter, On the Border, p. 380.

<sup>48</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, Sept. 3, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



But for nearly three weeks the command rested at the supply camp while Mackenzie laid plans for another stab at the Comanches. With his horses recuperated sufficiently by September 21, he resumed the campaign with Troops A, D, F, I, and L of the 4th Cavalry--in all, 7 officers, 215 enlisted men, and 9 Tonkawa scouts.<sup>49</sup> Eight days later the horsemen crossed the Salt Fork of the Red River and moved about four miles above the junction of McClellan's Creek and the North Fork.<sup>50</sup>

About mid-afternoon on September 29 the column discovered a vineyard of wild plums or grapes. As his men had not tasted food for two days, Mackenzie allowed them to stuff their aching stomachs.<sup>51</sup> While the troopers gorged on the succulent fruit, McCord, one of the scouts, found two trails that led from the far side of the vineyard. Reasoning that the tracks made by a mule led to an Indian camp, he reported his findings to the colonel. Mackenzie immediately sent Tonkawas to investigate the trail. They set off at a rapid gait, "urged and assisted" by Capt. Wirt Davis.<sup>52</sup> Before long, the scouts returned and reported a large village of hostiles about a mile away on McClellan's Creek. Mackenzie passed the order to mount, and the 4th Cavalry moved out at a gallop.

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<sup>49</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, Oct. 12, 1872, Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid. Carter, On the Border, p. 377.

<sup>51</sup>Charlton quoted in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 85.

<sup>52</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, Oct. 12, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



The Comanche village numbered about 262 lodges--175 of them large tipis. It was the camp of Mow-way (Shaking Hand), a chief who once killed a grizzly in hand-to-hand combat and who now wore the huge claw in his scalp-lock. Although he favored peace, the friendly Comanche entertained little desire to become an agency Indian. It was Mow-way who once said: "When the Indians in here [the reservation] are treated better than we are outside, it will be time enough to come in." He kept an open mind on the subject, however, and in the fall of 1872 Mow-way left his village in charge of Kai-wotche and went to meet the "Peace People."<sup>53</sup> In his absence the Comanches prepared for winter. They were drying buffalo meat and making pemmican on the afternoon of September 29 when several tribesmen noticed animals crossing a ridge about three or four miles distant. As clouds of dust obscured the movement, however, the Indians assumed that it was only some of their people driving buffalo to the camp for slaughter.<sup>54</sup> But about 4:00 p.m. they heard the thunder of hooves and looked up to see a column of horsemen pouring out of a draw about half a mile away. The village burst into confusion as many Comanches raced for the pony herd that grazed between them and the Long

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid. Mow-way was a Kotchateka whose band lived with the Kwahadis. See Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 159. Also see accounts of Cohaya and Mumsukawa in Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>54</sup>Thompson in Cavalry Journal, p. 430. Thompson was a participant in the fight.



Knives. As they worked feverishly to drive the horses into camp and mount the warriors, the Indians might have heard a shrill voice rise above the blare of trumpets:

"Right Front into Line!"<sup>55</sup>

The blue wave pounded forward as Mackenzie fell in beside Capt. Eugene B. Beaumont, commander of Co. A, the base troop.<sup>56</sup> Sending Co. D racing after the Comanche ponies, the colonel led the rest of the command towards the village. Charging "handsomely" through a cluster of lodges somewhat detached from the main camp, Troop I met little opposition.<sup>57</sup> As the startled hostiles recoiled, only Cos. A and F met sharp resistance on the right. In the "brisk fight" of about half an hour, Troop F under Capt. Wirt Davis sustained most of the casualties.<sup>58</sup> Pvt. John Dooras sank to the ground, strangling on the blood from his torn throat. A Comanche bullet bit into the stomach of Pvt. William Rankin, ripping along his side and lodging near the spine. Pvt. John Kelly took a bullet through the neck, a wound from which he would die three days later.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Mackenzie's report, Oct. 12, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Thompson in Cavalry Journal, p. 430. Charlton quoted in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 85. Charlton served in Co. F.

<sup>56</sup>Thompson in Cavalry Journal, p. 430.

<sup>57</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, Oct. 12, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid. Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 85.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Augur, Oct. 12, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



Meanwhile, Troop A galloped to within 10 or 15 yards of a small ridge covered with thick brush. Suddenly, about 75 warriors rose from the bushes and delivered a fusilade. The shots passed harmlessly overhead, as Co. A pressed home its charge. The Comanches fell back into a crescent-shaped ravine through which ran a rather large brook. In the center of the depression stood a deep pond about 25 or 30 feet long, and 8 to 10 feet wide. As the flanks of Troop A deployed to seal both exits to the gulch, the Indians fought desperately. Twice they charged the blue line, and twice they reeled back with heavy loss. Each time a warrior fell, comrades heaved his body into the pool, no doubt hoping to spare him from the scalping knife.<sup>60</sup>

About 5:00 p.m. the last resistance collapsed. Seeing that two companies were sufficient to carry the village, Mackenzie sent Beaumont and his men to help Troop D round up the pony herd, while Co. L dashed after the fleeing tribesmen.<sup>61</sup> About dusk, when Cos. A and D rode back with a herd of ponies estimated as high as 3,000 head, Mackenzie counted the cost of his victory. He found it surprisingly cheap--one man dead and three wounded, among them Private Kelly who would soon die. Ten cavalry horses and mules fell in the engage-

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<sup>60</sup>Thompson in Cavalry Journal, pp. 430-431.

<sup>61</sup>Mackenzie's report, Oct. 12, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Thompson in Cavalry Journal, p. 431.



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On the other hand, 23 Comanche corpses (including Kai-wotche and his wife) littered the ground.<sup>63</sup> An old Mexican woman found in the village claimed that she saw 62 bodies thrown into the creek during the fight.<sup>64</sup> And, weeks later, when the warriors surrendered, they admitted the death of 52 people.<sup>65</sup> Those left on the field fell prey to Tonkawa scalping knives. One scout, old Henry, grew indignant when Mackenzie ordered him to stop mutilating corpses, and demanded: "What fur you no lette me scalp hemme Commanche?"<sup>66</sup> Whatever the colonel's answer, he was far too sensitive to sanction such ritual.

As usual, the warriors escaped, leaving behind over 120 women and children who crept from the chaparral with

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Augur, Oct. 12, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 162. Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 86.

<sup>63</sup>Mackenzie's reports of Oct. 4 and 12, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Record of Engagements, p. 32. Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 162.

<sup>64</sup>Strong, My Indian Fights, p. 38.

<sup>65</sup>Thompson in Cavalry Journal, p. 431. Mackenzie also believed that a "number" more were killed. See his report to Augur, Oct. 12, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>66</sup>Strong, My Indian Fights, p. 39.



hands raised.<sup>67</sup> Some dripped blood, and the only male among them proved too badly wounded to move. As the surgeon ministered to their wounds, Polonio Ortiz recognized many of the Indians as part of the band that wintered at Mucha Que the previous year. José Carrion, a former blacksmith and teamster, identified several of the captured mules as part of a wagon train destroyed in the spring of 1872 under circumstances of "peculiar atrocity." Adding to the guilt of Mow-way's band, Francisco Secundino Nieto, a 14 year-old boy from Eagle Pass, Texas stepped forward and told how he fell into Comanche hands two years before. The group also included seven other Mexicans, women who had been captives so long that they were now practically Indians.<sup>68</sup>

Mackenzie placed the prisoners under heavy guard and ordered his men to burn the shattered lodges. Shortly after dark the 4th Cavalry rode from the village with the captive Comanches and livestock.<sup>69</sup> Two miles away, in a dry camp among the sandhills, Mackenzie distributed many of the captured horses to the Tonkawas as reward and encouragement for

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<sup>67</sup>Mackenzie's report of Oct. 14, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Record of Engagements, p. 32. Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 162.

<sup>68</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, Oct. 12, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. U. S. Grant, Message on the Frontiers of Texas, House Exec. Doc. 257, 43rd Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. XVII (Serial 1615), pp. 19-20.

<sup>69</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, Oct. 12, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



their services.<sup>70</sup> Then he ordered the animals herded into a deep pocket or sink in the prairie about a mile from the bivouac. With the horses guarded only by Lieutenant Boehm and Co. E, the tired troops crawled into their bed-rolls.<sup>71</sup>

Later that night, Comanche warriors tied up the tails of their remaining ponies and rode to the camp of the Long Knives. Screaming, shooting, and waving blankets, they burst upon the sleeping soldiers. Co. E bore the brunt of the attack, as the troopers scrambled out of their covers and fired blindly into the night.<sup>72</sup> The stampede lasted only a few minutes, but when the Indians faded into the night, a mere 50 horses and 9 mules remained of the captured herd.<sup>73</sup> At dawn, on September 30, Lieutenant Boehm and his troop piled saddles and accoutrements on the remaining animals and trudged in to face the guffaws of their comrades.<sup>74</sup> Mackenzie doubtless found no humor in the situation. For the second time in less than two years he suffered humiliation at the hands of the Comanches. But, it would be the last time. Henceforth, he would make no effort

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid. Cf., Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 86.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Mackenzie's report of Oct. 12, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 162. Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 86.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie's report of Oct. 12, 1872, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>74</sup>Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 86.



to hold captured ponies, and would perfect methods of guarding his own animals.

So, with much of the command on foot, and dreading attack, Mackenzie headed back towards the supply camp on the Fresh Fork. Several nights at dusk, scouts noted small parties of hostiles stalking the column.<sup>75</sup> Their presence, Mackenzie feared, not only jeopardized his own stock, but also that of Colonel Shafter at the supply camp. He was therefore relieved to find everything secure when the cavalry reached the supply base early in October. They rested there until October 11 when Mackenzie received a message that directed him to meet General Augur in San Antonio.<sup>76</sup> Within a few days the colonel sent two companies back to Fort Griffin. He led the other three troops to Fort Richardson where they placed the captives in a corral under heavy guard.<sup>77</sup>

Between November, 1872 and April, 1873 Indian depredations in west Texas declined, leading some people to applaud an "unprecedented" peace.<sup>78</sup> Allowing for exaggeration, victories such as won by Mackenzie on September 29, 1872 came

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<sup>75</sup>Mackenzie to Lt.Col. William R. Shafter, Oct. 4, 1872, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>76</sup>Army and Navy Journal, X (1872), 212.

<sup>77</sup>Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 86.

<sup>78</sup>"Annual Report of the Dept. of Texas for the Year of 1873," in AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Leckie, Conquest of Southern Plains Indians, pp. 273-274. Report of U. S. Commissioners to Texas in RSW, 1874 (Serial 1615), p. 13.



very rarely in Indian warfare. Although surprisingly little is known of his triumph on McClellan's Creek, it came closer to total victory than any of his career.<sup>79</sup> He not only achieved as great or greater surprise than in any of his attacks, but the Comanche village proved the largest ever struck by Mackenzie. Moreover, he probably inflicted heavier casualties on the enemy than in any of his Indian fights. For all that, the captives in the corral at Fort Richardson proved of even greater importance.

The Comanche women and children provided excellent "leverage" for negotiation. Within weeks after their capture, the Kwahadi warriors straggled into the Fort Sill reservation for the first time in history.<sup>80</sup> They admitted defeat and promised to abandon their warlike ways in return for their families. As evidence of their sincerity, the Comanches surrendered 17 stolen mules to Kicking Bird, the Kiowa chief who offered his services to the U. S. Commissioners to Texas.<sup>81</sup> Agent Tatum, on the other hand, promised the Indians that he would work for the release of their families if they returned all the white captives they held. This phase of the negotiations gained momentum when Horseback, an old Noconi chief, came forward and offered his aid. He

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<sup>79</sup>Cf., Thompson in Cavalry Journal, p. 431.

<sup>80</sup>Lawrie Tatum quoted in Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, p. 331. Leckie, Conquest of Southern Plains Indians, p. 273.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.



worked diligently among the hostiles and, on December 4, 1872 a party of Comanches came to Fort Sill to discuss the release of four white boys. Thanks to the efforts of old Horseback, the bargaining went so well that by the end of March, 1873 Agent Tatum recovered several white captives without paying ransom.<sup>82</sup> But, had it not been for the capture of the women and children that brought the Kwahadis into the reservation, negotiations might have been deferred for many months.

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<sup>82</sup>Ibid. Tatum quoted by Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, p. 331. Cf., Report of Commissioners to Texas in RSW, 1874 (Serial 1615), pp. 25-26.



## CHAPTER IV

### SABERS ACROSS THE RIO GRANDE

On New Years Day, 1873, Mackenzie transferred headquarters to Fort Concho.<sup>1</sup> His stay would be a short one, however, because of marauding Indians along the Mexican border. Almost every new moon, bands of Kickapoos, Lipans, and Mescaleros forded the Rio Grande between Eagle Pass and Laredo, Texas. Their bold forays carried them into the counties between Corpus Christi and Laredo, and those bordering the Nueces River, where hundreds of thousands of sheep and cattle grazed. Thieving and murdering, the raiders threatened to ruin the stock industry in those areas. Neither the weak Texas militia nor the regular army could stem the incursions. So, hostile Indians found marauding along the Rio Grande a lucrative "business."<sup>2</sup>

Not a little profit accrued to the Kickapoos, a tribe whose animosity towards Texans dated from the Civil War. In January, 1865, after refusing to join the Confederacy, the Indians received permission to leave Texas. On their way to

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<sup>1</sup>(RG:94) Medical History of Fort Concho, Book 205, p. 81, National Archives. Cf., Carter, On the Border, p. 397.

<sup>2</sup>Lewis G. Brown, Collector of Internal Revenue at Corpus Christi, to General Sheridan, Jan. 9, 1873, in Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Report of U. S. Commissioners to Texas, in RSW, 1874 (Serial 1615), pp. 4-27.



Mexico, however, a party of Rebels attacked them. Although the tribesmen trounced their assailants, they remained implacable foes of the Texans.<sup>3</sup> The Mexican government, on the other hand, proved more sympathetic, allowing the Indians to settle in Mexico on condition that they protect the northern towns from Lipans and Mescaleros.<sup>4</sup> The Kickapoos kept their end of the bargain but, oddly enough, the spring of 1873 found them camped with their erstwhile enemies. Moreover, efforts to remove the Kickapoos to the United States met with failure. For one reason, the tribes of northern Mexico sold their plunder to a group of merchants in Coahuila, men who naturally resisted efforts to exile their suppliers. In 1871, for example, when the Mexican government tried to cooperate with American commissioners for the removal of the Kickapoos to the Indian Territory, local vested interests thwarted the plan.<sup>5</sup> Negotiations also broke down the following year, and the Mexican government seemed powerless to enforce its will.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 4-12. Carter, On the Border, pp. 432-433. Edward S. Wallace, "The Mackenzie Raid," The Westerners: New York Posse Brand Book, IV, 4 (1958), 73, 75-76, 87, 89-90.

<sup>4</sup>Report of U. S. Commissioners to Texas in RSW, 1874 (Serial 1615), pp. 15-27. Wallace in Westerners Brand Book, p. 76.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. J. Fred Rippy, "Some Precedents of the Pershing Expedition into Mexico," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXIV, 4 (Apr., 1921), 304.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. Foreign Relations of the U. S. (Mexico, 1872-1873), House Exec. Doc. 1, 43rd Cong., 1st Sess., Part I, Vol. I (Serial 1594), p. 343.



So, by mid-January, 1873, Sec. of State Hamilton Fish decided that because the Mexican government was either too weak or too apathetic to prevent raiding, the United States would have to take stronger measures. Before provoking a crisis, however, Fish sent commissioners to reopen discussions on the removal of the Kickapoos.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the secretary resolved that, if raids persisted, marauders must be punished in their Mexican haunts.<sup>8</sup> His determination may have been influenced by the argument that forays into Texas from the Rio Grande would decrease by 50% if the Kickapoos were removed to the Indian Territory.<sup>9</sup>

Secretary Fish found firm support in President Grant who, in the spring of 1873, deployed his forces to meet a possible crisis. Drawing the 7th Cavalry from the Division of the South to protect northwestern Texas, Grant ordered Mackenzie and the 4th Cavalry to relieve the 9th Cavalry in the troubled area along the Rio Grande. The President was "doubtless influenced" in his decision by the youth and enterprise of Mackenzie, and because the colonel imparted his

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<sup>7</sup>Letters from Hamilton Fish to Don Ignacio Mariscal, Mar. 19 and Apr. 9, 1873, in U. S., Department of State, Dispatches to U. S. Ministers in Mexico (Library, University of New Mexico), Microfilm Reel 70.

<sup>8</sup>Foreign Relations of the U. S. (Serial 1594), p. 343.

<sup>9</sup>Col. Edward Hatch quoted in Report of the Secretary of Interior, 1870, House Exec. Doc. 1, 41st Cong., 2nd Sess., Vol. III, Part 3 (Serial 1414), p. 93. Hereinafter reports of the Sec. of Interior will be cited as RSI, and will include serial numbers.



own "active character" to the 4th Cavalry.<sup>10</sup> The transfer represented the first clear-cut instance in which the government employed Mackenzie as a trouble-shooter.

Late in March, 1873 the 4th Cavalry marched from Fort Concho to the Rio Grande. The regiment took station at Fort Clark, the post where service was considered almost equivalent to "honorable mention."<sup>11</sup> The 4th had barely reached the border when, on April 11, Sec. of War Belknap and General Sheridan arrived at Fort Clark. On the following day, after a review and inspection of the regiment, Sheridan held a conference with Mackenzie.<sup>12</sup> Although no record of the conversation exists, Robert G. Carter (Mackenzie's adjutant at the time) claims that the colonel once repeated it to him. According to Carter, Sheridan said to Mackenzie:

I want you to control and hold down the situation, and do it in your own way. I want you to be bold, enterprising, and at all times full of energy. When you begin, let it be a campaign of annihilation, obliteration, and complete destruction, as you have always in your dealings done to all Indians you have dealt with, etc. I think you understand what I want done, and the way you should employ your forces, etc.<sup>13</sup>

No doubt surprised by the irregularity of the instructions,

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<sup>10</sup>Gen. W. T. Sherman to C. C. Augur, Feb. 5, 1873, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Carter, On the Border, p. 416.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., pp. 402, 410, 422. Parker, Old Army, pp. 15-24.

<sup>12</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 417.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 422.



and his superior's confidence in him, Mackenzie inquired: "General Sheridan, under whose orders and upon what authority am I to act? Have you any plans to suggest, or will you issue me the necessary orders for my action?" Pounding the table, Sheridan retorted:

Damn the orders! Damn the authority! You are to go ahead on your own plan of action, and your authority and backing shall be General Grant and myself. With us behind you in whatever you do to clean up the situation, you can rest assured of the fullest support. You must assume the risk. We will assume the final responsibility should any result.<sup>14</sup>

Although Sheridan's words left Mackenzie very nervous, ~~he did not~~ he did not hesitate to press the risky business to its conclusion. As soon as Belknap and Sheridan left Fort Clark, the colonel sent Isaac Cox--the post guide--and two scouts, 60 or 70 miles inside Mexico. The scouts rode off with orders to ascertain the number and location of Indians, and learn all accessible routes leading to them--especially those suited to a rapid night march.<sup>15</sup> Save for the scouts, however, Mackenzie apparently confided his scheme to no one except Lieutenant Carter.<sup>16</sup>

To keep Mexican spies in nearby Brackettville from learning of his preparations, Mackenzie sent companies singly or in pairs to grazing camps near Fort Clark. There, for the

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 422-423.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 424.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 423-426.



next month, they drilled constantly. Every day found troopers at target practice, while companies and platoons moved mounted or dismounted through every evolution of column and line, with special emphasis on rapid fighting on foot to the right and left. But, perhaps more ominous than rigid training and discipline, Mackenzie ordered sabers honed to a razor-edge. The order evoked much speculation because the 4th Cavalry never carried such hardware on ordinary Indian campaigns.<sup>17</sup> The colonel did not explain.

The training period ended about eleven o'clock on the night of May 16 when Ike Cox and his scouts rode into Fort Clark. Cox reported a Kickapoo camp on the headwaters of the San Rodríguez River near the hamlet of Remolino.<sup>18</sup> He also said that a band of Lipans, numbering 30 warriors, had recently arrived at that place. Not knowing that Cox "greatly overestimated" the number of the Indians at Remolino, Mackenzie prepared to act.<sup>19</sup> With companies scattered about 15 miles apart, he wasted no time sending them instructions to concentrate at the camp of Capt. John Wilcox and Troop C on Las Moras River, about 12 miles from Fort Clark. So, by one o'clock on the morning of May 17, Cos. A, B, C, E, I, and M

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 425, 427.

<sup>18</sup>Mackenzie's report to Augur, May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Cf., Report of Committee Sent by Mexican Government, pp. 422-424.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 422. Mackenzie to Augur, May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



of the 4th Cavalry, plus a detachment of 18 Seminole Negro scouts under 1st Lt. John L. Bullis (24th Infantry)--in all, 400 men--received orders to pack up and saddle up.<sup>20</sup>

A few hours later the column marched slowly down Las Moras under an "unbearable" sun, planning to cross the Rio Grande under cover of darkness. Mackenzie called a halt at the mouth of Las Moras and briefly outlined the object of the raid, its probable risks and results. The colonel failed to mention the instructions under which he acted, however, letting his officers assume that he had orders from the War Department.<sup>21</sup> Shortly after eight o'clock on the night of May 17, between the mouth of Las Moras and the present town of Quemado, Mackenzie made his move. He gave a low "forward" and the cavalry plunged into the swift current of the Rio Grande.<sup>22</sup>

Two hours later they emerged from the dense canebrakes and chaparral that lined the river and trotted into the Terreno Desconocido--that dreary, almost waterless waste of

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<sup>20</sup>Ibid. Carter, On the Border, pp. 428-429. This is the basic account of the raid although Carter repeats it in The Mackenzie Raid into Mexico (Washington: Gibson Bros., 1919). Carter errs when he claims that Mackenzie made no report of the raid. See On the Border, p. 539. For data on Lt. Bullis and the famous Seminole scouts, see Edward S. Wallace, "General John Lapham Bullis: Thunderbolt of the Texas Frontier," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, LV, 1 (July, 1951), 77-85. Kenneth W. Porter, "The Seminole Negro Indian Scouts, 1870-1881," Ibid., LV, 3 (Jan., 1952), 358-377.

<sup>21</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 424, 430.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 431. Wallace, Southwestern Historical Quarterly, p. 75.



mountains and deserts west of Fort Clark that for years had sheltered marauding Indians.<sup>23</sup> The night air was soft and warm. The moon, lurking behind a light haze, cast its uncertain light on the almost ghost-like column. At the head of the command, half-breed guides on their "fox-gaited" ponies kept a sharp eye on the trail, as Mackenzie increased the pace. In the rear of the column the pack-train struggled to maintain a trot. But, under a heavy burden of rations, the mules fell farther behind, increasing the danger that they might be cut off by Mexicans or Indians.<sup>24</sup>

At the head of the column, Mackenzie remained ignorant of the faltering mules until an officer screwed up enough courage to tell him. The colonel "exploded" at the news, but reluctantly halted for five minutes and ordered the packs cut loose. Each man seized the opportunity to cram his pockets with dried bread, little knowing that such would be his fare for the next two days. Then, in a column of fours, the command resumed its "killing pace." Clouds of alkali dust swirled around the weary horsemen, caking their pallid, "corpse-like" faces. Their suffering eased slightly towards morning, however, when cool breezes from the Santa Rosa Mountains helped revive men and beasts.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid. Carter, On the Border, pp. 431-432.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 432-435.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., pp. 435-438. Mackenzie to Augur, May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



At dawn, on the morning of May 18, 1873, the expedition drew rein at its destination. About a mile away stood three Indian villages, each averaging 50 to 60 lodges. Beginning with the Kickapoos, the tipis of the Lipans and Mesqueros ran east and west along the south bank of the shallow San Rodríguez River. The latter two camps lay about a quarter of a mile beyond the Kickapoo lodges, separated from them by a formidable "slough" of water. The villages stood on level ground which sloped up to fairly sizeable hills on the northern side of the San Rodríguez. Several miles to the east lay the sleepy hamlet of Remolino, while the town of Zaragoza stood about 35 miles to the southeast. Almost equidistant to the east, Piedras Negras faced Eagle Pass, Texas across the Rio Grande.<sup>26</sup>

In preparation for the attack, weary troopers watered their horses. As the men tightened cinches and girths, and stuffed pockets with extra cartridges, equally weary officers inspected .50 caliber Spencer carbines and newly-issued .45 caliber Smith and Wesson revolvers.<sup>27</sup> With everything in readiness, Mackenzie formed the companies into a column of platoons. Ignoring his guides who advised dividing the command, he instructed the lead platoon to dash through the

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<sup>26</sup>Wallace in Westerners Brand Book, p. 87. Mackenzie's report to Augur, May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Mackenzie to Thomas G. Williams, May 22, 1873, Letter Book (Gilcrease Museum, Tulsa, Oklahoma).

<sup>27</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 438-439, 440, 456.



first village, fire by volley, then wheel to the right and ride back through the camp. Each succeeding platoon would follow suit, reloading and falling in at the rear of the column to repeat the process.<sup>28</sup>

Instructions completed by about 6:00 a.m., Mackenzie led the column down a long slope studded with cacti, prickly pear, and the ever-present Spanish bayonet. At the foot of the hill, men in the front ranks spied the vague outline of the Indian villages. As the fringes of chaparral grew thinner, the camps burst into full view. Mackenzie warned his men to hold their mounts well in hand and not to scatter, before shouting "Charge!" Led by Capt. Napoleon B. McLaughlin and Lt. Charles L. Hudson, the gray horses of Co. I broke into a gallop. In a charge reminiscent of Civil War days, shouts of command mingled with cheers as the 4th Cavalry pounded across a mile of open but fairly rough ground.<sup>29</sup>

A shot rang out, followed by another, then swelled into a front line volley. Completely surprised, the Kickapoos gave ground as the more distant Lipans and Mescaleros escaped.<sup>30</sup> A brief but "sharp skirmish" ensued in which officers shouted imperative commands to hold their men in

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid., pp. 440, 448.

<sup>29</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Carter, On the Border, pp. 440-441.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 440, 448. Wallace in Westerners Brand Book, p. 87. Mackenzie's report of May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



ranks and prevent individuals from dashing off among the lodges. Gallant to the "point of rashness," the leading platoons of Troop I chased the Kickapoos over the open ground beyond the lodges as the rear companies rode up and dismounted.<sup>31</sup> Pvt. Peter Carrigan, attached to Co. I, fell mortally wounded, and Pvt. Leonard Knippenberger of Troop E suffered a slight wound in the face. Pvt. William M. Pair, a "splendid old soldier" who had served in the regiment since its formation, took a bullet in the right arm near the shoulder--a wound that cost him his arm.<sup>32</sup>

While the 4th Cavalry suffered no other losses, the short engagement ended with 19 dead Kickapoos strewn over the field. More probably died in the fight, but with his usual conservatism, Mackenzie refused to report casualties that he could not confirm.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, 40 women and children surrendered. Among them stood old Costilietos, principal chief of the Lipans, whose flight through the bushes terminated at the end of a lasso thrown by a Seminole scout.<sup>34</sup> Other scouts captured 65 ponies.<sup>35</sup> Yet, despite the success of his attack, Mackenzie worried lest the command be struck

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid. Carter, On the Border, p. 440.

<sup>32</sup>Mackenzie's report, May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid. Carter, On the Border, pp. 443-444.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 444. Mackenzie to Augur, May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.



by a band of Mescaleros who lived a few miles distant. Before retiring, however, he ordered the villages destroyed. Soldiers and scouts ran among the lodges with long torches of pampa plumes and other rank grasses. They found the tipis well stocked with stores and ammunition, as well as itemized contracts from many prominent Mexicans for regular deliveries of cattle and horses.<sup>36</sup>

While Mackenzie's men applied the torch to the Indian camps, Mexican militia answered the roll of drums in the villages of Coahuila. About two o'clock that afternoon, drums roused citizens of Piedras Negras from their siesta. The Mexicans quickly shed their lethargy when told that hundreds of gringos defiled their national territory. Townspeople armed and mounted while couriers raced to Saltillo and other hamlets. The ardor of the militia cooled somewhat, however, when they learned that los americanos were regular troops.<sup>37</sup> Mexican determination further weakened when the American commercial agent at Piedras Negras, William Schuchardt, explained that U. S. troops crossed the Rio Grande only to chastise Indians and had molested no white settlement. And, he warned, the more Mexicans sent against the invaders, the more Yankees would march against Mexico. As Schuchardt's words took effect, scouts rode into Piedras

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid. Carter, On the Border, pp. 441-442, 449.

<sup>37</sup>William Schuchardt to Mackenzie, May 19, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Carter, On the Border, pp. 448-449.



Negras and announced that "more sober minds" thought it foolish to attack the Americans. Many Mexicans therefore decided to be glad that the gringos had taught the Indians a lesson. Others, however, made threatening demonstrations to frighten off possible danger to their homes.<sup>38</sup>

Meanwhile, the 4th Cavalry plodded towards the Rio Grande. Under a broiling sun, and with nothing but crusts of bread to eat for the past two days, the weary command grew weaker. Only numerous lagoons kept suffering from becoming "intolerable."<sup>39</sup> But, exhaustion proved a greater menace. Men dozed by platoons and, during infrequent halts, could be aroused only by the greatest difficulty. Threats of punishment seemed to lose all effect. Throughout the night officers rode up and down the column, prodding men into an upright position. As they swayed in the saddle, many troopers grew alternately depressed, excited, morose, or quarrelsome. Not a few suffered hallucinations and other signs of "incipient insanity."<sup>40</sup> Mackenzie, who could not ride more than 25 or 30 miles without great pain, showed little sign of exhaustion. Nor did he reveal any symptom

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<sup>38</sup>Schuchardt to Mackenzie, May 19, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Translation of a letter from Luis Faiz to James H. Taylor, May 26, 1873, in Ibid. Cf., Report of Committee Sent by Mexican Government, p. 425.

<sup>39</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 449-451. Mackenzie to Augur, May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>40</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 451.



of the insanity that would overtake him someday.<sup>41</sup>

Shortly after dawn on May 19 the 4th Cavalry reached the Rio Grande. By then nearly all the troopers dozed low in their saddles, arms clutching the necks of their horses. Lashed two or three to a pony, the Kickapoo women and children presented an even more pitiful picture. Nonetheless, man and beast seemed to draw new strength from the refreshing waters of the Rio Grande when the column splashed into the current at Green Van's Ford.<sup>42</sup> In the struggle to get the litters safely across, Private Carrigan breathed his last.<sup>43</sup> The rest of the command made it across without mishap and bivouacked on a small plateau that overlooked the ford. Then, for the first time in 49 hours, riders stripped saddles from their jaded mounts.<sup>44</sup> After tending their horses, the troopers thronged to the river for a bath, unaware that they had just completed probably the longest ride ever made by a cavalry command of the U. S. Army. In 32 marching hours the 4th Cavalry covered 160 miles--part of the time either burdened by a pack-train, a badly wounded man, or 40 captives.<sup>45</sup>

While the troops relaxed, a rancher appeared at Green

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid. Carter, Corral Dust, pp. 1-6.

<sup>42</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 453-455. Mackenzie's report, May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. Carter, On the Border, p. 455.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 465-466. Cf., Mackenzie to Augur, May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



Van's Ford with jugs of mescal liquor. But, knowing that the firey brew could prove lethal to nervous, half-starved men, Mackenzie ordered it poured on the ground.<sup>46</sup> Almost at once another threat appeared in the form of Mexicans who gathered in large bodies on the opposite bank of the river. Mackenzie directed every fourth man to hold the horses and deployed marksmen among the dense canebrakes that nearly surrounded the plateau. Seeing that the Spencer carbines of the Yankee cavalry commanded Green Van's Ford, and that the crossing could be made only in single-file, the Mexicans withdrew from the Rio Grande.<sup>47</sup> Their disappearance brought little relief, however, for that night the regiment spread its blankets on a mammoth anthill.<sup>48</sup>

The watch on the Rio Grande continued throughout May 20. That night, as the officers gathered around Mackenzie's campfire, Capt. Eugene B. Beaumont inquired about the orders that sent them into Mexico. When the colonel admitted that he had none, Beaumont pointed out the illegality of the act and the risk to the command. "I considered all that," replied Mackenzie. His answer did not satisfy Napoleon B. McLaughlin, the senior captain of the regiment, who blurted out: "Had I known that you had no orders to take us over the

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<sup>46</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 456.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Augur, May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>48</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 456.



river, I would not have gone." If this remark surprised the colonel, he did not show it. In a firm, crisp, and decisive voice, he said: "Any officer or man who had refused to follow me across the river I would have shot." Captain McLaughlin, possibly the best marksman in the regiment except for Wirt Davis, snapped a quick retort: "That would depend, sir, upon who shot first." The colonel made no reply. An absolute silence descended over the gathering. One by one, the officers trailed off to their bedrolls<sup>49</sup> their memories perhaps drifting back to that day in 1840 when a commander named Mackenzie hanged a young midshipman for mutiny.

The following morning, as the 4th Cavalry prepared to break camp, the colonel received word that 200 Mexicans planned to ambush him on the way to Fort Clark.<sup>50</sup> Other rumors told of 60 Kickapoos who, bent on vengeance, had joined other tribesmen for an attack on the column.<sup>51</sup> Still another report came from William Schuchardt, who wrote that some 300 Indians gathered at Remolino and refused to disperse when ordered by the local commandante.<sup>52</sup> Such stories tormented wives at Fort Clark until about noon

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 457-458.

<sup>50</sup>Lt. Col. William R. Shafter to Mackenzie, May 21, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Schuchardt paraphrased in Ibid.



on May 21 when the regiment returned after an uneventful ride from Green Van's Ford.<sup>53</sup>

Within a few hours, Mackenzie distributed the 65 Kickapoo ponies among the hired guides and scouts as reward for their work and encouragement for future service.<sup>54</sup> He then directed his attention to the prisoners. In view of the apparent hostility of the Indians and Mexicans, and with Fort Clark so temptingly close to the Rio Grande, the colonel transferred his captives to San Antonio under heavy guard. He also sent instructions to keep the Indians in a corral where they should be allowed to prepare their own food. In that way, Mackenzie hoped, the Kickapoos would maintain good health by changing their way of life as little as possible.<sup>55</sup>

Meanwhile, frequent rumors of Mexican or Indian attack continued to reach Fort Clark.<sup>56</sup> Weary of the stories, and welcoming a fight, Mackenzie sneered at the Indians as a bunch of "old women" who frightened innocent Texans.<sup>57</sup> He seemed to get his wish for a showdown on the night of

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<sup>53</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 460.

<sup>54</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>James H. Taylor to Mackenzie, May 26, 1873, Ibid. Carter, On the Border, pp. 460-461.

<sup>57</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, May 23, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



May 26 during a fierce thunderstorm. A carbine shot rang out, touching off the "long roll" of infantry drums and crisp tones of cavalry trumpets. Soldiers poured out of the barracks and formed in the rain--only to learn that a jittery sentry had fired at a dog.<sup>58</sup> Such tension stimulated Mackenzie's impatience to strike another blow at the Kickapoos. Even after June 1, when the American commissioners opened negotiations with them, he felt that an attack would hasten the removal of the Kickapoos.<sup>59</sup> But, with his sector of the border "perfectly quiet," Mackenzie resolved to give the commissioners a chance to strike a bargain by peaceful means. The negotiators, Thomas G. Williams and Henry M. Atkinson, saw that there was no need for another expedition. They applauded Mackenzie's raid as producing a "most beneficial effect" on efforts to remove the Kickapoos to the Indian Territory. Although the sortie delayed initial overtures to the Indians, William Schuchardt foresaw that it would insure the ultimate success of negotiations.<sup>60</sup>

When bargaining began on June 1, 1873 the Kickapoos' flatly refused to discuss removal until reunited with their

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<sup>58</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 461-462.

<sup>59</sup>Thomas G. Williams to Mackenzie, June 3, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Letters from Mackenzie to Augur, June 2 and 6, 1873, Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Williams to Mackenzie, May 28, 1873, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Schuchardt to Mackenzie, May 19, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Mackenzie to Augur, June 24, 1873, Ibid. Mackenzie to Atkinson, July 13, 1873, Ibid.



families. They remained adamant even after Mexican officials told them that they were no longer welcome in Mexico.<sup>61</sup> But, when Sheridan and Mackenzie resisted pressure to return the Kickapoo women and children, the warriors changed their attitude.<sup>62</sup> Just as in the case of the Comanches captured the previous year, Kickapoo prisoners provided a powerful lever for negotiators. Furthermore, the destitute Indians seemed so cowed by the might of the United States that they refused to hold either the peace commissioners or Texans as hostages as advised by some "leading people" in Santa Rosa.<sup>63</sup> In fact, even after Mackenzie transferred the captives to Fort Duncan to facilitate visitation by the warriors, Kickapoo chiefs feared death or capture if they set foot in Texas. They finally yielded to persuasion, however, and visited their families before completing arrangements to remove to the United States.<sup>64</sup> According to the agreement, between 300 and 400 Kickapoos returned to American soil, while another 280 moved farther south to the boundary of Coahuila

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<sup>61</sup>Williams to Mackenzie, June 3, 1873, Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, June 6, 1873, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), "Special File, 1873-74," Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Sheridan to Augur, June 14, 1873, in Ibid. Williams and Atkinson to Mackenzie, June 3, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Williams to Schuchardt, June 2, 1873, in Ibid.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid. Williams to Mackenzie, June 3, 1873, Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Williams and Atkinson to Mackenzie, June 3, 1873, Ibid.



and Durango.<sup>65</sup>

The arrangements displeased Mackenzie. He argued that the Kickapoos in Mexico would act as a magnet, attracting all disaffected Kiowas and Comanches into the canyons of the Santa Rosa Mountains.<sup>66</sup> In airing his views, the colonel revealed an attitude that he never abandoned. That is, he contended that Indian depredations along the Rio Grande would never entirely cease until regular troops of the United States and Mexico cooperated to suppress marauders. Mackenzie found this necessity so patently obvious that he could see no "rational cause" for Mexican resentment of his expedition. By the same token, he also thought it "eminently proper" for Mexican troops to pursue hostiles across the Rio Grande as they had done in the 1860's. His convictions led him to write the governor of Coahuila as early as June 2, 1873 and suggest an agreement for cooperation against the Indians.<sup>67</sup>

Such overtures disturbed General Sheridan. He feared

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<sup>65</sup>Report of Atkinson and Williams in RSI, 1874 (Serial 1601), p. 540. Report of Committee Sent by Mexican Government, p. 416.

<sup>66</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, June 2, 1873, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), "Special File, 1873-74," Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>67</sup>He claimed to be acting on his own initiative and not "on account of orders from higher authority." See Mackenzie to Governor of Coahuila, June 2, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. See also, Mackenzie to Augur, June 6, 1873, Ibid. Mackenzie to Schuchardt, May 22, 1873, Ibid. Thomas G. Williams to Mackenzie, May 28, 1873, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Cf., Report of Committee Sent by Mexican Government, pp. 276-277.



that the colonel might spoil the effects of his raid by "corresponding too much with Tom, Dick and Harry, on the subject."<sup>68</sup> Mackenzie nevertheless kept up a steady stream of letters to various individuals in Mexico throughout the period of negotiation. Occasionally he revealed something of a flair for diplomatic subtlety. In one letter to the American commissioners (obviously intended for Mexican or Indian eyes), Mackenzie not only professed the "kindest and friendliest" feelings towards Mexico, but assured his readers that he struck the Kickapoo village by mistake. The Lipans and Mescaleros were his intended target. He excused the expedition on the grounds that if he had not crossed into Mexico, some Texans might have. Such people probably would not distinguish between the lives and property of Mexicans and Indians.<sup>69</sup>

Whatever his true intentions, Mackenzie's exploit reduced raiding on the Rio Grande frontier for the next few months.<sup>70</sup> It not only gave bargaining power for negotiations to remove the Kickapoos, but served notice on the

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<sup>68</sup> Sheridan's statement, June 17, 1873, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>69</sup> Mackenzie to Schuchardt, May 22, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Report of Atkinson and Williams in RSI, 1874 (Serial 1601), pp. 538-541.

<sup>70</sup> Augur's report in RSW, 1874 (Serial 1635), pp. 27-28. Mackenzie to Augur, June 24, 1873, Ibid. Cf., Report of Committee Sent by Mexican Government, p. 380. Sheridan to Sherman, July 25, 1874, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



hostiles that Mexico no longer provided sanctuary. It is perhaps significant that the Kickapoos who remained south of the border moved farther into the interior. Nor did serious international complications arise from the sortie. Official outcries from the Mexican government were as remarkable for their scarcity as for their relatively mild tone. For one reason, internal dissention in Mexico almost guaranteed impunity to the Grant administration. For another, Mexican officials seemed to believe that the colonel took it upon himself to violate the border, and that the U. S. government had no knowledge of the deed.<sup>71</sup> It is also noteworthy that the expedition did not jeopardize the cooperation given the American commissioners by the governor of Coahuila and his agent, Capt. Antonio Montero.<sup>72</sup>

While the raid evoked mixed reactions from the Mexicans, it no doubt delighted most Texans. On May 25, three days after General Sheridan wired congratulations to Mackenzie, a special session of the Texas Legislature passed a joint resolution of "grateful thanks" to the colonel and

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<sup>71</sup>Excerpt from Report of Committee Sent by Mexican Government, in Wallace, Westerners Brand Book, p. 95.

<sup>72</sup>Shafter to Mackenzie, July 3, 1873, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Mackenzie to Augur, June 6, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Hamilton Fish to Don Ignacio Mariscal, June 18, 1873, in U. S., Department of State, Dispatches, Microfilm Reel 70. Foreign Relations of the U. S., 1874-75 (Mexico), House Exec. Doc. 1, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., Part I, Vol. I (Serial 1672), pp. 713-716.



his regiment.<sup>73</sup> The resolution probably represented the only time in American history when a regiment of cavalry received the official commendation of a state. In fact, it is said that Mackenzie made such an impression on Texans that, when the Army Appropriation Bill failed in Congress in 1877, the Texas delegation agreed to support it if the colonel and his regiment would be ordered back to Texas with headquarters at Fort Clark.<sup>74</sup> And, while it is not certain that the expedition had any connection with it, Williams College bestowed an A. M. degree on Mackenzie sometime during 1873.<sup>75</sup>

If the raid won popularity for the colonel, it also incapacitated him for several months. A severe attack of inflammatory rheumatism struck Mackenzie on July 20, 1873. It invaded his right shoulder and arm, his right chest in front, his left forearm and leg, and finally settled in the joint and surrounding structures of his right knee.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Letters from Sheridan to Augur, May 22 and 27, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. "Resolution of the Texas Legislature," May 25, 1873, in Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Pres. Grant also sustained Mackenzie. See W. W. Belknap to Sheridan, May 31, 1873, Ibid. Carter, On the Border, pp. 462-463. One writer compared the raid to Caesar's crossing the Rubicon. See Army and Navy Journal, X (May 31, 1873), 668.

<sup>74</sup>Joseph Sudsberger, a retired sergeant, claimed that he saw the letter. See Carter, On the Border, p. 210.

<sup>75</sup>Class Report for 1884, Williams College.

<sup>76</sup>Medical Report from Dept. of Texas, Sept. 12, 1873, in AGO, ACP File, National Archives.



Probably more than his celebrated wounds, inflammatory rheumatism plagued him for the rest of his life.<sup>77</sup> The ailment grew so painful that, on August 1, the colonel reported himself as unreliable for any important scouting duty for at least a month.<sup>78</sup> And, during the first or second week in September, he submitted to a physical examination. The doctor found a general loss of "functional vigor," and warned that if Mackenzie did not take three or four months leave, he faced permanent disability.<sup>79</sup> So, on September 12, the colonel requested and received a leave of 30 days. Within a week he applied for, and was granted, an extension of three months.<sup>80</sup> His suffering no doubt excused him from serving on a horse equipment and cavalry accoutrement board that met on January 6, 1874.<sup>81</sup> By that time Mackenzie had received a one-month extension to his leave. He visited friends in Washington, D. C., assuring superiors that his stay was "purely personal" and in "no manner connected

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<sup>77</sup>Cf., Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 18.

<sup>78</sup>Adj. Gen., 4th Cavalry, to Augur, Aug. 1, 1873, in AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>79</sup>Medical Report, Dept. of Texas, Sept. 12, 1873, in Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Mackenzie's letters of Sept. 12 and 17, 1873, in Ibid. See Special Orders 173, Dept. of Texas, in Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Special Orders 253, AGO, Dec. 24, 1873, in RSW, 1874 (Serial 1635), pp. 300-301.



with Congress." Mid-January, 1874 found the colonel on his way back to the Rio Grande frontier where he was to spend a quiet spring and early summer at Fort Clark.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup>Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., Dec. 4, 1873, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Mackenzie stayed at 1711 "I" Street. See Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., Jan. 13, 1874, in Ibid.



## CHAPTER V

### INTO THE DEPTHS OF PALO DURO CANYON

While Mackenzie stood guard over the quiet Rio Grande frontier, the Indian Territory seethed with discontent. By the spring of 1874 Kiowas, Comanches, and Cheyennes fumed as Indian Bureau officials issued them swill that posed as food. Adding to the degradation of the Indians, whiskey peddlers and horse thieves infiltrated the reservations.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, tribesmen watched the foundations of their culture disintegrate under the rifles of buffalo hunters whose unprecedented slaughter would perhaps do more to bring nomadic Indians to heel than 30 years of campaign by the regular army.<sup>2</sup> Little wonder that the red man craved revenge.

As the cauldron of discontent bubbled, a catalyst appeared in the form of Isatai, a Kwahadi medicine man who in-

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<sup>1</sup>Nye, Carbine and Lance, pp. 187-189. Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, pp. 199-200.

<sup>2</sup>Gen. Sheridan quoted in Ernest Wallace and E. A. Hoebel, The Comanches: Lords of the South Plains (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, c1952), p. 66. Carl Coke Rister, "The Significance of the Destruction of the Buffalo," Southwestern Historical Quarterly, XXXIII (1929), 34-48. Rupert N. Richardson, "The Comanche Indians and the Fight at Adobe Walls," Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, IV (1931), 31. John R. Cook, The Border and the Buffalo: An Untold Story of the Southwest Plains, ed. M. M. Quaife (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1938), p. 113, et passim.



jected something of a patriotic zeal and sense of mission into the Indians. Isatai not only claimed dominion over the weather, and the power to heal the sick and raise the dead, but boasted the ability to disgorge huge quantities of cartridges from his stomach. And, more appealing, he promised his followers immunity from the bullets of the white man.<sup>3</sup> Pandora's box flew open in May, 1874 when Lone Wolf and his Kiowas left the Fort Sill reservation--bent on avenging the death of a kinsman.<sup>4</sup> Other parties of Kiowas, Comanches, and Cheyennes took the war trail as spring approached summer. Raids grew more frequent, especially after a medicine dance at the junction of Elk Creek and the North Fork of the Red River, where Isatai plied his followers with whiskey and incantations.<sup>5</sup>

While war parties ravaged Texas and the Indian Territory, it became obvious that the outbreak could not be quelled by a few companies of cavalry. Civil and military officials therefore debated a course of action. They reached an agreement on July 20 when the Interior Department gave permission for the army to punish hostile Indians wherever found

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<sup>3</sup>Thomas C. Battey, The Life and Adventures of a Quaker among the Indians (Boston: Lee & Shepard, 1875), pp. 302-304. Richardson in Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, pp. 27-28. Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, pp. 201-202.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. Carter, On the Border, p. 473.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. Cf., Richardson in Panhandle-Plains Historical Review, pp. 27-28. Battey, Life and Adventures, p. 303. Record of Engagements, p. 41.



--even on reservations.<sup>6</sup> Then preparations for the Red River campaign moved into high gear.

General Augur worked up a plan (similar to one offered by Mackenzie after his campaign of 1872) that called for simultaneous operations by some 2,000 troops from Texas, the Indian Territory, and New Mexico.<sup>7</sup> Divided into five columns, the soldiers were to ignore both reservation and departmental boundaries in their pursuit of hostile Indians. A force under Col. Nelson A. Miles would move southward from Camp Supply in the Indian Territory while Lt. Col. "Black Jack" Davidson and his command marched westward from Fort Sill. The largest column, under Mackenzie, was to operate from Fort Concho towards the north and west, combing the headwaters of the Red River and adjacent areas for hostiles. In the meantime, Lt. Col. George P. Buell and his command would work between Mackenzie and Davidson, while Maj. William R. Price and a force of the 8th Cavalry marched eastward from Fort Bascom, New Mexico.<sup>8</sup>

On July 23, therefore, General Augur accepted Sheridan's suggestion and ordered Mackenzie and the 4th Cavalry

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid. Sheridan's report in RSW, 1874 (Serial 1635), p. 28.

<sup>7</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. xi. Cf., "Extract of a Memo Prepared in Nov., 1872," in Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Aug. 4, 1874, Letter Book of the Fourth Cavalry (RG:98), National Archives.

<sup>8</sup>Augur to Mackenzie, July 23, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Sheridan's report in RSW, 1874 (Serial 1635), p. 28.



from the Rio Grande to Fort Concho.<sup>9</sup> Anticipating a long and arduous campaign, Augur urged the colonel to follow the hostiles wherever they roamed. If they fled to Fort Sill, Mackenzie was to assume full command of all troops at that post.<sup>10</sup> Unlike the campaign of 1871, he would not be subordinate to the commander of Fort Sill. The exercise of full control over the Indians by the army<sup>11</sup> pleased Mackenzie, for he always detested a division of authority between the civil and military. So, eager to take the field, he completed preparations for his departure a week after Augur's orders arrived.

On the last day of July Mackenzie and six companies of the 4th Cavalry marched out of Fort Clark. Accompanied by General Augur, the column rode into Fort McKavett on August 15.<sup>12</sup> The quiet post burst into activity as its garrison of two companies of the 4th Cavalry and three of the 10th

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<sup>9</sup>Sheridan to Sherman, July 25, 1874, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), "Special File, 1873-74," Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Mackenzie commanded the largest body of troops in Texas. See RSW, 1874 (Serial 1635), p. 74.

<sup>10</sup>Augur quoted in Carter, On the Border, pp. 475-476.

<sup>11</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Aug. 4, 1874, Letter Book of Fourth Cavalry (RG:98), National Archives.

<sup>12</sup>Stephen Seyburn, History of the Tenth U. S. Infantry (Santa Fe, New Mexico: n. p., 1890), p. 60. Carter, On the Border, p. 474. One Who Was There, "Scouting on the 'Staked Plains' (Llano Estacado) with Mackenzie in 1874," United Service, XIII (1885), p. 400. See bibliography for comments on this important source. Hereinafter it will be cited as United Service.



Infantry prepared to take the field. Two days later the column left Fort McKavett and, on August 21, pitched its tents around Fort Concho.<sup>13</sup> The next day, while Colonel Davidson battled recalcitrant Comanches and Kiowas at the Wichita agency, Mackenzie organized the "Southern Column."<sup>14</sup> He hired an ex-Comanchero, a half-breed Lipan and Mexican named Johnson, whose intimate knowledge of the Panhandle of Texas was to prove invaluable in the weeks to come.<sup>15</sup> Johnson took his place in the scouting party, a detachment commanded by Lt. William A. Thompson and comprised of 6 white guides and scouts, 13 Seminole Negroes, 12 Tonkawas, and a few Lipans.<sup>16</sup>

The scouts led the way on the morning of August 23 when the Southern Column marched out of Fort Concho. About a mile from the post the command paused long enough for an inspection by Augur and Mackenzie.<sup>17</sup> Then, swinging into a

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 401. Carter, On the Border, p. 474. Seyburn, History of Tenth Infantry, p. 60.

<sup>14</sup>Record of Engagements, p. 41. Augur's report in RSW, 1874 (Serial 1635), pp. 41-42. United Service, p. 401.

<sup>15</sup>Charles A. P. Hatfield, "The Comanche, Kiowa and Cheyenne Campaign in Northwest Texas and Mackenzie's Fight in Palo Duro Canyon, September 26 [sic], 1874," West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, V (June, 1929), 118. Hatfield was a second lieutenant in Co. E, 4th Cavalry at this time. Hereinafter this work will be cited as Yearbook.

<sup>16</sup>Sgt. Charlton was now in the scout detachment. See Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 103. Carter, On the Border, p. 474. Cf., Strong, My Indian Fights, pp. 50-51. Hatfield, Yearbook, pp. 118-119. Cf., Porter in Southwestern Historical Quarterly, p. 365.

<sup>17</sup>United Service, p. 401. Carter, on the Border, p. 474.



column of companies, the expedition began the trek to a supply camp on the Fresh Fork of the Brazos, at or near the base of operations in 1871 and 1872. The colonel, however, lingered at Fort Concho for the next few days, before marching to join his command.<sup>18</sup>

As the Southern Column trudged towards the Fresh Fork, on August 30, Colonel Miles and his force encountered a body of hostiles near the headwaters of the Washita. A running fight developed, and continued for several days as the Indians scattered into the fastness of the Staked Plains. Miles dogged their footsteps until pursuit yielded nothing but misery. Then he called off the chase.<sup>19</sup> Two days after Miles' fight the Southern Column reached its base camp on the Fresh Fork, there to await the arrival of Mackenzie. While elsewhere the soldiers of Miles and Price fought or tracked hostile Indians, the Southern Column spent the next 12 days in drill and preparation for the pack-mule scouting that lay ahead.<sup>20</sup>

On September 19, Mackenzie arrived with two companies of infantry. He was also accompanied by Maj. Thomas M. Anderson whose foot soldiers would guard the supply camp and

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<sup>18</sup>For details see United Service, pp. 401-402.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid. Maj. G. W. Baird, "General Miles' Indian Campaigns," Century Magazine, XLII (July, 1891), 353. Record of Engagements, p. 41.

<sup>20</sup>United Service, pp. 403-404. Cf., Seyburn, History of Tenth Infantry, p. 60. Record of Engagements, pp. 41-42.



escort wagon trains to and from the field.<sup>21</sup> Now the expedition numbered 47 officers, 560 enlisted men, 3 acting assistant surgeons, and 32 scouts.<sup>22</sup> Almost at once, Mackenzie divided the cavalry into two battalions. Cos. D, F, I, and K comprised the 1st Battalion under Captain McLaughlin, while the 2nd Battalion included Troops A, E, H, and L under Captain Beaumont. In all, the 8 companies of cavalry numbered 21 officers, 450 enlisted men, and the detachment of scouts.<sup>23</sup> That night Mackenzie dispatched a party of scouts to comb the area for signs of Indians.

Some of the Seminoles had already reported three small trails that led to the area around the head of the Pease River.<sup>24</sup> So, at 6:15 a.m. on Sunday, September 20, the long blue column wound northward up the valley and out on to the Staked Plains.<sup>25</sup> Around noon, after a march of 15 miles, the Southern Column reached some waterholes where Lieutenant Lawton waited with his wagons. The men ate and rested while their horses cropped the good grass. About 2:30 p.m. the scouts whom Mackenzie sent out the night before

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<sup>21</sup>United Service, p. 404.

<sup>22</sup>"Annual Report of the Dept. of Texas for Year Ending Aug. 31, 1874," AGO (RG:94), Index 5689, National Archives. United Service, p. 404.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid. Carter, On the Border, p. 481.

<sup>24</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Sept. 19, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>25</sup>United Service, p. 405.







galloped into camp. They reported that a party of 20 Indians had attacked them and run off with their extra horses. Mackenzie shouted the order to mount. For the next hour and a half the 4th Cavalry kept up a steady trot on a northerly and northwesterly course. But, at 5:00 p.m., after a ride of 12 miles without sighting Indians, they bivouacked on one of the heads of the Big Wichita River, 30 miles from their camp of that morning.<sup>26</sup>

They waited for forage until 7:30 on the morning of September 21 when the supply wagons rolled into camp. After doling out two quarts of corn to each horse, the 1st Battalion moved northward over a trail thought to be made by the hostiles who were reported the previous day.<sup>27</sup> In the meantime, Mackenzie and the 2nd Battalion rode northwest over some sandhills to the Salt Fork of the Wichita. From that point Captain Boehm and Co. E reconnoitered to the west, while the other three troops ate dinner. Boehm returned shortly and reported a trail of a hunting party that came from the north. Upon receipt of this news the battalion mounted and marched generally north for 20 miles. But,

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<sup>26</sup>"Memoranda of the March of the First Column," Sept. 29, 1874, in Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. This is the "missing" Mackenzie report for which R. G. Carter and others searched before the establishment of the National Archives. It covers the period from Sept. 20 to Oct. 4, 1874 and, like most of Mackenzie's reports, it is very terse. The report is nevertheless valuable. It will be cited hereinafter as "Memoranda." Cf., United Service, p. 405.

<sup>27</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. United Service, p. 405.



again they failed to sight Indians and made camp along the good running water of the Pease River.<sup>28</sup>

Not long after the 2nd Battalion bivouacked, the Staked Plains unleashed one of the terrible thunderstorms for which it is notorious. Rain fell in torrents and lightening played in the heavens until the phrase "sheets of flame" failed to do it justice. Terrified horses stood motionless, tails turned to the wind and rain.<sup>29</sup> In about an hour, however, the storm passed, leaving everything saturated. Eight miles in the rear, Lieutenant Lawton hitched 12 mules to a wagon of fresh beef and corn and struggled through a light rain to reach the command. The bottom seemed to have dropped out of the ground. Wagon wheels buried to the hub every few yards and horses sank to their fetlocks at each step.<sup>30</sup> Although the wagon managed to get through to Mackenzie, the rest of the train did not labor into camp until early in the forenoon of September 22. Nor did the 1st Battalion rejoin the colonel, as rain continued at intervals throughout the night.<sup>31</sup>

Wednesday, September 23, dawned cool and soggy. The 2nd Battalion resumed its trek at 9:00 a.m., toiling seven and a half miles west and northwest to some low hills on the

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<sup>28</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. United Service. pp. 405-406.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 406.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid. "Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.



Santa Fe Trail. There a "tremendous" rainstorm lashed the command, scattering men into hollows and ravines to escape the cold fury of the wind.<sup>32</sup> The deluge passed by six o'clock that evening when the 1st Battalion stumbled into camp. McLaughlin's horses were so run down in flesh and strength that they could not move sufficiently to graze. Those "completely used up," Mackenzie ordered shot.<sup>33</sup> Later that evening, Lawton and the supply wagons labored into camp, having taken five hours to slog seven miles over the slushy soil. To make matters worse, another wet norther struck.<sup>34</sup>

The storm made movement impossible until 1:00 p. m. on September 24. Three hours later the Southern Column drew rein at the foot of the hills of Quitaque Valley.<sup>35</sup> Troopers stripped bridles and saddles from their mounts and picketed them to graze. Each company furnished guards for the animals while the rest of the command slaved to haul the wagons and their double teams up the steep and slippery grade to the Staked Plains. Exhausting labor carried the 4th Cavalry only four miles that day, and evening found them bivouacked about five miles east of the crossing of the upper Tule

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid. United Service, p. 406.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., pp. 406-407.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 407. "Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.



Canyon.<sup>36</sup>

The struggle resumed at six o'clock the next morning, after Mackenzie sent Lieutenant Thompson and the scouts to "prospect" along the edge of the Staked Plains.<sup>37</sup> With the ground so boggy that wagons could not move, and horses sinking to their fetlocks every few yards, the command labored towards Tule Canyon. Walking their mounts most of the time, the men marched 25 miles that day and camped at Tule Spring about sunset.<sup>38</sup> While the 1st Battalion bivouacked, the 2nd retraced its steps about five miles. As the men stood to horse, waiting for Mackenzie to select a campsite, one of the scouts rode up and announced that Lieutenant Thompson and the main body of guides were chasing Indians.<sup>39</sup> The colonel made no move, however, until seven o'clock, when Thompson returned. The lieutenant reported that during the course of his 60-mile scout, he found many trails leading in different directions. One of his guides saw three Indians driving a herd of 150 ponies, and Thompson discovered tracks made by an estimated 1,500 horses heading east.<sup>40</sup>

So, Mackenzie and the 2nd Battalion climbed back into

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<sup>36</sup>Ibid. United Service, p. 407. Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 119.

<sup>37</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. United Service, p. 407.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid. "Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid. United Service, p. 407.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid. "Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.



the saddle and, under a full moon, rode in search of hostiles. Bathed in cold, silver moonlight, the spectral column moved almost noiselessly over the short, thick grass that muffled the tread of the horses. The men kept silent, expecting to meet the enemy at any moment.<sup>41</sup> They met none. After nearly 16 hours in the saddle, Mackenzie gave up the search and picketed the horses under strong guard. It was late at night when the command spread its blankets in a series of ravines and slept "horse fashion"--that is, with boots on and weapons handy. No alarm interrupted their sleep that night, although Indians were close at hand.<sup>42</sup>

With his quarry so near, Mackenzie remained in camp on September 26, awaiting the arrival of the 1st Battalion. While the horses munched "pretty good" grass, the colonel directed Lieutenant Lawton to hurry his wagons to the command.<sup>43</sup> About 5:00 p. m., after "the Mexican guide" [probably Johnson] rode off in search of an Indian village, Mackenzie moved his force south to a long depression in the plain, a hollow that contained rainwater.<sup>44</sup> As the animals savored the succulent grass and the soldiers went about their chores, a corporal and six men rode into camp. They said that some Indians had exchanged shots with McLaughlin as the 1st Battalion made

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<sup>41</sup>United Service, p. 407.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 408.

<sup>43</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid. United Service, p. 408.



its way from Tule Canyon. Shortly, however, McLaughlin rejoined Mackenzie and bivouacked about three-quarters of a mile west of the 2nd Battalion. At least seven Indians hovered about the command.<sup>45</sup>

When dusk settled over the Southern Column, Mackenzie's thoughts possibly strayed to the stampedes of 1871 and 1872 when Indians made off with his horses. On the night of September 26, 1874, however, he left nothing to chance. He saw that the horses were hobbled, sidelined, and lariated--making it impossible for them to run or break loose.<sup>46</sup> Not content with these precautions, he formed a skirmish line outside the horses, in what the 4th Cavalry knew as "sleeping parties." These detachments of 12 to 20 enlisted men and non-commissioned officers proceeded to designated points 400 to 500 yards from the main command. They took cover in hollows or ravines where, unseen by Indians, they made certain that nothing approached the bivouac undetected.<sup>47</sup> All men not detailed to sleeping parties rolled into their blankets, hoping to snatch as much rest as possible before the alarm sounded. At 9:30 p. m. Johnson rode in with word of buffalo running on the west side of Tule Canyon as if chased by Indians.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid. "Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.

<sup>46</sup>United Service, p. 408.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

<sup>48</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.



At ten o'clock, the hostiles struck. Waving blankets and screaming insults in English, an estimated 250 warriors tried to charge through the camp and stampede the animals.<sup>49</sup> Co. A bore the brunt of the attack, as troops of both battalions set up such a rapid fire that the Indians adopted circling tactics.<sup>50</sup> Under a moon alternately bright and hazy, feathered forms flitted around the battalions, their shots wounding three horses.<sup>51</sup> After about a half hour of screeching and firing, the tribesmen faded into some brush about 300 yards from the bivouac. The stillness of a prairie night settled over the camp, punctuated only by the sporadic fire of Indian rifles and the sharp commands of officers.<sup>52</sup> Around midnight, the soldiers caught the sound of wagons, accompanied by the crack of whips and the curses of mule-skinners. As the train strained to reach the command, wheels cut through the mesquite sod and axles raked the ground for a hundred feet at a time. The wagons finally rolled into camp, raising a question why the Indians had not pounced upon the noisy procession.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 119. Strong, My Indian Fights, p. 56. United Service, pp. 408-409. "Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.

<sup>50</sup>Charlton quoted in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 105. "Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid. Hatfield, Yearbook, pp. 419-420.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., p. 419.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 105. Strong, My Indian Fights, p. 58. United Service, pp. 408-409.



The hostiles ceased fire around one or two o'clock on the morning of September 27. About five o'clock they resumed sniping from all prominent points, a fire so desultory and ineffectual that it did not interfere with morning chores.<sup>54</sup> But when the fusilade became more lively, Mackenzie ordered Captain Boehm to disperse the attackers, warning him not to pursue them more than a mile. Leaving camp at a gallop, Troop E, accompanied by Lieutenant Thompson and the scouts, flushed between 250 and 600 Comanches from a series of ravines. Decked in full regalia, the warriors boiled out of the gullies and deployed in a line a mile long across the level plain. Feathers bobbing, they turned to fire at the soldiers and scouts who galloped some 250 yards in the rear.<sup>55</sup>

One Comanche in a gorgeous headdress found himself cut off from his fleeing comrades. He tried to rejoin them by taking a shortcut, but came within range of old Henry, the Tonkawa. Henry took aim, dropped the Comanche's brown horse, then jogged leisurely towards his prostrate foe. Confident of victory, the scout neglected to draw his weapons, even when the dizzy warrior staggered to his feet. Not until the hostile leaped and dragged Henry from his mount did the Tonkawa claw frantically at the pistol he carried under his blanket.

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 409. "Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid. Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 120. United Service, p. 409.



When the Comanche began trouncing him with a bow, Henry gesticulated wildly to the troops and shrieked: "Why you no shoot? Why you no shoot?" The soldiers enjoyed a good laugh at the scout's expense before dispatching the Comanche. Although old Henry took a scalp that morning--without interference from Mackenzie--he nursed a "grouch" against his white brothers for several days.<sup>56</sup>

While Henry salved his indignation with a scalping knife, Mackenzie and the 2nd Battalion rode to join Boehm's troop and the scouts. The colonel met Co. E about three miles from camp and learned that the hostiles had reached several herds of ponies before Boehm could overtake them. So, with fresh mounts, the Indians disappeared as if swallowed by the prairie. Realizing the futility of pursuit, Mackenzie led his men back to breakfast.<sup>57</sup>

The Southern Column remained in bivouac until mid-afternoon, girding itself for a showdown with the enemy. Packers lashed 12 day's rations on the mules while Mackenzie and his officers inspected men and equipment. As preparations neared completion, scouts hurried off to search for hostiles.<sup>58</sup> At 3:00 p. m. Mackenzie left a company of cav-

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<sup>56</sup>Charlton quoted in Carter, Old Sergeant, pp. 105-106. Hatfield, Yearbook, pp. 120-121. United Service, p. 409. "Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid. United Service, p. 409. Hatfield, Yearbook, pp. 120-121.

<sup>58</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. United Service, pp. 409-410.



alry to guard the wagons and set out with 7 troops along a trail that took them some 25 miles across Tule Canyon. About two o'clock on the morning of September 28, however, scouts lost the trail.<sup>59</sup> So, after 11 hours in the saddle, Mackenzie passed quiet orders along the column to unsaddle and unpack. Staking their animals on ground devoid of grass, the men spread blankets on the wet soil and tried to sleep. They got precious little rest, because, about 4:00 a. m. the scouts returned and told of a large concentration of Indians in Palo Duro Canyon, four miles north and northwest of the bivouac.<sup>60</sup>

In a remarkably short time the 4th Cavalry broke camp and, under a bright moon moved quietly across the vast expanse of prairie.<sup>61</sup> The first streaks of day revealed Cañoncito Blanco sprawling on the left; and to the front, like a dark blotch, the winding course of Palo Duro Canyon gashed the plain.<sup>62</sup> When the column drew rein at

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<sup>59</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. Cf., Strong, My Indian Fights, p. 58. United Service, p. 410. Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 121. Mumsukawa said that the hostiles also lost track of Mackenzie and that he got ahead of them on the trail. See Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 221.

<sup>60</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 121. United Service, p. 410.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid. "Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.

<sup>62</sup>United Service, p. 410. Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 121. Charles A. P. Hatfield to Bruce Gerdes, Feb. 12, 1923, in Gerdes Collection, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, Texas.



the brink of the chasm, Mackenzie crept to the edge. Peering into the murky depths, he saw a gorge that stretched perhaps half a mile from wall to wall. Some 1,500 feet below, a stream meandered through the valley.<sup>63</sup> The feeble light also revealed about 200 tipis, divided among 5 small villages that extended along the stream for 2 or 3 miles.<sup>64</sup> The lodges seemed no bigger than a half-dollar. Deceived by the height, one of the Seminoles muttered: "Lor' men, look at de sheep and de goats down dar." He referred to the large herd of Indian ponies, animals that other viewers mistook for chickens.<sup>65</sup>

The first cluster of perhaps 40 tipis stood opposite the mouth of Cañoncito Blanco and comprised the Comanche village of O-ha-ma-tai.<sup>66</sup> Next came the lodges of all the Kiowas off the reservation, followed by the small bands of Cheyennes under Iron Shirt. Most of the Cheyennes, however, and the Comanche bands of Mow-way, Tabananica, and Wild Horse pitched their lodges far to the south of the

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<sup>63</sup>Charlton quoted in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 106.

<sup>64</sup>For a good description of Palo Duro Canyon, see Great Western Indian Fights (Potomac Corral of the Westerners; Washington: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1960), pp. 214-215. Hatfield to Gerdes, Feb. 12, 1923, Gerdes Collection, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum. United Service, p. 410. Mackenzie's report of Oct. 1, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>65</sup>Strong, My Indian Fights, p. 59. Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 121.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 122. Mumsukawa's account in Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 221.



canyon. But in Palo Duro, all villages came under the general leadership of the Kiowa chief, Maman-ti (Touching-the-Sky, or Sky-Walker). It was Maman-ti who, before the Long Knives discovered his stronghold, inflated a sacred owl skin, tooted an eagle bone whistle, and offered his people several reassuring predictions--prophecies that a blue-coat known as "Kinzi" was about to shatter.<sup>67</sup>

High above the unsuspecting tribesmen, Mackenzie searched for a trail into the gorge. As the sun climbed higher, his chances for a dawn attack slipped past. About 15 minutes elapsed before scouts discovered a narrow, zig-zag sheep or goat path that wound into the depths of Palo Duro Canyon. From that point a stone easily could be tossed into the Comanche tipis of O-ha-ma-tai at the foot of the trail.<sup>68</sup> So, after instructing the 1st Battalion to wait for orders at the edge of the canyon, Mackenzie turned to the commander of the scouts and said: "Mr. Thompson, you may take your men down and open the fight." "Very well, sir," answered the lieutenant.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid. Indians were so impressed by Mackenzie that for years any Mexican captive with fingers missing they called Kinzi. Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, p. 414.

<sup>68</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. Hatfield, Yearbook, pp. 121-122. In 1924 Bruce Gerdes took 40 Indians to the battlefield. They recognized the trail down which the 4th Cavalry descended. See Gerdes to Mrs. Arlina Ogden, May 24, 1935, in Gerdes Collection, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum.

<sup>69</sup>Charlton quoted in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 107. "Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.



The scouts disappeared over the rim, followed in rapid succession by Troops E and A. Stumbling and sliding, soldiers and scouts led their mounts single-file down the steep path.<sup>70</sup> About mid-way in their half-hour descent an Indian sprang from behind a rock and waved a red blanket. His whoop, followed by a shot, shattered the stillness of early morning.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid. Cf., Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 121. United Service, p. 410.

<sup>71</sup>Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, pp. 107, 111. Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 121. Strong, My Indian Fights, p. 60.



## CHAPTER VI

### HARD TIMES ON THE SCOUT

K'ya-been (Older Man), who had charge of the family group at the foot of the trail, spied the blue-coats scrambling down the side of the canyon. Firing his gun, K'ya-been darted into his tipi to don war paint. Indians farther down the valley paid little attention to the shots, thinking them fired by some early-morning deer hunter. A few minutes later, four more shots rent the crisp autumn air. But the tribesmen still failed to take warning.<sup>1</sup> They awoke to their danger, however, when Lieutenant Thompson's detachment reached the floor of the canyon.

As the scouts formed and galloped up the valley with Troops E and A close behind, the alarm spread among the villages.<sup>2</sup> Many warriors raced to their lodges, grabbed weapons, and scattered among the cedars and immense boulders that lined both walls of the gorge.<sup>3</sup> Other men and women leaped on ponies and fled up the valley. As the firing drew closer,

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<sup>1</sup>As told by Mumsukawa in Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 222.

<sup>2</sup>United Service, pp. 410-411. Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 122. "Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. Mackenzie's report of Oct. 1, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 122.



panic seized many Indians. Some women and children tried to scale the bluffs on the northwest side of the gorge, or dashed up a blind canyon. Mumsukawa's sister became so crazed with fear that she wanted to rid herself of the baby boy strapped to her back.<sup>4</sup>

Such panic probably did not strike the Cheyennes who, camped farther up the valley, gained time to escape. The Comanches and Kiowas, however, bore the weight of the charge.<sup>5</sup> Although they tried to save their ponies in a running fight of about four miles, the warriors not only lost the horses, but three of their comrades as well. Killed by Thompson's scouts, these three were the only bodies found on the field.<sup>6</sup> The rest of the Indians abandoned the milling herd and dashed to the safety of the pass at the west end of the canyon.<sup>7</sup>

During the next hour, while Thompson's scouts rounded up the horses, the tribesmen recovered from their initial shock. High on the sides of Palo Duro Canyon, behind cedars and huge boulders, growing numbers of hostiles sniped at the flanks and rear of the attackers.<sup>8</sup> An-zai-te ducked

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<sup>4</sup>Mumsukawa's account in Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 223.

<sup>5</sup>"Talk with White Horse," Oct. 21, 1874, in Division of the Missouri (RG:98), "Special File, 1873-74," Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Great Western Indian Fights, p. 220.

<sup>6</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. Thompson in Cavalry Journal, p. 431.

<sup>7</sup>Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 108.

<sup>8</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.



behind a tree and shot the horse of an officer leading the troops. As the soldiers returned fire, Poor Buffalo crouched behind a pile of rocks and sang the song of the Blackfoot Society, expecting death to claim him at any moment.<sup>9</sup>

Before long, however, scouts and soldiers retired down the canyon, driving hundreds of ponies before them. They retraced their steps about two miles when Mackenzie rode up at the head of Cos. H and L of the 2nd Battalion. After leaving word for the 1st Battalion to follow, the colonel had managed somehow to get his troops down the precipitous trail in parallel lines. Upon reaching the floor of the canyon, Mackenzie formed his companies and galloped up the valley until he met Troops A and E with the captured ponies. He then halted and brought his men into line to cover the withdrawal of the horse herd.<sup>11</sup>

About that time, from a huge breastwork of rocks 800 to 1,000 feet above the floor of the canyon, the hostiles loosed a galling fire.<sup>12</sup> Enfilading the exposed flanks of Troops H and L, the fusilade forced Mackenzie to withdraw a short distance. As the two companies wheeled to the left by fours, Trumpeter Henry E. Hard of Troop L toppled from his

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<sup>9</sup>Mumsukawa in Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 224.

<sup>10</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. United Service, p. 411.

<sup>11</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. United Service, p. 411.

<sup>12</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. Carter, On the Border, p. 490. Cf., Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, pp. 107, 111.



mount. Several men hurried the severely wounded bugler to the rear where, to the surprise of all, Assistant Surgeon Choate saved his life.<sup>13</sup> After the trumpeter fell, Cos. H and L struck the bed of a dry stream and fell back about 200 yards to what seemed adequate cover. But again the hostiles found the range, pouring in an enfilading fire on both flanks.<sup>14</sup> Throwing their reins to horse-holders, the troopers dismounted and formed a skirmish line across the canyon. Although not a man was hit, six or eight horses crumpled in as many minutes.<sup>15</sup> Private McGowan tugged at the saddle bags of his fallen animal, as bullets whined about him. Seeing his danger, Mackenzie shouted three times for the soldier to take cover. McGowan ignored the commands and continued struggling with the saddle bags until the colonel yelled: "I told you to go away from there, are you going?" "Damned if I am until I get my tobacco and ammunition," snapped the private.<sup>16</sup> At another point in the long-range duel, Mackenzie overheard Capt. S. Gunther command Co. H to clear the bluffs of hostiles. The colonel countermanded the order, saying that "no one of them would live to reach the top."<sup>17</sup> The fusillade from the cliffs

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<sup>13</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. United Service, p. 411. Carter, On the Border, p. 490.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 108.

<sup>15</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 490. Cf., United Service, p. 411. "Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.

<sup>16</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 491.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 490.



so unnerved one soldier that he asked Mackenzie how they would ever get out of the canyon. "I brought you in," said the colonel, "I will get you out."<sup>18</sup>

To make matters worse, the adjutant rode up about noon and announced that some warriors were making threatening demonstrations near the head of the trail down which the command descended.<sup>19</sup> So, with his line of retreat in peril, Mackenzie ordered Cos. H and L back to cover the path. The companies wheeled to the left by fours and galloped over their back-trail, followed by Troops A and E with the captured ponies. The men of Cos. H and L reached the foot of the "Jacob's Ladder" by which they had entered the gorge and began to climb. They struggled up the steep path for half or three-quarters of an hour before emerging on the plains. Not an Indian was in sight.<sup>20</sup>

Meanwhile, the 1st Battalion moved into the positions abandoned by the 2nd. As Cos. D, I, and K dismounted and deployed across the valley, the hostiles grew bolder. They glided down the sides of the canyon until a long-range duel became hot skirmishing.<sup>21</sup> But this time Mackenzie allowed his men to move against the warriors. As the blue line of

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 491.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 492.

<sup>20</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. United Service, pp. 411-412.

<sup>21</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. United Service, p. 412. Carter, On the Border, pp. 492-493.



skirmishers advanced, the tribesmen retired. The troopers gradually forced the Indians into full retreat towards the pass at the west end of the valley through which many of their families had escaped.<sup>22</sup> With characteristic speed and skill, the hostiles disappeared into the Staked Plains before the rearmost companies could reach the rim of the canyon.<sup>23</sup> Once into the safety of the Llano, the Indians scattered to the winds. The Cheyennes fled to the North Fork of the Red River where they encountered troops of the other columns. Some of the Kiowas followed Lone Wolf and Man-Walks-on-Top-of-the-Ground to Salt River, while others escaped to Yellowhouse Canyon. The Comanches roosted on Red River until set upon by more soldiers.<sup>24</sup>

When the hostiles slipped out of Palo Duro Canyon, Mackenzie gave chase for only a few minutes. With evening near and a weary command that had not eaten for the past 24 hours, he elected to give up the pursuit.<sup>25</sup> So, about 3:00 p. m., the column retraced its steps to the deserted villages where other portions of the command tore down tipis, broke lodge-poles, and gathered the belongings of the hos-

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<sup>22</sup>United Service, p. 412. Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 109.

<sup>23</sup>United Service, p. 412.

<sup>24</sup>"Talk with White Horse," Division of the Missouri (RG:98), "Special File, 1873-74," Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Mumsukawa in Nye, Carbine and Lance, pp. 224-225.

<sup>25</sup>Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 109. United Service, p. 412.



tiles.<sup>26</sup> Immense bonfires roared as the soldiers heaped vast quantities of dried buffalo meat and Indian Department flour and sugar on the flames.<sup>27</sup> Although Mackenzie confirmed only three dead tribesmen, the loss of shelter, provisions, and ponies guaranteed a bleak winter for the Indians. The 4th Cavalry, on the other hand, suffered one trumpeter wounded, three horses killed and ten wounded.<sup>28</sup>

The destruction of the villages completed by about 4:00 p. m., the command climbed out of Palo Duro Canyon and on to the Staked Plains.<sup>29</sup> Leaving nothing to chance, Mackenzie formed the Southern Column into a huge corral. One company swung into a line of battle in the advance, and two others marched in a column of two's on either flank. Another troop closed the hollow square, while the seventh company acted as rearguard.<sup>30</sup> With the captured horses safely inside, the formation marched rapidly until 12:30 on the morning of September 29 when tired eyes spotted the campfires of the infantry who guarded the supply train at Tule Canyon.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. Cf., United Service, p. 412.

<sup>27</sup>Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 122. United Service, p. 412.

<sup>28</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid. Cf., United Service, p. 412.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid. Carter, On the Border, p. 493.

<sup>31</sup>"Memoranda," Sept. 29, 1874. Carter, On the Border, p. 494. Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 122. Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 110.



Mackenzie immediately ordered the captured ponies driven into a corral of wagons and posted a strong guard over them. Then, after riding almost continually for the past 34 hours, weary troopers unsaddled and picketed their mounts. They fed the animals a full ration of badly-needed corn, sipped cups of scalding coffee, and crawled into their blankets.<sup>32</sup>

Reveille came late that morning. When the trumpeter sounded, the men awoke to the first food they had tasted in over 48 hours.<sup>33</sup> After they gobbled breakfast, infantrymen roped 1,048 of the captured ponies and led them to where other foot soldiers waited with rifles.<sup>34</sup> With the nearest fort about a week's march distant, Mackenzie was taking no chances of losing horses. As fast as they appeared on the firing line, details shot them. The crazed animals, many of them young and handsome, scrambled onto a pile of dead ponies four or five feet deep.<sup>35</sup> The slaughter continued until 3:00 p. m. when Mackenzie marched the command up Tule Creek six miles and camped on good grass.<sup>36</sup>

There, in keeping with his policy, Mackenzie distributed

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<sup>32</sup>United Service, p. 412.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 532.

<sup>34</sup>Mackenzie's reports of Oct. 21 and 26, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>35</sup>United Service, p. 532. Strong, My Indian Fights, p. 62. Carter, On the Border, p. 494.

<sup>36</sup>Mackenzie's report of Oct. 21, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. United Service, p. 532.



the remaining 376 ponies. He believed that men who scouted long distances from the main command needed inducement, and that the distribution of spoils was the only practicable way to reward them.<sup>37</sup> Because he had promised Johnson 40 horses if he located an Indian village, the ex-Comanchero won first choice. Johnson made his selection, then immediately sold the ponies to the officers of the expedition.<sup>38</sup> Other guides and scouts drew five animals apiece, although the Tonkawas and Seminoles later lost two-thirds of their booty through carelessness on the way back to Fort Griffin.<sup>39</sup> The remaining mounts went to replace those broken down in service. Ponies apportioned among the troops would be sold at the end of the campaign to provide money for the company fund. Of all the animals distributed, however, few qualified as excellent mounts.<sup>40</sup>

After the division of spoils, a few Tonkawas left with dispatches for the supply camp on the Fresh Fork of the Brazos.<sup>41</sup> About the same time, scouts reported some Indians a

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<sup>37</sup>Mackenzie's reports of Oct. 21 and 26, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 122.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie's report of Oct. 26, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>39</sup>Mackenzie's reports of Oct. 26 and Nov. 16, 1874, Ibid. Hatfield, Yearbook, p. 122. Strong, My Indian Fights, p. 62.

<sup>40</sup>Mackenzie's report of Oct. 26, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. United Service, p. 532.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.



short distance north of the bivouac. Fearing attack, Mackenzie ordered horses made fast to picket ropes stretched between the wagons. The colonel deployed his men in a skirmish line around the camp and sent word for the 1st Battalion to concentrate near the wagons.<sup>42</sup> But the night passed quietly, and on the following day the command moved another three miles up Tule Creek and bivouacked on good grass.<sup>43</sup>

Not until about 12:30 on the afternoon of October 2 did Mackenzie launch a series of exhausting marches that would prove not only almost fruitless, but deleterious to men and horses as well. He headed northwestward over his back-trail and scoured the area of Cañoncito Blanco.<sup>44</sup> Finding nothing but 10 stray ponies, the Southern Column continued north and northwest. On the north side of Palo Duro Canyon scouts picked up a large trail three days old that led northeastward.<sup>45</sup> But a severe norther thwarted tracking until shortly after noon on October 5 when the command moved over the trail made by Colonel Gregg in 1872. Although Mackenzie arrived at the site of a large village, he found no hostiles.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 533. Mackenzie's report of Oct. 21, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid. United Service, p. 533.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie's report of Oct. 21, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>46</sup>United Service, p. 533.



So, for the next two days, the 4th Cavalry pushed northeastward through intermittent torrents that left the ground so boggy that horses sank a foot at every step.<sup>47</sup> As the troopers walked their mounts in a generally eastward direction, on October 7, they overtook 15 Mexicans with 6 ox-carts loaded with dried meat. Although they claimed to be buffalo hunters, Mackenzie detained the Mexicans until two of them (who had been raised by the Kwahadis) agreed to guide the expedition in return for plunder.<sup>48</sup> Leaving the rest of the Mexicans behind, the Southern Column slogged along the trail until it merged with another that led southeast.<sup>49</sup> Mackenzie followed the tracks to what he thought was the North Fork of the Red River where, on October 8, he encountered five more Mexicans with carts drawn by eight oxen. Although the carts were empty, the men admitted trading with the hostiles. The colonel placed them under arrest, but released them two days later. He ordered the oxen turned into

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<sup>47</sup>Mackenzie's report of Oct. 21, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. United Service, p. 535.

<sup>48</sup>Mackenzie's report of Oct. 21, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. United Service, p. 535. Thompson in Cavalry Journal, p. 432. Cf., Strong, My Indian Fights, pp. 62-63. One of the Comancheros was probably José Piedad Tafoya who is mentioned in a probably apocryphal story by Haley in Southwestern Historical Quarterly, p. 175. See Cook, Border and Buffalo, p. 294.

<sup>49</sup>Mackenzie's report of Oct. 21, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



the beef herd and the carts chopped into firewood.<sup>50</sup>

By this time long marches had told fearfully on the animals. And, on October 9, when the command met three wagons from the train, many of the riders were astride mules.<sup>51</sup> While the Southern Column fed sorely-needed forage to their jaded horses, the soldiers of Lieutenant Colonel Buell destroyed a large camp of Kiowas on the Salt Fork of the Red River and chased the Indians northward.<sup>52</sup> No such action livened Mackenzie's arduous scouting, however. On October 10, when Lawton and the main wagon train arrived, teamsters told the colonel that the Mexican "hunters" encountered on October 7 had joined about 100 Indians with some 300 ponies somewhere to the southeast.<sup>53</sup>

So, the Southern Column drew rations for 12 days and, leaving 55 exhausted men and mounts with the wagons, descended the breaks of the Staked Plains.<sup>54</sup> Heading generally east and southeast, Mackenzie picked up the trail of a large body of Indians and followed it to the Red River. Along that

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid. United Service, p. 536. Cf., Strong, My Indian Fights, pp. 62-63.

<sup>51</sup>Mackenzie's report of Oct. 21, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. United Service, p. 536.

<sup>52</sup>Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, p. 211. Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 225.

<sup>53</sup>United Service, p. 536.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie's report of Oct. 21, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



stream the command moved over marshy soil, passing several played-out ponies that indicated that their quarry was hard pressed. But, Mackenzie's horses also were deteriorating rapidly, and much of the march to Mulberry Creek was on foot.<sup>55</sup>

Mounts further weakened on October 14 when the command gave vain pursuit to a group of Indians near Medicine Lake.<sup>56</sup> The following day the Southern Column trudged to the Salt Fork of the Red River and struggled across the quicksand near its mouth.<sup>57</sup> Marching night and day for the next two days, the horses grew weaker. By the time the 4th Cavalry reached the Pease River, their mounts could follow the trail no longer.<sup>58</sup> Mackenzie stayed in camp until the morning of October 18 when the column tramped south past Quitaque Mountain and into the valley of the Salt Fork of the Wichita.<sup>59</sup> The horses grew weaker. After they reached Cottonwood Springs and met Lawton's wagons loaded with corn and rations for 15 days, Mackenzie knew that he must abandon the scout temporarily. Long, heavy marches, often at night with poor grass and little or no for-

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid. United Service, p. 537.

<sup>56</sup>So named by the Indians because even with many lariats tied together they could not touch bottom. United Service, pp. 537-538. Mackenzie's report of Oct. 21, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>57</sup>United Service, p. 538.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie's report of Oct. 21, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Telegram from Dept. of Texas to Sheridan, quoted in Carter, On the Border, pp. 504-505.

<sup>59</sup>United Service, pp. 538-539.



age, had told "fearfully" on the animals. It therefore became necessary to nurse them for a few days.<sup>60</sup> On October 23 the Southern Column trudged to the base of operations, now located on Duck Creek, a few miles northeast of Spur, Texas. For the next six days the horses recuperated while soldiers overhauled equipment for another scouting expedition.<sup>61</sup>

By October 30 the Southern Column completed preparations and climbed into the saddle. Pushing westward and southwestward, the command ascended and descended the Staked Plains.<sup>62</sup> Mackenzie scouted the heads of several streams, including the headwaters of the Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos when scouts reported Indians in that area.<sup>63</sup> As the 4th Cavalry tracked the hostiles southwestward, the weather gradually grew colder, culminating in a norther of "indescribable" ferocity.<sup>64</sup> Mackenzie nevertheless clung to the trail, turning eastward--on November 3--past Laguna Rica and Laguna Lombiga. That evening, as the Southern Column prepared

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<sup>60</sup>Dept. of Texas to Sheridan, in Carter, On the Border, pp. 538-539. Mackenzie's reports of Oct. 21 and Nov. 16, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. United Service, p. 539.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., pp. 539-540.

<sup>62</sup>Mackenzie's report of Nov. 8, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. United Service, p. 540.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.



to go into camp near Las Lagunas Quatro, scouts discovered a herd of ponies. Swinging into the saddle, the cavalry galloped about 10 miles west of Laguna Tahuca where they struck a camp of eight families.<sup>65</sup> The Comanches never had a chance. In the rout, troops killed 2 warriors, captured 19 women and children, and rounded up 144 ponies.<sup>66</sup> The horses proved of better quality than those taken in Palo Duro Canyon, and Mackenzie found 20 or 30 of them "really good."<sup>67</sup> He gave most of them to the two Mexicans enlisted on the Staked Plains as reward for their assistance. Other ponies went to the Lipans to replace those worn out by scouting long distances from the command. The remainder of the animals were pressed into service by the companies.<sup>68</sup>

The prisoners proved interesting. Some of the females had been captured by Mackenzie at McClellan's Creek in 1872.<sup>69</sup> The captives included an aged Mexican woman whose two sons had just died in the fight with the soldiers, and whose two

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<sup>65</sup>Mackenzie's reports of Nov. 8 and 9, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Cf., Thompson in Cavalry Journal, p. 432. Strong, My Indian Fights, p. 65. Record of Engagements, p. 43.

<sup>66</sup>Mackenzie's reports of Nov. 8 and 9, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>67</sup>Mackenzie's report of Nov. 16, 1874, Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>"Tabular Statement of Expeditions & Scouts against Indians, etc., Dept. of Texas, for Year Ending Aug. 31, 1874," in Annual Reports of the Dept. of Texas, Index 5689, AGO (RG:94), National Archives. Hereinafter cited as Tabular Statement.



daughters stood by her side. Captured by the Comanches near San Antonio when a child, and with the end of her nose cut off, the old woman had no desire to return to white society.<sup>70</sup> Some of her companions told Mackenzie that his dogged pursuit had frightened the hostiles until even the stubborn Kwahadis planned to go to the reservation in a few days.<sup>71</sup> If the news impressed the colonel, he did not alter his plans.

On November 4, therefore, the Southern Column broke camp and tramped east and southeast with its prisoners.<sup>72</sup> The next evening, while the command rested in bivouac about 16 miles southeast of Laguna Tahuca, Lieutenant Thompson and 9 scouts discovered 3 hostiles guarding a herd of ponies. Resting after a raid on the settlements, the warriors were caught by surprise. One of them died at the hands of the scouts, while Private Comfort of Troop A killed another after a long chase. The third Indian escaped.<sup>73</sup> Their 28 ponies went to the two Mexicans, the scouts, and the companies.<sup>74</sup>

For the next two days, half of the Southern Column

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<sup>70</sup>Strong, My Indian Fights, p. 65.

<sup>71</sup>Mackenzie's report of Nov. 9, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>72</sup>Mackenzie's report of Nov. 8, 1874, in Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., Nov. 9, 1874. Thompson in Cavalry Journal, p. 432.

<sup>74</sup>Mackenzie's report of Nov. 9, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



pushed east and northeast past Canyon Resgata, finally coming to rest on the Fresh Fork of the Brazos.<sup>75</sup> The other half of the force scouted to the southwest on the Staked Plains before rejoining Mackenzie. Although they spied numerous hunting parties, the troopers failed to locate a large camp of hostiles.<sup>76</sup> While the Southern Column idled in camp on November 8, Lt. Frank D. Baldwin and a detachment of Colonel Miles' expedition surprised a large village near the head of McClellan's Creek. With his infantry in uncovered wagons--firing over the backs of the galloping mules--Baldwin's cavalry swept into the camp. The tribesmen rallied several times, then fled. They left behind Adelaide and Julia Germaine, two little white girls whose parents died in a Cheyenne raid in Kansas several months before.<sup>77</sup>

But no such coup rewarded Mackenzie's scouting. Moreover, marching for two days on one day's forage weakened his horses so badly that they could not leave camp on November 9. Already hard campaigning had cost the colonel 44 animals, and he needed another 200 to replace those still on their feet.<sup>78</sup> As if the long, hard marches with insufficient grass were not

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<sup>75</sup>Mackenzie's report of Nov. 8, 1874, Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Mackenzie's report of Nov. 9, 1874, Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 226. Baird in Century Magazine, p. 353.

<sup>78</sup>Mackenzie's report of Nov. 9, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



enough, a shortage of forage at Forts Griffin and Concho hastened the deterioration of his mounts. Mackenzie concluded that someone was "much to blame" for not supplying those posts with enough grain to fill Lawton's wagons.<sup>79</sup>

The real blame for such deficiencies, however, and the resulting suspension of operations, lay in what was probably the major problem that plagued the army throughout the Indian wars. The difficulty of supplying ever-moving columns with subsistence and forage grew more overpowering as winter advanced. When mud and snow gripped the prairie, the flow of provisions dwindled to a trickle, despite the almost superhuman efforts of men like Lawton. And, when transportation broke down, a basic weakness of the U. S. Cavalry stood out in bold relief. That is, a traditional dependence upon the big, grain-fed "American" horse made conventional mounted units slaves to the forage train. Except for a few men like Col. Nelson A. Miles, officers failed to recognize the value of using hardy Indian ponies that could subsist on grass and bark. It never seemed to occur to the unimaginative Mackenzie, for example, that he might mount the 4th Cavalry on Indian horses as Colonel Miles did a battalion of his 5th Infantry.<sup>80</sup> So, when transporta-

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>See James S. Hutchins, The Mounted Riflemen: The Role of Cavalry in the Indian Wars, 1865-1890. (A paper presented to the Conference on the History of Western America on Oct. 13, 1961 at Santa Fe, New Mexico). See Miles in RSW, 1878 (Serial 1818), p. 241 and RSW, 1875 (Serial 1674), pp. 79-80.



tion bogged down, cavalry idled in bivouac until a dose of grain gave temporary relief to their distress.

Be that as it may, Mackenzie resolved to continue the campaign, and drilled his men in preparation for another 30-day scout.<sup>81</sup> But because of his weakened horses, the colonel could muster no more than 260 mounted men for the proposed expedition.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore, a series of northers lashed the command until it became "worse than useless" to attempt travel over the boggy ground.<sup>83</sup> Yet, Mackenzie refused to give up the campaign, believing that the Indians were not ready to give up "in good faith," or to "behave" themselves. He based his judgment on the premise that not enough hostiles had been killed.<sup>84</sup> Thus he embraced the fallacy that casualties were the deciding factor in bringing the red man to his knees. Mackenzie was yet to learn that the hostile Indian could be humbled more effectively by relentless harassment, the loss of shelter, provisions, and ponies--not to mention the capture of his women and children.

The colonel held to his determination to take the field as soon as weather permitted. But his plans received a fur-

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<sup>81</sup>Mackenzie's report of Nov. 16, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. United Service, pp. 540-541.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie's report of Nov. 16, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.



ther setback on November 18 when another norther struck. As the temperature dropped to zero, rain changed to sleet and snow, transforming tents into sheets of solid ice.<sup>85</sup> Miles to the north, on McClellan's Creek, 27 horses froze to death at the picket line of the Fort Sill Column.<sup>86</sup> Fortunately, Mackenzie lost no horses that night. For the next few days, mild weather thawed the ground, allowing Davidson's command to limp towards Fort Sill and for Mackenzie to prepare his expedition.<sup>87</sup>

Finally, on November 22, the troopers of the 4th Cavalry drew 100 rounds of ammunition and packed another 10,000 on the mules.<sup>88</sup> The cartridges were ample for a mere 13 officers, 260 enlisted men, and 14 guides and scouts. Divided into seven detachments, the force represented only the strength of five companies. Nevertheless, Mackenzie noted that his men showed better health and spirits than when they left Fort Concho two months before.<sup>89</sup> So, the Southern Column slogged 32 miles through a gale to the head of Fresh Fork Canyon where, on November 24, mud forced a halt.<sup>90</sup> Buffeted

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<sup>85</sup>United Service, p. 541. Mackenzie to Augur, Nov. 21, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>86</sup>Sheridan to Augur, Dec. 1, 1874, Ibid. United Service, p. 541. Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 227.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid. United Service, p. 541.

<sup>88</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, Nov. 27, 1874, quoted in Carter, On the Border, p. 509.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.

<sup>90</sup>United Service, p. 541.



by northerners, the cavalry lay in camp for the next week.<sup>91</sup> While snow, sleet, and mud sealed the fate of the expedition, Mackenzie grew more concerned about the condition of his command. By now the 4th Cavalry was so exhausted that he realized that the future efficiency of the regiment depended upon an immediate change of station.<sup>92</sup> Although he clung to the idea of a winter campaign, the colonel also insisted that fresh troops and horses replace those in the field.<sup>93</sup>

On December 1 or 2, therefore, Mackenzie sent Cos. F and K to Fort Richardson.<sup>94</sup> And, on December 3, he marched the effective men of the remaining five troops to Canyon Resgata.<sup>95</sup> From there the Southern Column limped generally southward for nearly 15 miles where, on the evening of December 4-5, a norther inflicted one of the most wretched nights ever suffered by the command. Driven by gales, sleet froze several horses to death at the picket line as men huddled over mesquite root fires.<sup>96</sup> When the storm passed, Mackenzie pushed

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<sup>91</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Augur, Nov. 27, in Carter, On the Border, p. 509.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Augur, Dec. 2, 1874, Ibid. Also see Carter, On the Border, pp. 513-514.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie's reports of Nov. 27 and Dec. 2, 1874, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., Dec. 2, 1874.

<sup>95</sup>Carter, On the Border, pp. 514-515.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., p. 515.



on past Laguna Tahuca and Mucha Que.<sup>97</sup>

December 8 found the Southern Column in camp on a tributary of the Double Mountain Fork of the Brazos. About 8 miles away, Lt. Lewis Warrington and 10 men of Co. I attacked some 15 Indians on the Mucha Que.<sup>98</sup> In a hot little fight, the troops killed two hostiles and wounded another. They also captured nine horses and a 15 year-old boy named Vidot.<sup>99</sup> Mackenzie reported that Lieutenant Warrington's bravery in the skirmish deserved a reward. The recommendation not only led to a Congressional Medal of Honor for the officer, but contradicted the accusation that the colonel never solicited awards for his men.<sup>100</sup> In fact, during the campaign, Mackenzie recommended and received Congressional Medals of Honor for five men of the command.<sup>101</sup>

Lieutenant Warrington's engagement proved the last encounter with hostiles by the Southern Column in the Red River campaign. Between the 9th and 19th of December, Mackenzie combed the country around Mucha Que, but to no avail.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Warrington's report in Ibid., pp. 516-517. "Tabular Statement", Index 5689, AGO (RG:94), National Archives. Record of Engagements, p. 44.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid. Warrington's report in Carter, On the Border, pp. 516-517.

<sup>100</sup>Carter, Ibid., p. 518. Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 185.

<sup>101</sup>Adj. Gen. to Mackenzie, Oct. 29, 1875, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>102</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 518.



Six inches of snow fell, and ice an inch and a half thick formed on the Brazos. Several horses froze to death as winter whipped the 4th Cavalry.<sup>103</sup> By now clothing and equipment presented a major problem. Campaign hats were useless rags. Many of the men, and some of the officers, were almost bare-footed. Several soldiers improvised shoes from buffalo skins turned flesh side out, laced or tied across the toes.<sup>104</sup> It was a ragged column that stumbled into the supply camp on Duck Creek on December 19.<sup>105</sup> But Mackenzie did not linger at the base, because orders directed him to deliver his reports and maps to General Augur in San Antonio.<sup>106</sup>

As he rode eastward for his meeting with Augur, companies of the 4th Cavalry limped towards Forts Concho, McKavett, and Richardson.<sup>107</sup> They returned through some of the coldest weather ever felt in Texas. The mercury plunged to 10 degrees below zero, freezing rivers solid.<sup>108</sup> Thus ended the campaign. Except for the troops of Colonel Miles who remained in the field until the spring of 1875, the Red River War was over.

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., pp. 518-519.

<sup>104</sup>Strong, My Indian Fights, p. 66.

<sup>105</sup>Carter, On the Border, p. 519.

<sup>106</sup>Augur to Mackenzie, Dec. 5, 1874, Ibid., p. 521.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.

<sup>108</sup>United Service, p. 542.



## CHAPTER VII

### INTERLUDE AT FORT SILL

General Sheridan applauded the Red River War, not only as the most comprehensive, but the most successful Indian campaign ever waged.<sup>1</sup> He might have noted, however, that casualties did not bring the tribesmen to heel. Only eight hostiles belonging to an agency died at the hands of Mackenzie's force, while the Fort Sill Column killed but two.<sup>2</sup> Far more than casualties, psychological and economic factors undermined Indian resistance. That is, between July, 1874, and February, 1875, persistent harassment kept the tribes continually on the move. Unable to hunt, lay in provisions for the winter, or scarcely able to snatch a night's sleep unmolested, the red man lost his will to resist.<sup>3</sup> Kiowas and Comanches, as well as Cheyennes, realized the power of the Long Knives and their inability to cope with it. Even the elusive Kwahadis, for the first time, were constantly harried and routed from their

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<sup>1</sup>Sheridan's report in RSW, 1875 (Serial 1674), p. 58.

<sup>2</sup>Report of J. M. Haworth, Indian Agent at Fort Sill, Sept. 1, 1875, in RSI, 1875 (Serial 1680), p. 774. Cf., George Bird Grinnell, The Fighting Cheyennes (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1915), p. 314.

<sup>3</sup>Gen. John Pope's annual report in RSW, 1875 (Serial 1674), pp. 73-74.



winter homes.<sup>4</sup> So, through perhaps "unprecedented hardship and exposure"--not to mention heavy expense to the government<sup>5</sup>--the simultaneous operations of five columns broke the back of hostile resistance on the southern plains.

While not the zenith of Mackenzie's career<sup>6</sup>, no success of the Red River campaign proved more important than the victory in Palo Duro Canyon. Although the engagement does not deserve sole credit for opening west Texas to settlement, it is significant that Charles G. Goodnight grazed a herd of cattle in the canyon two years after the fight.<sup>7</sup> By routing the Indians from their ancient haunt, Mackenzie not only scattered the confederated tribes, but demonstrated that no stronghold was too remote from the long arm of the Great White Father. On the other hand, the battle may have prolonged the campaign because, prior to Mackenzie's attack, the hostiles talked of going to the reservation. But, when the 4th Cavalry struck on September 28, 1874, the frightened Indians fled to the Staked Plains.<sup>8</sup> After their

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<sup>4</sup>Thompson in Cavalry Journal, p. 432. Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, RSI, 1875 (Serial 1680), pp. 268-269.

<sup>5</sup>Pope's report in RSW, 1875 (Serial 1674), p. 74.

<sup>6</sup>Cf., Carter, Corral Dust, pp. 1-6.

<sup>7</sup>J. Evetts Haley, Charles Goodnight, Cowman and Plainsman (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1936), passim. Carter, Corral Dust, pp. 1-6. Great Western Indian Fights, p. 220.

<sup>8</sup>Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 314.



initial panic subsided, however, the more subtle effects of deprivation and anxiety bred a sense of futility that brought tribesmen into the agencies. The destruction of their ponies doubtless proved a harsh blow. It robbed a nomadic people of the mobility to fight and hunt. And, with buffalo hunters slaughtering the great herds, red men had precious little to hunt. In this context--including Mackenzie's dogged determination to ride his adversaries into the ground--the victory in Palo Duro Canyon probably did more to undermine hostile resistance than any other aspect of the Red River campaign.

If the war taxed the energies of five columns, it also proved a drain on Mackenzie. On January 15, 1875, after his conference with General Augur, the colonel boarded a train for Washington, D. C.<sup>9</sup> While he took leave in the East, his regiment transferred to the Department of the Missouri, commanded by Maj. Gen. John Pope. With headquarters at Fort Sill, the 4th Cavalry relieved the 10th Cavalry at a time when parties of humbled and impoverished Indians straggled into the reservation.<sup>10</sup>

The tribesmen continued to surrender after April 1 when Mackenzie returned from Washington and relieved Colonel

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<sup>9</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., Feb. 5, 1875, Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Special Orders 7, Dept. of Texas, Jan. 11, 1875, in Carter, On the Border, p. 524. Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in RSI, 1875 (Serial 1680), pp. 268-269. Also see Haworth's report in Ibid., p. 774.



Davidson as commanding officer of Fort Sill.<sup>11</sup> It was Davidson who, in February, 1875, sent representatives to induce the Kwahadis to come into the agency.<sup>12</sup> Although Davidson left Fort Sill early in April, his efforts were rewarded on the 18th of that month when 185 Kwahadis appeared at the reservation and surrendered their arms and over 700 ponies. In keeping with the policy, Mackenzie placed the chiefs in irons and imprisoned the warriors for a short time.<sup>13</sup> He then resolved to bring in one of the principal bands still off the reservation. Hearing that Mow-way's people camped about the headwaters of the Red River, Mackenzie asked Dr. J. J. Sturm--a frontiersman of long experience who claimed to be a friend of Mow-way--to induce the Comanches to return to the agency.<sup>14</sup> And, on April 23, when Sgt. John B. Charlton reenlisted, the colonel asked him to accompany Sturm on the dangerous mission.<sup>15</sup>

The following day, Sturm, Charlton, and two Comanches set out for Mow-way's village. After traveling generally west for three days, the emissaries met two Comanche hunters

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<sup>11</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 231.

<sup>12</sup>Haworth's report, RSI, 1875 (Serial 1680), p. 774.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, p. 214. Cf., Charlton in Carter, Old Sergeant, p. 113.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.



who came into camp to talk with Sturm.<sup>16</sup> The hunters led the party into Mow-way's camp where Sturm presented Mackenzie's terms. If the Comanches surrendered their ponies and weapons, the colonel promised them comfort and comparative freedom for as long as they behaved themselves. But, if they remained stubborn, he vowed to exterminate them.<sup>17</sup> When Sturm finished, the Indians herded the messengers into a tipi, placed them under guard, and retired to debate Mackenzie's offer. On the third day the prisoners heard much yelling in camp, and within a few minutes Mow-way led a procession into the lodge. Shaking hands and offering "overdone manifestations of friendship," Indians of all ages agreed to the terms of surrender.<sup>18</sup> Sturm and his party returned to Fort Sill early in May and reported their success. On June 2, Mow-way and 407 Comanches (including a few Apaches) trudged into the post and surrendered their arms and over 1,500 ponies. Just as he had done with the Kwahadis who gave up in April, Mackenzie jailed the warriors. After a short confinement, however, he released them and returned about 500 of their ponies.<sup>19</sup>

By the summer of 1875 only 35 Comanches remained off

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 113-114.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Haworth's report in RSI, 1875 (Serial 1680), p. 774. Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, p. 214.



the Fort Sill reservation.<sup>20</sup> To bring these people to the agency, as well as any others who might be found, Mackenzie enlisted the aid of the capable Kwahadi war chief, Quannah Parker. The colonel armed Quannah with a heavy, crisp document which stated that Indians off the reservation wanted to surrender but feared falling into the hands of Texas authorities. The letter not only asked cooperation, but warned people against molesting Quannah in the discharge of his duties. In July the Kwahadi chief roamed the prairie with two older warriors and two women, but it is not known how many returned with him to Fort Sill.<sup>21</sup>

At the agency, Indians found "Kinzi" strict, but fair. They not only feared and respected him, but maybe felt affection for the colonel who continually worked for their welfare.<sup>22</sup> He worried over the failure of the Indian Department to properly feed and clothe its wards. This "pressing emergency," Mackenzie predicted, would eventually goad the Kiowas and Comanches into a "stampede" from the agency.<sup>23</sup> Like General Augur, he no doubt found it revolting to watch corrupt officials fatten on the plunder wrung from the Indians, then find himself a party to the injustice by punish-

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<sup>20</sup>Haworth's report in RSI, 1875 (Serial 1680), p. 774.

<sup>21</sup>Cook, Border and Buffalo, pp. 374-375.

<sup>22</sup>Parker, Old Army, pp. 48-49.

<sup>23</sup>Mackenzie to Sherman, Aug. 31, 1875, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



ing rebellious warriors for doing what any man might do under the circumstances. So, when civil officials provoked dissatisfaction, the military found themselves in a delicate position. The army faced charges of assassination if it killed Indians, and claims of inefficiency if it did not.<sup>24</sup> Fortunately, however, Mackenzie enjoyed a "cordial and pleasant" relationship with Agent J. M. Haworth, a man who appreciated the colonel's courtesies and cooperation.<sup>25</sup>

The harmony that existed between the two officials helped Mackenzie affect a plan suggested by General Sheridan at the beginning of the Red River campaign. At that time Sheridan recommended that the proceeds from the sale of captured ponies be used to supply sheep for the Indians.<sup>26</sup> Both he and Mackenzie hoped to transform nomads into herdsmen and promote a blanket weaving industry such as found among the Navahos.<sup>27</sup> So, the colonel carefully husbanded money gained from the sale of animals and, by the end of the summer of 1875, he had saved over \$23,000.<sup>28</sup> In the fall, Mackenzie

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<sup>24</sup>Pope's report in RSW, 1875 (Serial 1674), p. 76.

<sup>25</sup>Haworth in RSI, 1875 (Serial 1680), p. 777. Also, RSI, 1876 (Serial 1749), p. 457.

<sup>26</sup>Sheridan to Sec. of Interior, date unknown, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>27</sup>Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 249.

<sup>28</sup>See undated and unsigned "Memo: Indian Pony Fund," in AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Haworth's report of Sept. 1, 1875 in RSI, 1875 (Serial 1680), p. 561. Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 249.



sent two officers to scour New Mexico for suitable ewes and rams. The officers purchased 3,500 sheep and 600 cattle and drove them from Fort Bascom across the Staked Plains to Fort Sill.<sup>29</sup> Many of the animals died during the crossing, and the rest arrived so weakened that Mackenzie postponed issuing them until the following spring.<sup>30</sup> Apparently neither he nor the Indian Bureau noted that the Indians disliked mutton and lamb.

Be that as it may, in the spring of 1876, Mackenzie launched the first general attempt by the Kiowas to raise stock other than horses.<sup>31</sup> At first the experiment seemed promising, but sickness and a shortage of food reduced the flocks--especially during the extremely cold winter of 1876-77.<sup>32</sup> The Indians killed their livestock, forcing the agent to increase their issue of beef to four pounds a week. Yet the increase did not deter warriors from sneaking off the reservation to supplement their diet with buffalo meat. In fact, as long as the tribesmen could slaughter buffalo, no experiment with domestic stock would succeed. So, in a few

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<sup>29</sup>Haworth's report of Aug. 21, 1876 in RSI, 1876 (Serial 1749), p. 456. Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, p. 340. Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 249.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, p. 340. Nye, Carbine and Lance, p. 249.

<sup>32</sup>Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, p. 340. Wallace and Hoebel, The Comanches, p. 330.



years, the sheep disappeared.<sup>33</sup>

When the experiment began, the number of Indians under Mackenzie's jurisdiction rose to between 3,000 and 4,000 Cheyennes and Arapahoes, about 1,690 Comanches, 1,070 Kiowas, 400 Apaches, and 1,500 of the lesser bands.<sup>34</sup> To police this population--both at Fort Sill and Darlington--the colonel had only about 400 soldiers divided among 10 companies. He regarded his command as inadequate, believing that a strong force must always be near the agency as a "visible power." In view of the discontent of the Indians, therefore, Mackenzie requested a full regiment of cavalry and one of infantry.<sup>35</sup> Although his command never reached those proportions, the colonel helped keep the inmates of Fort Sill quiet for an entire year--a feat never before accomplished at the reservation.<sup>36</sup>

While no military crisis developed during Mackenzie's sojourn at Fort Sill, he came under fire in another manner. In the spring of 1876, during the controversy over a proposed transfer of the Indian Bureau back to the War Department, Sec.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid. Mooney in Seventeenth Annual Report, p. 340.

<sup>34</sup>Mackenzie to H. B. Banning, Chairman of House Committee on Military Affairs, Mar. 9, 1876, in Report on the Transfer of the Indian Bureau, House Report 354, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. II (Serial 1709), p. 56.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 56-58.

<sup>36</sup>Sheridan's comments in Sec. of War, Letter on Affairs at Fort Sill, House Exec. Doc. 175, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. XIV (Serial 1691), p. 4.



of War W. W. Belknap resigned under charges of corruption. The revelation touched off an investigation in which the misdeeds of the Grant administration paraded before the public. Americans read about gross frauds by civil and military officials, corrupt practices such as the sale of post traderships, and speculation in letting contracts for quartermaster and commissary supplies.<sup>37</sup> No one was above suspicion.

Mackenzie found himself involved in the scandal when an alleged agent of the Board of Indian Commissioners wrote an article on Fort Sill in the April 7 edition of the New York Times.<sup>38</sup> The anonymous reporter saw the post as a sort of "young Sodom" whose garrison neither feared God nor respected man. According to the writer, horse races on Sunday were a favorite pastime, while the neat stone chapel served as a theater and dancehall. Not only did drunkenness flourish, complained the reporter, but there was no proper distinction between officers and men<sup>39</sup>--an absurd observation for anyone knowing Colonel Mackenzie. The writer concluded that common soldiers "planted the seeds of moral and physical death" among the miserable Indians of the reservation.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>Heister Clymer, Chairman of Special Committee, in Report on the Management of the War Department, House Report 799, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. VIII (Serial 1715), passim.

<sup>38</sup>Letter on Affairs at Fort Sill (Serial 1691), pp. 1-3.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.



Although these allegations, and the scandal that followed, failed to injure Mackenzie's career, his reaction to the controversy revealed much of his character. While he realized that the article was designed to show Americans the horrors that would attend a transfer of the Indian Bureau to the War Department, the accusations cut Mackenzie to the quick.<sup>41</sup> Feeling himself and his men "much injured" by the irresponsible allegations, his sense of duty and honor demanded rebuttal. So, for the first and probably last time in his life, the colonel wrote a letter to a newspaper.<sup>42</sup> In a typically rambling letter to the editor of the New York Times, he wrote:

This command is not depraved or bad. I am not in favor of drunkenness or disorder, or opposed to the Christian Religion.... Someone ought to be punished, for, either I am a very poor officer, or these people are bad men.<sup>43</sup>

Mackenzie went on to suggest that an "impartial" agency such as the State Department investigate his administration of Fort Sill, as well as look into the activities of the War and Interior Departments.<sup>44</sup>

General Pope acquiesced in Mackenzie's appeal for an investigation, although he did not think that an officer of

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., pp. 1-2.



the colonel's "well-earned and well-established reputation could in any way be injured by the libelous accusations of an anonymous newspaper correspondent."<sup>45</sup> General Sherman likewise thought that Mackenzie was too good an officer to have his reputation blemished by "anonymous flings."<sup>46</sup> At the same time, Sherman advised Mackenzie not to be drawn into the controversy in the newspapers, nor to reopen the issue of the corn frauds at Fort Richardson in 1871.<sup>47</sup>

The General-in-Chief had good reason for concern over Mackenzie's reaction, because, during a trial in which Colonel Reynolds faced charges of mishandling an attack on the village of Crazy Horse in March, 1876, the "gross frauds" of his administration in Texas came to light.<sup>48</sup> Although General Sherman assured Mackenzie that nothing had been said to his detriment at the trial, the colonel felt "bitterly hurt" by what he regarded as Reynold's attempt to transfer "odium" to him.<sup>49</sup> He therefore served notice that any accusation by Reynolds would not go unanswered.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Sherman to Mackenzie, Apr. 29 and May 2, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid. Heister Clymer to Mackenzie, Mar. 20, 1876, Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Mackenzie to Sheridan, May 11, 1876, Ibid. Sherman to Mackenzie, Apr. 29, 1876, Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Mackenzie to Sheridan, May 11, 1876, Ibid.



Then, as always, Mackenzie's chief concern was that his military superiors understand his innocence and devotion to duty.<sup>51</sup> Otherwise, he had no desire to enter into the controversy. That is why he declined to offer a "confidential" statement to the House Committee on Military Affairs. Not from any sense of "Christian forgiveness," but merely because he felt a "great unwillingness" to parade before the public that which could not fail to hurt the entire army.<sup>52</sup> Instead, Mackenzie insisted on submitting a full report to his superiors for the record, a report that presented his role in the Reynolds affair of 1871 and that included all the documents he possessed that related to the controversy.<sup>53</sup>

While the scandal left Mackenzie's reputation unblemished, it provided an insight into his character. Not only did it reveal his sensitive pride and honor, but his devotion to the army as well. The controversy also bared an aggressive nature that would not permit silence in the face of calumny. But, perhaps more significant, the episode furnished a glimpse at the vein of self-pity in Mackenzie's personality, a trait that grew more pronounced from this time forward. It is also worth noting that, although it probably had no bearing

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<sup>51</sup>Mackenzie to Sherman, Apr. 30, 1876, Ibid.  
Mackenzie to Sheridan, May 11, 1876, Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Clymer to Mackenzie, Mar. 20, 1876, Ibid. Mackenzie to Clymer, Apr. 3, 1876, Ibid. Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., May 11, 1876, Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.



on his reaction to the scandal, Mackenzie suffered an accident at Fort Sill.<sup>54</sup> In the autumn of 1875, when a horse started suddenly, the colonel toppled from a wagon. He landed on his head and remained in a "half-stupor" for two or three days. In fact, it is said that his mind did not entirely "clear" for several months.<sup>55</sup> Whatever the lasting effects of the accident, it seems certain that, dating from his sojourn at Fort Sill, Mackenzie grew more and more sensitive. He began to complain frequently of real or imagined ills. His tendency to feel persecuted (if not martyred) stood out in ever-bolder relief, until the colonel embarked on the dark trail of insanity.

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<sup>54</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 18. See Mackenzie's obituary in the Washington Evening Star, Jan. 21, 1889. It claims that the fall occurred in the autumn of 1877. But Dorst seems the better source. See John G. Bourke, Diary, 1869-1896 (126 vols.; Photostat copy at Library, University of New Mexico), XCII, 84.

<sup>55</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 18.



CHAPTER VIII  
TO DULL KNIFE'S STRONGHOLD

While Mackenzie smarted under the lash of notoriety at Fort Sill, violence erupted on the northern plains. Long blue columns took the field in what was hoped would be the final campaign against the hostile Sioux and Cheyennes. Unfortunately, hopes of an early victory disappeared in March, 1876, when Brig. Gen. George Crook--commanding the Department of the Platte--withdrew after an unsuccessful engagement with Crazy Horse and his Sioux. And, on June 17, when Crook again failed to crush the hostiles along Rosebud Creek, the campaign rose to its climax.<sup>1</sup> Eight days later, Bvt. Maj. Gen. George A. Custer and five companies of the 7th Cavalry fell at the Little Big Horn.

The bodies of Custer and his troopers had scarcely grown cold before their Sioux and Cheyenne slayers scattered over the wild face of Wyoming and Montana. In cooperation with the army, the Interior Department, on July 26, surrendered jurisdiction over all Indian agencies within the theater

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<sup>1</sup>Martin F. Schmitt (ed.), General George Crook, His Autobiography (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1946). Capt. John G. Bourke, On the Border with Crook (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1891). Bourke served on Crook's staff during the Powder River Expedition in the winter of 1876. See also Finerty, Warpath and Bivouac, pp. 1-290.



of war.<sup>2</sup> By that time, General Crook had launched another campaign. Throughout the summer and fall of 1876 his soldiers tracked the fugitive Indians, as units hurried from other parts of the frontier to bolster the over-extended regiments on the northern plains.<sup>3</sup> On August 2, therefore, Ranald Mackenzie found himself once more cast in the role of trouble-shooter.<sup>4</sup> With six companies of the 4th Cavalry, he was assigned to the Department of the Platte. Under General Crook, he would command both the District of the Black Hills and Camp Robinson, Nebraska--the post that stood guard over the explosive Red Cloud agency.

On his way north, Mackenzie paused to confer with General Sheridan. Then he pushed on to Camp Robinson, arriving on August 17.<sup>5</sup> He assumed command of 18 companies of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Cavalry, the 4th Artillery, and the 9th and 14th Infantry.<sup>6</sup> One of his first acts at

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<sup>2</sup>George E. Hyde, Red Cloud's Folk: A History of the Oglala Sioux Indians (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1937), p. 279. Roger T. Grange, Jr., "Fort Robinson, Outpost on the Plains," Nebraska History Magazine, XXXIX, 3 (Sept., 1958), 191-240.

<sup>3</sup>Schmitt, Crook's Autobiography, pp. 201-208. Robert G. Athearn (ed.), "A Winter Campaign against the Sioux," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XXXV (June, 1948-Mar., 1949), 272-284.

<sup>4</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. RSW, 1876 (Serial 1742), p. 59.

<sup>5</sup>Sheridan to Sherman, Aug. 9, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>6</sup>Mackenzie to Crook, Aug. 18, 1876, Dept. of the Platte (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. RSW, 1876 (Serial 1742), p. 48.



Camp Robinson may have indicated the falseness of the charges leveled against him at Fort Sill. Mackenzie closed the officers' billiard room and post trader's store on Sunday, forbidding games of pool or cards on that day. He also imposed stiffer discipline, and courts martial for enlisted men grew more frequent. Some of the trials culminated in at least one popular punishment of the day. Offenders were required to stand on a barrel for 12 days from reveille to retreat, with but half an hour for each meal.<sup>7</sup>

But problems of discipline proved far less important than the management of several thousand Indians. Within a month after his arrival at Camp Robinson, Mackenzie personally supervised a census of the tribesmen at the Red Cloud agency. The count showed 4,614 inhabitants, including half-breeds and whites drawing rations under the Treaty of 1868. This figure proved a far cry from the tally of 9,135 submitted by Agent E. A. Howard when he turned over the agency to the military.<sup>8</sup> Nor did the inventory include the Oglalas of Chief Red Cloud, or a few Brules under Yellow Leaf and Swift Bear, who bolted the agency about the time that Mackenzie took command.<sup>9</sup> The recalcitrant Sioux pitched their tipis on

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<sup>7</sup>Grange, Nebraska History, p. 220.

<sup>8</sup>Mackenzie's report of Sept. 15, 1876 in AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Cf., RSW, 1876 (Serial 1742), p. 26. Hyde, Red Cloud's Folk, p. 279.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 284. George Bird Grinnell, Two Great Scouts and Their Pawnee Battalion (Cleveland: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1928), p. 250.



Chadron Creek, about 23 miles from Camp Robinson. They not only refused to budge when Mackenzie withheld their rations, but ignored his threats of force.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps they realized that the colonel lacked the troops to enforce his will. So, the Sioux remained on Chadron Creek, where they maintained contact with the hostiles and talked much of war.<sup>11</sup>

As the Indians grew more restless, some observers feared that the principle bands verged on bolting the reservation. Reports from the Red Cloud agency, in October, alarmed General Crook whose soldiers hobbled along in futile pursuit of the hostiles.<sup>12</sup> Like Sheridan, Crook realized that while many of the agency Indians professed peace, sooner or later they would have to surrender their arms and ponies.<sup>13</sup> Because, with his "Starvation March" a failure, Crook must subdue the tribesmen at Red Cloud before taking the field in a new effort. So, while the troops of the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expeditions limped along on their diet of horsemeat, Crook ordered Col. Wesley Merritt, 5th Cavalry, to con-

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid. Hyde, Red Cloud's Folk, p. 284. Interview of William Garnett, Jan. 10, 1907, in Ricker Collection (Nebraska State Historical Society), Tablet 1, pp. 43-44, Microfilm Reel 1.

<sup>11</sup>Crook to Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Oct. 30, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Sherman to Sheridan, Sept. 4, 1876, Ibid., Letters Sent. Hyde, Red Cloud's Folk, p. 284.

<sup>12</sup>Crook to Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Oct. 30, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>13</sup>Sheridan's report in RSW, 1876 (Serial 1742), pp. 35-36.



verge his column on the Red Cloud agency.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile, the forces under Mackenzie slowly expanded. Additional units arrived, overflowing Camp Robinson into three temporary cantonments near the post.<sup>15</sup> Several batches of recruits filtered into the companies, in October, replacing men discharged or disabled. The number of replacements rose until they comprised nearly two-thirds of some companies in the 4th Cavalry.<sup>16</sup> And, by October 22, with Colonel Merritt's command but a few hours away, Mackenzie knew that he would soon have 53 companies at his disposal.<sup>17</sup> He therefore felt strong enough to move against the bands on Chadron Creek.

Shortly after sunset on Sunday, October 22, the colonel made his move. Avoiding the agency to prevent being reported to the Indians, he led six companies of the 4th Cavalry and two of the 5th along the road to Chadron Creek.<sup>18</sup> About 15 miles from the agency, reinforcements trotted up in the form of Maj. Frank North, his brother Capt. Luther North, and 42

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<sup>14</sup>Crook to Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Oct. 30, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>15</sup>Grange, Nebraska History, p. 211.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Crook to Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Oct. 30, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Col. Homer W. Wheeler, The Frontier Trail, or: From Cowboy to Colonel (Los Angeles: Times-Mirror Press, 1923), p. 160. Wheeler was a second lieutenant in Co. L, 5th Cavalry and served with Mackenzie in the Powder River Expedition.



Pawnee scouts.<sup>19</sup> They were part of the famous Pawnee Battalion that was to serve Mackenzie so well in the weeks to come. One hundred of them enlisted in the Indian Territory in August 1876 and, well armed with carbines and revolvers, rode north to aid in the suppression of the hostile Sioux and Cheyennes. When they arrived at the Red Cloud agency and learned of Mackenzie's march to Chadron Creek, Major North mounted about half his scouts on choice ponies and trotted off to join the colonel.<sup>20</sup>

Together, soldiers and Pawnees resumed the steady trot towards Chadron Creek. About three or four o'clock on the morning of October 23 the column reached a fork in the road. One branch led to Red Cloud's village, and the other to that of Yellow Leaf and Swift Bear, about a mile away on the same stream.<sup>21</sup> Apparently expecting no serious resistance, Mackenzie divided his command. He sent Maj. George A. Gordon with two companies of the 5th Cavalry, Troop M of the 4th, and a

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<sup>19</sup>"Capture of Red Cloud on Chadron Creek," Nebraska History Magazine, XV, 4 (Oct.--Dec., 1934), p. 277. Luther North, Man of the Plains: Recollections of Luther North, ed. Donald F. Danker (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), p. 202. Interview of William Garnett, Ricker Collection, Tablet 1, p. 46, Microfilm Reel 1.

<sup>20</sup>North, Man of the Plains, passim. Grinnell, Two Great Scouts, p. 249. Donald F. Danker, "The North Brothers and the Pawnee Scouts," Nebraska History Magazine, XLII (Sept., 1961), 161-179.

<sup>21</sup>Garnett interview, Ricker Collection, Tablet 1, pp. 46-51, Microfilm Reel 1. North, Man of the Plains, p. 202.



few Pawnees under Capt. Luther North, towards the Brule camp. With the other five companies of the 4th Cavalry and the remainder of the scouts under Major North, Mackenzie trotted off to Red Cloud's lodges.<sup>22</sup>

Arriving at the village about two hours before day-break, Mackenzie quickly deployed his men around the camp. When dawn broke, scout William Garnett rode ahead to calm the fears of the Sioux, while the colonel sent a man to the edge of the creek to warn the Indians that they were surrounded.<sup>23</sup> As the shout rang out, women and children poured from the lodges and scrambled into the bushes. The warriors did not show themselves, even when the Pawnees charged through the village. A few minutes later, when the scouts rode back with 722 ponies, the Sioux men still remained inside their tipis.<sup>24</sup> Not until Mackenzie dismounted the cavalry and marched into the camp did some 239 warriors emerge from the lodges. Troopers seized their worthless guns and placed the tribesmen under arrest.<sup>25</sup> In the meantime, Mackenzie's interpreter ordered the women to select horses to transport their baggage back to Camp Robinson. They must hurry, warned

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, pp. 160-161.

<sup>23</sup>Garnett interview, Ricker Collection, Tablet 1, pp. 50-51, Microfilm Reel 1. Grinnell, Two Great Scouts, pp. 253-254.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. "Capture of Red Cloud," Nebraska History, p. 278. Grange in Nebraska History, p. 211.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. Cf., Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 160.



the colonel, or else he would burn their tipis. Apparently the women thought that Bad Hand was bluffing, but when several lodges began to blaze, they hurried to do his bidding.<sup>26</sup> When they finished their task, Mackenzie mounted the aged and feeble Sioux on ponies and, with the young men walking alongside the column, marched to join Major Gordon.<sup>27</sup>

Just before sundown on October 23, the command rode into the Red Cloud agency. They found most of its inmates already disarmed and dismounted by the ragged soldiers of the Big Horn and Yellowstone Expeditions.<sup>28</sup> Although but a few tribesmen escaped the "roundup," General Crook allowed the friendly Arapahoes and Cut-off Sioux to keep their weapons. He reasoned that to disarm them would simply array the white man against the red, placing both "loyal" and "disloyal" Indians on the same footing.<sup>29</sup> So, for the first time in the history of the Red Cloud reservation, friendly warriors received better treatment than the recalcitrant.<sup>30</sup> The policy not only impressed the tribesmen with the friendship of the government, but greatly stimulated the "experiment" that Crook

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<sup>26</sup>Grinnell, Two Great Scouts, pp. 254-255.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. North, Man of the Plains, p. 204. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 161.

<sup>28</sup>Capt. Charles King, Campaigning with Crook and Stories of Army Life (n. p., n. d.), pp. 149, 166.

<sup>29</sup>Crook to Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Oct. 30, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.



planned to undertake.<sup>31</sup>

Because his "Horsemeat March" had left the hostiles uncowed, Crook plotted a winter campaign and put some "new tricks into the bag."<sup>32</sup> He not only placed Mackenzie in command of the cavalry, but planned to use Sioux and Cheyennes as scouts. Such a scheme was a "measure of humanity," designed to shorten the war and save the lives of both white men and red.<sup>33</sup> Crook banked on the employment of Indians to impress the hostiles with the futility of resistance, and thereby undermine their will to fight. Furthermore, the "gray fox" saw the enlistment of tribesmen as "the entering wedge by which the tribal organization [would be] broken up, making way for civilization and Christianizing influences." Furnished with the uniform, food, and pay of the regular soldier, the Indian scout was supposed to believe that the whites had no prejudice against his race. Crook held (with curious logic) that military service made the Indian decide for himself and enabled him to see beyond the "old superstitions" that governed his people.<sup>34</sup> With these ideas in mind, Crook placed Spotted Tail in charge of all tribes at the agency, then addressed himself to the recruitment of Indian

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Schmitt, Crook's Autobiography, p. 213.

<sup>33</sup>Crook to Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Oct. 30, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. Garnett interview, Ricker Collection, Tablet 1, p. 59, Microfilm Reel 1.



scouts.<sup>35</sup> Although critics of his policy predicted that the Sioux and Cheyennes would never fight their own people, large numbers of warriors ignored the advice of their former agent, E. A. Howard, and volunteered their services.<sup>36</sup>

In the meantime, Camp Robinson bustled with activity. Crook and Mackenzie girded for the impending campaign while a delegation of Japanese army officers observed the preparations.<sup>37</sup> Everything in readiness by November 1, the Powder River Expedition took the field. As the command marched out of Camp Robinson and headed for Fort Laramie, 52 officers, 1,500 enlisted men, and 6 surgeons marched in the column. Almost 400 Indian scouts--divided into tribal groupings--hovered about the front and flanks.<sup>38</sup>

Three days later, the Powder River Expedition rendezvoused at Fort Laramie. There companies of cavalry drew more replacements. In a manner reminiscent of Civil War days,

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Cincinnati Daily Gazette, Nov. 22, 1876, in Capt. John G. Bourke, Diary, XIX, 1572. Hereinafter this source will be cited as Bourke Diary. Newspaper clippings will include the name of the writer or paper. Crook to Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Oct. 30, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>37</sup>Grange in Nebraska History, p. 211.

<sup>38</sup>Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 167. Capt. John G. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight with the Cheyennes (Governor's Island, New York: n. p., 1890), p. 4. This work is based almost entirely on the Bourke Diary.



troop strengths rose to 100 or more men.<sup>39</sup> At least half the newcomers were recruits, however, men with very little drill and even less camp experience. Amused by their inexperience, old campaigners dubbed them "General Custer's Avengers."<sup>40</sup> Probably a more welcome addition was Captain Egan and his veteran gray horse troop (K) of the 2nd Cavalry.<sup>41</sup>

Whatever the deficiency in training, General Crook made sure that the troops were well equipped. Each man drew a full kit of the latest cold-weather gear--caps, gloves, and leggings of fur. Furthermore, quartermasters issued each soldier either felt boots or "snow excluders" for the regulation cavalry boot. An overcoat, three blankets, and tentage rounded out the equipment.<sup>42</sup> The Powder River Expedition proved so well furnished that the veteran Capt. John G. Bourke applauded it as the best officered and equipped command in which he had ever served.<sup>43</sup> On November 5, moreover, when the command began a 100-mile trek to Fort Fetterman on the

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<sup>39</sup>Homer W. Wheeler, Buffalo Days: Forty Years in the Old West (New York: A. L. Burt [c1925]), p. 127. James S. McClellan, "A Day with the 'Fighting Cheyennes'," Motor Travel, XXII, 11 (Feb., 1931), 22. McClellan was a sergeant in Co. H, 3rd Cavalry. Bourke Diary, XVII, 1375.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Wheeler, Buffalo Days, p. 127.

<sup>42</sup>Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 170. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1375.



south bank of the North Platte River, 168 supply wagons and 7 ambulances rattled in its wake. Driven by 219 teamsters, 3 6-mule teams served each troop of cavalry, while 2 wagons hauled the provisions of each company of infantry.<sup>44</sup> Over 400 prime mules toiled under the expert eye of Tom Moore and 65 packers, ready to shoulder their burdens when the horse soldiers cut loose from the main body.<sup>45</sup>

A march of five days carried the Powder River Expedition to Fort Fetterman. The quiet post suddenly burst into activity as the troops drew more equipment and readied themselves for the field.<sup>46</sup> Preparations completed by daylight on November 14, the command left Fetterman in a blinding snowstorm and headed for Cantonment Reno, a small supply depot perched at the crossing of the Powder River, 100 miles to the north.<sup>47</sup> The fangs of the storm bit deeper as the column picked its way through the ice floes of the Powder River. When the expedition wound across a high, rolling mesa, the blizzard abated. With the sun "sulking behind soft gray mists," detachments of Indian scouts scoured the countryside

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<sup>44</sup>Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 171. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 4.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 4, 14, 41.

<sup>46</sup>See diary of James S. McClellan in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 19. North, Man of the Plains, p. 207.

<sup>47</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, pp. 7-8. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 171. McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 19.



for 30 to 40 miles on either flank.<sup>48</sup> During the march of 15 miles that day, a ripple of excitement passed along the column when 4 hostiles chased the quartermaster clerk and the wagonmaster in from the flank. The warriors escaped.<sup>49</sup>

After the expedition crossed the South Fork of the Cheyenne River, the weather cleared briefly. Then, for the first time, the entire column could be seen stretching out over five miles of road.<sup>50</sup> The next day intermittent snow falls returned, and the air grew colder as the command wound slowly to the top of the divide. When they reached the summit, the Powder River and the Big Horn Range, robed in snow, burst into view. To the east, Pumpkin Butte reared its hoary head. After a march of 20 miles, the soldiers pitched their tents that night on the Dry Fork of the Powder River.<sup>51</sup>

On November 18 they moved down to the crossing of the Dry Fork, forded it, and bivouacked on the north side of Cantonment Reno.<sup>52</sup> The garrison scrambled from holes in the faces of clay-banks and other makeshift quarters to offer their hospitality. Tom Cosgrove, an old frontiersman, also came forward with over 100 Shoshones to reinforce the scout battalion.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 8.

<sup>49</sup>McClellan's diary, Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 20.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid. North, Man of the Plains, p. 210.

<sup>53</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, pp. 8-9. McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 20.



General Crook lectured the Indian auxiliaries on the duties and conduct expected of them as another storm closed around Cantonment Reno.<sup>54</sup> While the blizzard shrieked outside the hovels, Crook dispatched 8 Arapahoes and 6 Sioux scouts to reconnoiter the foothills of the Big Horn Mountains.<sup>55</sup> The rest of the Powder River Expedition sat out the storm on November 20, while a civilian plied the men with whiskey. But before the peddler's cart was confiscated and his barrels staved in, a drunken recruit wandered off into the night and froze to death. An artilleryman also died during the brief stay at the cantonment.<sup>56</sup>

The following day scouts returned leading a Cheyenne boy named Beaver Dam. The youth admitted that he belonged to a small party of five lodges at the head of the Crazy Woman's Fork of the Powder River. He also warned that his failure to return home would alarm his people. They would then cross the mountains to join Crazy Horse, whose camp lay near his battle with Crook the preceding June. Beaver Dam's news made the village of Crazy Horse the target of the Powder River Expedition.<sup>57</sup> That evening a courier gathered up last-minute letters and dispatches and disappeared into the

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<sup>54</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 9.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 10. Cf., McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 20.

<sup>57</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 11. Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 349.



night.<sup>58</sup>

At daylight, on Wednesday, November 22, the command packed up and trudged 28 miles through the biting cold to the Crazy Woman's Fork--the point from which Crook intended to strike out at Crazy Horse.<sup>59</sup> As the supply train parked amid good grass, water, and fuel, Mackenzie rode east towards a herd of buffalo. That evening three of the animals supplemented the rations of the Powder River Expedition.<sup>60</sup>

Shortly after dawn the next day, a young Cheyenne named Sitting Bear appeared on a nearby bluff and waved a white flag. He had been sent from the Red Cloud agency to present the hostiles with an ultimatum that would bring about their bloodless surrender. Sitting Bear said that the camp of young Beaver Dam had already started the trek to Crazy Horse. But, more important, the scout reported an extremely large village of Cheyennes hidden in a canyon of the Big Horn Range near the head of the very stream on which the command rested.<sup>61</sup> Although neither Crook nor Mackenzie knew it, the Cheyenne camp

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<sup>58</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 12.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 172. McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 20.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid. R. G. Carter once said that he never saw Mackenzie "make a run" after buffalo because he was such a poor rider. The colonel was most fond of hunting bear with dogs. He kept one pack of bear hounds and another of greyhounds to hunt antelope, jack rabbits, or lobos. See Carter, Corral Dust, pp. 1-6.

<sup>61</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1412. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 172.



was that of Dull Knife, an influential chief who, dreading exile to the Indian Territory, led his band from the Red Cloud agency in June, 1876--in time to lend their weight in the Custer battle.<sup>62</sup> So, when Sitting Bear reported his findings, the village of Dull Knife became the prime objective of Mackenzie's cavalry. Packers hurried to strap 10 day's rations on the mules, while shivering troopers crammed a hundred rounds of ammunition in their cartridge belts and pockets.<sup>63</sup>

At 9:00 a. m. Mackenzie rode out of camp at the head of 28 officers, 790 enlisted men, 4 interpreters, and 363 Indian scouts. His 10 companies of cavalry consisted of Troops H and K of the 3rd, B, D, E, F, I, and M of the 4th, and H and L of the 5th.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the column included the "scholarly and companionable" Jerry Roche of the New York Herald, probably the only correspondent ever to accompany Mackenzie on a campaign.<sup>65</sup> Leaving Captain Egan's troop of the 2nd Cavalry to follow with the wagons, the colonel left camp with orders to strike a decisive blow at any village encountered. If the enemy proved too strong, Mackenzie was

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<sup>62</sup>Cf., Hyde, Red Cloud's Folk, p. 287.

<sup>63</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 13. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 172.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., pp. 167-169. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 13. McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 20.

<sup>65</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 12.



to fall back on the 15 companies of infantry and artillery that escorted the supply train.<sup>66</sup> So, setting a southwesterly course, he marched down the Crazy Woman's Fork until reaching the point where Beaver Creek leaves the Big Horn Mountains. Then the column moved rapidly 12 or more miles up that stream and bivouacked in the foothills.<sup>67</sup> Although well-hidden, the campsite afforded very little firewood. The weather grew colder and, as the troops braced for an uncomfortable night, not a man nor animal seemed affected by the "Polar" temperature.<sup>68</sup> Also that night, Mackenzie dispatched Indian scouts.

Daybreak on the 24th of November found the command on a southwesterly course that led to Sioux Pass on the east side of the Big Horn Range. Rugged terrain and deep, muddy creeks caused several to fall from their horses. One trooper almost drowned when his mount fell from the bank of a stream.<sup>69</sup> At noon, five of the seven scouts sent out the previous even-

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., pp. 13-14. McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 20. Joe De Barthe, Life and Adventures of Frank Grouard, ed. Edgar I. Stewart (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), p. 166. This book incorporates many quotations of Grouard who served as chief of scouts for the cavalry expedition.

<sup>68</sup>McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 20. North, Man of the Plains, p. 211. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, pp. 18-19. Mackenzie's report enclosed with Crook's message of Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>69</sup>McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 20. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 19.



ing rode in and reported a large camp of hostiles about 18 miles distant. They said that, while following the Powder River, they discovered fresh signs of Indians that led towards the head of the Red Fork of the Powder River. The scouts rode up the Red Fork for about six miles and, where the stream leaves the mountains, found the Cheyenne village located in a little open valley. Leaving Red Shirt and Jackass hidden in the rocks overlooking the camp, the scouts hurried back to report.<sup>70</sup>

Upon receipt of this news, Mackenzie pointed the column towards the mountains and marched until about 3:00 p. m. when he called a halt. He hid the command in a deep ravine with orders to build no fires and to prepare for a night march. If all went well, the colonel planned to strike the Cheyenne village before dawn the following day.<sup>71</sup> While troopers gulped a cold lunch and readied themselves for a forced march, Indian scouts raced their ponies wildly about the command. Veterans recognized the ancient practice as an exercise to give horses their second wind before riding out to do

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<sup>70</sup>Crook's enclosure of Mackenzie's report, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Luther North says that the scouts were Arapahoes, while his brother claims that they were Sioux. At any rate, Luther observes that this was the only time his Pawnees failed to locate a village of hostiles. See North, Man of the Plains, p. 211 and diary of Frank North in Danker, Nebraska History, p. 177n. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 19.

<sup>71</sup>Crook's enclosure, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. North, Man of the Plains, p. 211. McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 20. De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 166.



battle.<sup>72</sup>

About 4:00 p. m. the cavalry swung into the saddle and, with Sharp Nose, the Arapaho chief, leading the way, began a rapid walk over the rough ground until darkness slowed the pace.<sup>73</sup> Several miles in advance of the horse soldiers, Lieutenant Lawton and a squad hacked at the flinty soil with pick and axe, laboring to make deep ravines passable.<sup>74</sup> Early in the evening a rising moon helped light the way. In its cold rays fur-clad troopers glistened from head to foot in a coating of "crystal rime," as the command stumbled across knolls glassy with ice.<sup>75</sup> Shortly after midnight, however, the moon set, leaving the column to struggle under a clear, cloudless sky. Deep ravines forced grumbling riders to dismount at least 20 times during the night. One frozen arroyo cost Mackenzie two hours.<sup>76</sup> Other obstacles

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<sup>72</sup>McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 20. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 173.

<sup>73</sup>Garnett interview in Ricker Collection, Tablet 1, p. 130, Microfilm Reel 1. Crook's enclosure, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RC:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 173. De Barthe, Life and Adventures, pp. 166-167.

<sup>74</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 14. Letter from Walter S. Schuyler in Motor Travel, XXII, 4 (July, 1930), 18.

<sup>75</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, pp. 14, 20.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid. Article by Jerry Roche in New York Herald, Dec. 11, 1876, as found in Bourke Diary, XX, 1661. Bourke also clipped Roche's articles of Nov. 29, Dec. 4, and Dec. 24. Unless otherwise indicated, citations to Jerry Roche will refer to his article of Dec. 11, 1876. Also see Bourke's entries in Ibid., XVII, 1414. McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 20.



delayed the column until it strung out in single-file for nearly two miles. During halts many of the shivering soldiers dozed in their saddles. Others dropped out of ranks. Some puffed pipes in defiance of Mackenzie's strict orders not to smoke.<sup>77</sup>

Such was the struggle across the North Fork of the Powder River and over to the Red Fork, which the command struck eight miles below the Cheyenne village.<sup>78</sup> Mackenzie followed the winding stream across gullies that "seamed and gashed" the floor of the canyon. As the riders moved single-file through a narrow gorge, tall brush often hid the foremost horsemen from their followers.<sup>79</sup> Just before daybreak, keen ears caught the dull throb of Cheyenne war drums. The enemy did not sleep but, as the sky grew light in the east, danced in celebration of a victory over the Shoshones.<sup>80</sup> The thud of drums and the weary chants of medicine men echoed along the walls of the canyon while Mackenzie dismounted each troop as it straggled into the meadow at the mouth of the gorge. There, many troopers dozed on the frozen ground, the reins of their horses tied

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid. North, Man of the Plains, p. 211. Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1661.

<sup>78</sup>Grouard's statement in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 167.

<sup>79</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1661.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid. Bourke Diary, XVII, 1414-1415. North, Man of the Plains, p. 212.



to their wrists.<sup>81</sup> Other men crouched, dreading the cough, the sneeze, or the whinney that would betray them. Sharp Nose moved nervously about on his pony.<sup>82</sup> Every few minutes Indian scouts darted in, reported in hushed tones, and inquired about the progress of the command that strung out in a dozen ravines. They, more than the whites, realized the urgent demand for speed.<sup>83</sup>

The sky grew brighter, and Mackenzie fidgeted as the opportunity for a dawn attack came and went.<sup>84</sup> He called Major North over from the left bank of the stream and outlined his plan of attack. Despite ignorance of the terrain, the colonel hoped to envelop Dull Knife's village. His strategy called for Pawnee scouts to charge down the south bank of the Red Fork, through the Cheyenne camp, and cross the stream at the far end of the village. There they would meet the cavalry riding in from the north side of the stream to complete the encirclement. Meanwhile, the rest of the scouts would sieze the Cheyenne pony herd. Mackenzie preferred a bloodless capture, and ordered that no one shoot unless the hos-

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid. Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1661.  
Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 21.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1414. Jerry Roche in Ibid., XX, 1661.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., XVII, 1414-1415.



tiles fired first.<sup>85</sup> Such a scheme demanded surprise, an element that was fast evaporating. The blazing morning star had already begun its retreat before the first shafts of dawn when the Cheyenne drums fell silent.<sup>86</sup> In the half-light of daybreak the sleepy dancers shuffled off to their lodges.

About half an hour after dawn the rearmost companies reported in. Mackenzie hurriedly re-formed his command into a column of fours, with the six companies of Major Gordon's battalion in the lead followed by the four troops of Major Mauck's battalion.<sup>87</sup> On the left bank of the creek, Pawnee scouts stripped off overcoats and jackets, cached their saddles, and pushed eagerly to the fore--much like racehorses awaiting the bell. In the excitement, a Sioux named Scraper sneaked away from the column. He got half way down the slope before scouts Baptiste Pourier and William Garnett persuaded him not to charge the village single-handed.<sup>88</sup> Then, when Sharp Nose ran up to Mackenzie and asked if the whites were

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<sup>85</sup>North, Man of the Plains, p. 212. Garnett interview, Ricker Collection, Tablet 1, p. 136, Microfilm Reel 1. Grouard's account in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 167.

<sup>86</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1663. Crook's enclosure of Mackenzie's report, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>87</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1662. McClellan's account in Motor Travel, XXI, 12 (Mar., 1930), 19.

<sup>88</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1662. Bourke's entry, Ibid., XVII, 1415. North's account in Motor Travel, XXIII, 2 (May, 1931), 23. Ibid., XXIII, 3 (June, 1931), 18. Garnett interview, Ricker Collection, Tablet 1, p. 136, Microfilm Reel 1.



ready, the colonel nodded and gave the order to charge.<sup>89</sup>

Perhaps two miles to the west stood nearly 200 Cheyenne lodges, sheltering some 1,200 souls--300 to 400 of them warriors.<sup>90</sup> The tipis hugged both banks of the Red Fork for at least three-quarters of a mile. Laid out in an elliptical form, and almost hidden by brush, Dull Knife's camp measured a mile at its widest point. It stood in a sort of amphitheater, the walls of which rose 500 to 1,000 feet.<sup>91</sup> Stretching four miles, the canyon extended from one-half to one mile from the bases of the hills that formed its north and south walls. About one-third of a mile west of the village the canyon ended in several flat-topped hills cut by ravines.<sup>92</sup> At the east end of the valley a high mesa jutted into the plain, narrowing the entrance to the canyon. This hill, later named Mackenzie Mountain, commanded the entire valley and blended into mesas that formed the almost vertical south wall of the canyon. From the base of Mackenzie

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<sup>89</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1662. Bourke's entry in Ibid., XVII, 1415.

<sup>90</sup>Jerry Roche in Ibid., XX, 1663-1664. Mackenzie reported 173 lodges. See Crook's enclosure, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Wheeler quotes this report in Frontier Trail, p. 185, but changes the number of tipis to 205. This was probably the entire Northern Cheyenne tribe. See Harry H. Anderson, "The Cheyennes at the Little Big Horn: A Study of Statistics," North Dakota History, XXVII, 2 (Spring, 1960), 82-83, 91.

<sup>91</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1419-1420. Jerry Roche in Ibid., XX, 1664. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 22.

<sup>92</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1664.



Mountain the plain gradually sloped down for two or more miles to about where the village began.<sup>93</sup>

On the north side of the valley almost perpendicular walls reared an average of 800 to 1,000 feet for more than half their length. A few hundred yards from the north wall stood a double and a single red limestone broken ridge. Except for Mackenzie Mountain and the south wall, the double bluff was the key position in the canyon.<sup>94</sup> Both these ridges blended into a grassy plateau that ran parallel to Dull Knife's village and about 20 feet above it. Four or five deep ravines ran northward into the hills from the cut-bank or high water mark of the Red Fork and gashed the plain across which the soldiers must ride before encircling the camp.<sup>95</sup> Several hundred yards southeast of the double red sandstone bluffs, and very close to the creek, stood a red sandstone butte. About 30 feet high, this butte would soon be known as "Hospital Hill."<sup>96</sup>

Such was Dull Knife's stronghold. The hostiles knew of the proximity of the troops days before Mackenzie's attack,

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid. Luther North's account in Motor Travel, XXII, 12 (Mar., 1931), 19.

<sup>94</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1664. Letter from O. W. Judge, Caspar, Wyoming, to Nohl, Sept. 25, 1961. Mr. Judge has visited the site on several occasions with a metal detector. He has traced troop locations and movements by locating expended cartridge casings as well as by relics.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid. Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1663-1664.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid. Letter from Judge to Nohl, Sept. 25, 1961.





y A. W. Johnson, Marine-on-St. Croix, Minnesota, 1930.

VIEW OF MACKENZIE MOUNTAIN, LOOKING SOUTH ACROSS THE RED FORK OF POWDER RIVER



y Albert W. Johnson, Marine on St. Croix, Minn., 1930

VIEW OF THE DULL KNIFE BATTLEFIELD FROM THE TOP OF MACKENZIE MOUNTAIN





*Photograph by Albert W. Johnson, Marine-on-St. Croix, Minn., July, 1929*

THE PRINCIPAL AND MOST IMPORTANT RAVINE ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE DULL KNIFE  
BATTLEFIELD, WYO.



*Photograph by F. O. Graves, Barnum, Wyoming, 1930*

CROSS-SECTION OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THE DULL KNIFE FIELD



yet few dreamed that Bad Hand would dare a night march through the mountains in winter.<sup>97</sup> But if the formidable refuge lent a feeling of security to many Cheyennes, others saw it as a trap. Less confident warriors counseled flight from the canyon, but the obstinacy and arrogance of Last Bull--chief of the Fox Soldiers--seems to have cowed the more timid leaders of the tribe.<sup>98</sup> So, daybreak on November 25, 1876 found most of the Cheyennes asleep.

Young Two Moons was one of the exceptions. After a night of dancing, he felt uneasy and went to his lodge to awaken his family.<sup>99</sup> Elsewhere in the camp, Little Hawk lay half asleep, gazing at the brightening sky through the smoke-hole of his tipi. As Little Hawk dozed, a shout some distance away shattered his reverie. He recognized the voice of Black Hairy Dog, keeper of the sacred Medicine Arrows. The voice shrieked: "Get your guns. The camp is charged. They are coming."<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>97</sup>For Indian statements see Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 355. Luther North's account in Motor Travel, XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 16.

<sup>98</sup>Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 355.

<sup>99</sup>Young Two Moons' account in Ibid., p. 360.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., p. 361.



CHAPTER IX  
MACKENZIE'S LAST FIGHT

Trumpets stuttering the "charge," Mackenzie and his staff spurred their mounts towards the startled village.<sup>1</sup> Behind them, sharp commands rang along the walls of the canyon as, in a column of fours, the battalions of Gordon and Mauck pounded over unfamiliar terrain. On the south bank of the Red Fork, Pawnee medicine men galloped along the narrow trail at the head of their tribesmen, the "weird croon" of their sacred flageolets moaning like steamboats in the fog.<sup>2</sup> Behind the Pawnees rode Tom Cosgrove and 1st Lt. Walter S. Schuyler, leading the yelping Shoshones and Bannocks. Thundering in the rear came Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho scouts behind Lt. Philo Clark and Lt. Hayden Delaney.<sup>3</sup>

When the cavalry reached the east gap, where the canyon widened into an amphitheater, the columns galloped front into line.<sup>4</sup> But as the charge gained momentum, the Pawnee

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<sup>1</sup>North, Man of the Plains, p. 213. Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1663.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup>Luther North's account in Motor Travel, XXI, 11 (Feb., 1930), 20. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



scouts found themselves on an ever-narrowing trail where Mackenzie Mountain juts into the valley. Seeing the Pawnees hemmed in by the creek, Mackenzie told Ralph Weeks--a Pawnee riding with him--to order Major North over to the north side of the Red Fork.<sup>5</sup> So, within a quarter of a mile from the Cheyenne camp, the Pawnees drew rein. They lost precious moments looking for a place to ford the stream, then slid down a 30 or 40 foot embankment. As the scouts splashed across the Red Fork, about half their ponies mired in the mud, dooming all chances of an envelopment.<sup>6</sup>

The lost minutes gave startled Cheyennes time to flee their lodges. Amid the "horrible shrieks" of terrified women, many warriors herded their families into the deep ravines north and west of the village.<sup>7</sup> Others in the lower end of the camp slipped behind rock breastworks near the western terminus of the canyon. There, while women chanted "strong-heart" songs, warriors fired at the onrushing cavalry

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<sup>5</sup>North's account in Motor Travel, XXI, 11 (Feb., 1930), 20. North, Man of the Plains, p. 213.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. Luther North in Motor Travel, XXI, 11 (Feb., 1930), 20.

<sup>7</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1664. Grouard's account in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 167. The stone breastworks are on the east rim of the steep canyon that borders the field on the west. A foot path leads down the wall from the breastworks to a ledge on which stood another breastwork. The Cheyenne women and children took cover behind this second shelter. Letter from Judge to Nohl, Sept. 25, 1961.



and scouts.<sup>8</sup>

While the Cheyennes gained time to take possession of the ravines that intersected the grassy plateau north of the Red Fork, the Shoshones did not follow the Pawnees across the stream. Instead, they veered left up a trail that led to the crest of Mackenzie Mountain. Following Lieutenant Schuyler, whose services would win him a brevet captaincy (one of two brevets awarded that day), the Shoshones scampered across the top of the south wall. They spread out on the mesa in three positions, the last group taking cover atop a cliff that stood about a quarter of a mile opposite the lower end of the village. There they fired at the retreating hostiles.<sup>9</sup>

After the Shoshones climbed the south wall, the Pawnees reached the north side of the Red Fork. Coming abreast of Major Gordon's battalion, the scouts galloped past the spur of Mackenzie Mountain. After they passed that eminence, Major North recrossed the stream, no doubt hoping to carry out the plan of envelopment. Although the movement brought the Red Butte (Hospital Hill) between the Pawnees and the

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<sup>8</sup> McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 20. Luther North in Ibid., XXI, 11 (Feb., 1930), 20. Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1664. Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 366.

<sup>9</sup> North's account in Motor Travel, XXII, 12 (Mar., 1931), 19. Also Ibid., XXII, 4 (July, 1930), 17. Mr. Judge has found many .45-70, .50-70, Henry and Spencer cartridge casings in three different locations on the south wall. Mr. Frank Graves, who established a ranch in the valley in 1908, once said that he could have filled a spring wagon with empty cartridges. See also Bourke Diary, XVII, 1420, and Jerry Roche in Ibid., XX, 1664.



cavalry, the scouts pressed on towards the village, barking their war-whoop and hurling taunts at the fleeing tribesmen.<sup>10</sup> The Cheyennes answered not at all, letting the sharp crack of their rifles speak for them.<sup>11</sup>

As the Pawnees approached the fringes of the camp, one of Dull Knife's sons sprang from behind a thicket and ran to meet them. Within a few yards of the scouts, the young warrior raised his rifle and fired. At that instant, Luther North twisted in his saddle and snapped a shot. Dull Knife's son sank to the ground with a bullet in his breast.<sup>12</sup> The Pawnees galloped on. When they reached the village, however, the scouts found the lodges so close together that each man was forced to pick his own route through a maze of deserted tipis.<sup>13</sup> The Pawnees pushed on to a clearing about half-way through the camp, when the Shoshones on the south wall (probably mistaking them for hostiles) opened a galling fire. Their fusillade, or that of the Cheyennes in the lower end of the village, cost the Pawnees 4 horses in less than 10 min-

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<sup>10</sup>Luther North in Motor Travel, XXII, 12 (Feb., 1931), 19. Grouard's account in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 167. Bourke Diary, XVII, 1416-1417.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 1417.

<sup>12</sup>Luther North in Motor Travel, XXII, 1 (Apr., 1930), 20. Cf., Grouard in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 167.

<sup>13</sup>Luther North in Motor Travel, XXIII, 3 (June, 1931), 18. For an Indian account, see Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 361.



utes.<sup>14</sup> If the scouts sustained any other losses, they proved too slight to report. At any rate, Major North shouted the order to withdraw from the camp. The Pawnees splashed back across the Red Fork, dismounted behind Hospital Hill, and climbed to the top. They were joined soon by 8 or 10 soldiers, among them Frank Grouard, the chief of scouts, and old Bill Hamilton, another guide.<sup>15</sup> From these men the Pawnees learned that the cavalry also had failed to make headway against the hostiles.

The valuable minutes that Mackenzie lost when the Pawnees were forced to cross the Red Fork allowed many Cheyennes time to take up strong positions in gullies and among rocks, while others clung stubbornly to the eastern end of their village. As the mists of early morning slowly lifted, a cold light filtered down on the rocky arena, revealing a party of warriors who crept across the plain west of the Red Butte. They seemed bent on saving a herd of ponies not yet captured by the soldiers and scouts.<sup>16</sup> Seeing the movement, Mackenzie ordered 1st Lt. John A. McKinney--a tall, handsome Tennessean, and one of the colonel's favorites--to take Co. M,

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<sup>14</sup>Luther North in Motor Travel, XXII, 12 (Mar., 1931), 19. Also, Ibid., XXIII, 3 (June, 1931), 18.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., XXII, 12 (Mar., 1931), 19.

<sup>16</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1420. Jerry Roche in Ibid., XX, 1664. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 23. Cf., Grouard's statement in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 168.



4th Cavalry, and strike the hostiles.<sup>17</sup>

Troop M trotted off in a column of fours with Capt. H. W. Wessell and Co. H, 3rd Cavalry, close behind.<sup>18</sup> The Cheyennes spied the advancing cavalry and darted into the ravine that lay just west of the Red Butte. Lieutenant McKinney led his troop to within about 10 yards of the gulch before seeing that its perpendicular banks were 20 feet deep. He therefore wheeled the company to the right by fours to avoid the obstacle.<sup>19</sup> At that moment, Yellow Eagle raised up from the gully and fired.<sup>20</sup> A volley followed, dropping Lieutenant McKinney with at least six bullets in his body. As the lieutenant toppled from his mount, mortally wounded, he cried: "Get out of this. You are ambushed."<sup>21</sup> The warning came too late. A Cheyenne bullet spun 1st Sgt. Thomas H. Forsyth out of his saddle, a slight flesh wound in the

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<sup>17</sup>Jerry Roche stood next to Mackenzie at this time. See Bourke Diary, XX, 1664. Grouard rode beside McKinney in the charge. De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 168. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 23. Although Wheeler claims that McKinney disobeyed orders, there is no evidence to support his statement. See Frontier Trail, p. 174.

<sup>18</sup>McClellan's account in Motor Travel, XXI, 12 (Mar., 1930), 19-20.

<sup>19</sup>Luther North, Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 18. Letter, Judge to Nohl, Sept. 25, 1961. Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1664. Bourke's entry in Ibid., XVII, 1418. Grouard in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 168.

<sup>20</sup>Young Two Moons' account in Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 361.

<sup>21</sup>Grouard in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 168. Bourke Diary, XVII, 1418 and Jerry Roche in Ibid., XX, 1664.



head. Another shattered the right hip joint of Corp. William J. Linn, as four other troopers dropped. The trumpeter's horse collapsed, pinning its rider to the ground. The lead fours of Co. M recoiled in confusion.<sup>22</sup>

Taking advantage of the chaos, Yellow Eagle scrambled out of the ravine, counted coup on the fallen lieutenant, and took his gun. Two Bulls darted forward and claimed second coup. Counting third coup, Bull Hump slashed the saddle bags from McKinney's horse and started back towards the gulch. But, seeing two revolvers on the ground, the Cheyenne paused in his flight. He scooped both pistols, thrust them in his belt and, as bullets kicked up dirt around him, staggered off with his treasures.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, 2nd Lt. Harrison G. Otis struggled to bring order to the faltering company.<sup>24</sup> Sgt. Forsyth, with Sgt. Frank Murray and Corp. Linn, recovered sufficiently to defend McKinney against further "outrage" until he was carried to Hospital Hill. There, after asking that his mother be told how he died, the young officer expired.<sup>25</sup> Sgt. Forsyth won the Congressional Medal of Honor

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<sup>22</sup>Bourke's entry in Ibid., XVII, 1418. Jerry Roche in Ibid., XX, 1664. Crook's enclosure, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 174.

<sup>23</sup>Indian account in Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 365. Cf., Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 174.

<sup>24</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1665. Report of 2nd Lt. Harrison G. Otis, Nov. 30, 1876, in Motor Travel, XXII, 4 (July, 1930), 16.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1664.



for his role, the only medal awarded for the Dull Knife battle.<sup>26</sup>

When Troop M recoiled from the shock of the Cheyenne volley, Captain Wessells, bringing up the rear with Co. H, 3rd Cavalry, shouted: "Dismount and fight on foot."<sup>27</sup> As the troopers swung out of the saddle, the hostiles loosed another fusilade. A ball struck the ankle of Sgt. Daniel Cunningham as he dismounted.<sup>28</sup> The rest of the men handed their reins to horse-holders, "darted" through the ranks, and deployed to the right. As "number fours" led the mounts to the safety of Hospital Hill, Troop H spread out towards the foot of the north wall.<sup>29</sup> They fired into the ravine up which many hostiles had already escaped. The Cheyennes, upon reaching the head of the gully, scurried across the open space that separated the gulch from the north wall. Those who reached the hills put up a stout defense until later in the day when they were killed or driven from their positions.<sup>30</sup> Others never gained the hills to the north.

One of the ill-starred fugitives was Bull Head, a

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<sup>26</sup>Motor Travel, XXII, 4 (July, 1930), 17.

<sup>27</sup>McClellan's story in Ibid., XXI, 12 (Mar., 1930), 20.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid. Crook's enclosure, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>29</sup>McClellan, Motor Travel, XXI, 12 (Mar., 1930), 20.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-20. Also Ibid., XXII, 8 (Nov., 1930), 15. Bourke Diary, XVII, 1419. Grouard in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 168.



brother-in-law of Little Wolf. After the repulse of McKinney, Bull Head hugged the bank of the gully as he crept northward towards the open space at its head. A rather stout warrior of medium height, Bull Head owned a set of protruding teeth that gave him a ferocious appearance. Three feathers drooped from his bushy mane and brushed the gray flannel of his shirt as he scampered along the gulch. With the skirmish line of Troop H drawing closer, Bull Head knew that when he reached the end of the gully he would have to take his chances crossing the open plain that separated him from the shelter of the north wall.<sup>31</sup> At the head of the ravine, Sgt. James S. McClellan moved cautiously on the extreme right flank of Co. H. He reached a little knoll that marked the terminus of the gully, when an Indian scrambled out of the gulch about 15 yards away. The Cheyenne paused, fired his Sharps carbine, then raced across the open plateau. Startled but unhurt, McClellan instinctively fired from the hip. The hostile sprawled, a bullet in the small of his back. McClellan shot him one or two more times. Then the sergeant took Bull Head's carbine.<sup>32</sup>

Meanwhile, other Cheyennes in the gulch met a similar end as Mackenzie rushed troops to seal off the ravine. From his vantage point some 50 yards east of the gully, he had seen

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<sup>31</sup>McClellan in Motor Travel, XXII, 6 (Sept., 1930), 11. Ibid., XXI, 12 (Mar., 1930), 20.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid. Cf., Ibid., XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 20.



McKinney's troop stagger, and watched as Lieutenant Otis tried to reform the demoralized company.<sup>33</sup> So, the colonel ordered Capt. John M. Hamilton and Troop H of the 5th Cavalry to help shore up the stricken company. At the same time, Mackenzie sent Capt. Wirt Davis with Troop F, 4th Cavalry, to seal off the mouth of the ravine.<sup>34</sup> As Davis rode off to earn a brevet lieutenant colonelcy, Mackenzie ordered Capt. A. B. Taylor and Co. L of the 5th Cavalry to charge lengthwise through Dull Knife's village.<sup>35</sup> For the present, the colonel held three companies of Major Mauck's battalion in reserve behind Hospital Hill.<sup>36</sup>

When a troop of soldiers on gray horses rode to the mouth of the ravine up which many of the Cheyennes had fled, Young Two Moons saw a trooper topple from his horse. He watched two Cheyennes leap from the gulch and take the soldier's gun and belt.<sup>37</sup> But Young Two Moons feared for his people because, after falling back and dismounting, the blue-coats poured a rapid fire into the gully.<sup>38</sup> Another company

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<sup>33</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1664-1665.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Motor Travel, XXII, 4 (July, 1930), 17. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 174. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 24.

<sup>36</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1665. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 24.

<sup>37</sup>Young Two Moons in Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 362.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.



of cavalry on gray horses (probably H, 3rd Cavalry) sealed off the upper end, insuring the death of at least eight hostiles in the ravine. This was the "hottest" part of the fight.<sup>39</sup> Some accounts mention hand-to-hand combat, and that Captain Hamilton sabered one or two of the enemy.<sup>40</sup> Although it is unlikely that Mackenzie allowed sabers on the campaign, fighting in the hour after McKinney's disaster undoubtedly proved "brisk."<sup>41</sup>

While cavalry trapped hostiles in the ravine, or raced through the village, the fire of Cheyenne rifles continued from the double red sandstone ridges under the north wall. The hostiles held a key position, a position that not only threatened the led-horses and casualties behind Red Butte, but one that robbed Mackenzie of an anchor for his right flank.<sup>42</sup> So, to silence the fire from that quarter, he asked Major North to take his Pawnees up the ravine, climb the north wall, and take the hostiles from behind. North nodded his agreement, then blew a whistle that sounded like a turkey-call. Fifteen Pawnees appeared,

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<sup>39</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 24.

<sup>40</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1418. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 174. Grouard in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, pp. 167-168. Luther North does not believe that Capt. Hamilton sabered any Indians. See North in Motor Travel, XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19.

<sup>41</sup>Crook's enclosure, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>42</sup>Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 178. Cf., Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1665, 1667.



stripped off uniforms, tied bright colored handkerchiefs around their heads, and disappeared up the gulch. All went well until they started to scale the north wall. A short distance to the east, some dismounted cavalry (probably Wessell's troop) mistook the scouts for hostiles and opened fire. Although the Pawnees suffered no casualties, they scrambled down from the hill and followed the gully back to the Red Butte.<sup>43</sup>

Mackenzie then committed two more companies of cavalry. When they fought their way to the top of the ridges, they held the farthest point reached by skirmishers that day. At that point Mackenzie established his command post and another "hospital."<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, other units consolidated the line that now stretched southward from the double bluffs to Hospital Hill, thence west along the high-water mark of the Red Fork to the extreme limits of the village where Captain Taylor and Co. L, 5th Cavalry, huddled behind the cut-bank.<sup>45</sup>

Troop L had dashed through Dull Knife's village, driving Cheyenne snipers before them. Four cavalry horses fell dead or wounded as the hostiles stubbornly withdrew.<sup>46</sup> Trooper

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<sup>43</sup>Letter from Luther North in Motor Travel, XXII, 11 (Feb., 1931), 22. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 178.

<sup>44</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1668. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 24.

<sup>45</sup>Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 175. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 24.

<sup>46</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1665.



Cline's mount staggered and went down. Cline kicked free of the animal and, afraid lest he be forced to pay for its harness, struggled to remove the saddle and bridle.<sup>47</sup> The rest of the company drove the hostiles from the lower end of the camp. As the troops dismounted and occupied a small fringe of timber just beyond the village, Pvt. Alexander McFarland--an old soldier, but newcomer to the company--took a Cheyenne bullet through the left lung. He sank to the ground, mortally wounded.<sup>48</sup> His comrades deployed behind the cut-bank where they suffered another casualty. A trooper carelessly exposed his head. A bullet shattered his jaws, knocking him senseless. The soldier pitched forward against the bank, strangling to death on his own blood.<sup>49</sup>

Some 50 or 60 yards north of the cut-bank, and about opposite the end of the village, a little knoll nestled in the forks of a gulch.<sup>50</sup> Behind the knoll, five Cheyennes crouched, watching a company of cavalry on gray horses (probably L, 5th Cavalry) deploy along the cut-bank. Seeing the five warriors trapped, about 20 Cheyennes decided to save them.<sup>51</sup> Screeching "charge," the hostiles followed

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<sup>47</sup>Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 178.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 175. Crook's enclosure, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>49</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 25.

<sup>50</sup>Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 364. Letter, Judge to Nohl, Sept. 25, 1961.

<sup>51</sup>Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 364. Cf., Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 176.



White Shield and Yellow Nose towards the cut-bank. They almost reached the blue-coats when a volley turned their attack. With war bonnets bobbing, the Cheyennes retreated around the little knoll and back to their breastworks at the west end of the canyon.<sup>52</sup> But, for some unknown reason, the gray horse troop moved off to the east, allowing the five hostiles to escape. Later, however, the cavalry seized the little knoll.<sup>53</sup>

The charge of the bonneted warriors demonstrated the courage that made the Cheyennes probably the most formidable tribe on the northern plains. Another example of their fighting spirit involved a warrior who pranced about on a fine pony, his war bonnet sweeping the ground.<sup>54</sup> With cavalry carbines blazing at him, the Cheyenne brandished a shield of buffalo hide and screeched defiance at his enemies. He seemed to revel in danger, until a bullet knocked him from his mount.<sup>55</sup> Just then another bonneted warrior appeared and, carrying a bull-hide shield, raced his spirited pony towards the fallen comrade. He dismounted, draped his friend's body across the horse and, chanting a war song, rode away. The Cheyenne al-

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<sup>52</sup>Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 364.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 365. The cut-bank is lined with expended .45-70 cartridges. Both cases and bullets litter the southern slope of the little knoll, indicating that the troops captured it. Letter, Judge to Nohl, Sept. 25, 1961.

<sup>54</sup>Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 176. Cf., Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, pp. 25-26.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 176.





Key to letters on map: A, spot where Lt. McKinney was killed; B, where Bull Head was killed; C, burial place of private Baird, 4th Cavalry (only interment on the field); D, approximate location of Field Hospital after the fight; E, ranch house of Charles Graves; F, ranch house of F. O. Graves, with general line of present road connecting battlefield with Barnum-Kaycee, Wyo., highway. There being no surveys for a base, the scale, though calculated with care, is necessarily approximate.



most reached safety when a bullet ended his song.<sup>56</sup>

Such valor dashed Mackenzie's hopes for a quick victory. He therefore braced for a long engagement, knowing that an attack on the well entrenched and determined Cheyennes would meet with severe losses.<sup>57</sup> The colonel had already sustained casualties heavier than any of his Indian-fighting career. The hostiles, on the other hand, realized that if they tried to withdraw their families, they would precipitate a fatal assault.<sup>58</sup> So, the battle lapsed into a stalemate, a long-range duel in which recruits squandered precious cartridges. Mackenzie issued strict orders to conserve ammunition until the pack train arrived later in the day with 30,000 rounds.<sup>59</sup>

The Cheyennes also husbanded their shells, large quantities of which remained in their lodges when they fled.<sup>60</sup> But, sniping from 500 to 1,500 yards away, the hostiles enjoyed an advantage. Their rifles out-ranged the carbines of the troops, and the accuracy of their fire drew grudging respect for Cheyenne marksmanship.<sup>61</sup> One sharpshooter lurked

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, pp. 25-26.

<sup>57</sup>Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 177. Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1665.

<sup>58</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 25.

<sup>59</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1422, 1426. Jerry Roche in Ibid., XX, 1665.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 1665, 1669.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., XVII, 1422. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 177. Arcadi Gluckman, U. S. Muskets, Rifles and Carbines (Buffalo: Otti Ulbrich Co., Inc., 1948), pp. 406-407.



behind some rocks about 600 yards from where two soldiers ran across the grassy plateau from one hill to another. The sniper let the first man get about half-way across the plain before dropping him with what was probably a Sharps buffalo gun. As the soldier sprawled, wounded, the other man ran to within 20 feet of him. The big Sharps boomed again. The second trooper also fell<sup>62</sup>wounded.

When long range firing showed no signs of abating by 2:00 p. m., Mackenzie called a council at his command post on the double bluffs.<sup>63</sup> Probably recalling his success in Palo Duro Canyon, the colonel said to his officers: "We have captured all their winter supplies; so if we destroy their tipis and clothing, they will have to come to some reservation and surrender."<sup>64</sup> But before putting the village to the torch, Mackenzie tried to spare his enemy the frozen horrors of a winter night. He sent Bill "Long Knife" Rowland, an interpreter who had married into the Cheyenne tribe, to parley with the hostiles.<sup>65</sup> In company with some Sioux and Cheyenne scouts, Rowland crawled up to an enemy position and demanded surrender. Dull Knife, who had already lost three sons in the fight, favored capitulation. Little Wolf, a fine organ-

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<sup>62</sup>North, Man of the Plains, p. 217.

<sup>63</sup>North in Motor Travel, XXII, 12 (Mar., 1931), 20.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid. North's account in Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 16. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 177.

<sup>65</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 27.



izer and better tactician than Dull Knife, refused to consider it. With Roman Nose, Gray Head, Turkey Legs, and others, he shouted to the Sioux and Cheyenne scouts: "Go home, you have no business here. We can whip the white soldiers alone, but can't fight you too." Other hostiles cried: "You have killed and hurt a heap of our people, you may as well stay now and kill the rest of us."<sup>66</sup>

So, arms and parley failing, Mackenzie decided to let the sub-zero temperature of a Wyoming winter humble his foe. Turning to Frank North, he snapped: "Major, take your men into the village and destroy it."<sup>67</sup> As the Pawnees raced off to do his bidding, the colonel called Frank Grouard, the chief of scouts. He ordered Grouard to ride to General Crook with a request for infantry support, two days away by the shortest route.<sup>68</sup> The colonel knew that only with the more powerful rifles of the foot soldiers could he hope to root out the obstinate Cheyennes.

Throughout much of the battle, Mackenzie dispatched couriers from his command post at the double bluffs to Hospital Hill and other positions to the south.<sup>69</sup> Guessing

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<sup>66</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1427. George Bird Grinnell, The Cheyenne Indians: Their History and Ways of Life (2 vols.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1924), II, 51-52. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, pp. 176-177.

<sup>67</sup>North in Motor Travel, XXII, 12 (Mar., 1931), 20. Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 16.

<sup>68</sup>Grouard in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 169. Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1669.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., XVII, 1422-1423.



that only officers of high rank or couriers dared cross the 500 yards of grassy plateau, hostiles on the higher slopes to the north joined the warrior with the big Sharps in sweeping the plain with bullets. The colonel's staff officers would not forget soon the perils of the passage.<sup>70</sup> But now, as Frank Grouard and a Sioux scout trotted off on their mission, Mackenzie swung into his "Texas" saddle and pointed his iron-gray mount towards the Red Butte.<sup>71</sup> Disdaining the shelter of the ravine on his left, the colonel jogged across the plateau with Cheyenne bullets cleaving the air around him.<sup>72</sup> Those veterans of the Civil War who watched him brave the bullet-swept plain might have recalled the tempest of lead at Winchester, when a younger Mackenzie "...seemed to court destruction all day."<sup>73</sup> But the colonel never played to the grandstand, because "...he cared not a copper for the good will of any except his military superiors."<sup>74</sup> Rather, it was as if he either felt compelled to prove his manhood, or did not care whether he lived or died. At least one officer concluded that only the star of a brigadier general would requite

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>McClellan in Motor Travel, XXII, 5 (Aug., 1930), 17.

<sup>72</sup>North in Ibid., XXII, 12 (Mar., 1931), 20. Clipping from Cheyenne Leader, Dec. 20, 1876, in Bourke Diary, XX, 1696. Grinnell, Two Great Scouts, pp. 270-271.

<sup>73</sup>T. F. Vaill quoted in Joseph H. Dorst, "Ranald Sli-dell Mackenzie," Cavalry Journal, X, 39 (Dec., 1897), 372.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.



the courage and skill demonstrated by Mackenzie that day.<sup>75</sup>

As the colonel trotted to Hospital Hill, Pawnee scouts began to destroy Dull Knife's village. Later in the afternoon, when Mackenzie sent Cos. K of the 3rd and F of the 4th Cavalry, soldiers and scouts ransacked almost 200 lodges.<sup>76</sup> Lined two or three feet deep with undressed buffalo hides, the tipis looked as if their inmates had just stepped outside for a minute.<sup>77</sup> Pawnees and troopers selected buffalo robes and other choice articles of plunder before tearing down the hide tipis and canvas tents issued by the Interior Department.<sup>78</sup> Huge bonfires roared, as great bladders of fat and marrow, and tons of buffalo meat sizzled in the flames. Lodge-poles, clothing, arms, and saddles likewise found their way to the pyre. Cartridges and kegs of powder exploded, while the destroyers heaved cooking utensils on the fire to rob them of their temper.<sup>79</sup>

The lodges also yielded less utilitarian items: the arm and hand of a Shoshone woman, scalp shirts fringed with

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<sup>75</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1447.

<sup>76</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 29. Cf., North in Motor Travel, XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 16.

<sup>77</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1667.

<sup>78</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 29. Cf., North in Motor Travel, XXII, 5 (Aug., 1930), 17. Garnett interview, Ricker Collection, Tablet 1, p. 25, Microfilm Reel 1.

<sup>79</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 29. Mr. Judge and his wife have found two large copper or brass pots and one skillet, besides fragments of weapons, etc., on the site.



human hair, and a little buckskin bag filled with the right hands of 12 Shoshone babies.<sup>80</sup> The Shoshone scouts danced and wailed all night around the buckskin bag, before burning the terrible evidence of their loss.<sup>81</sup> Capt. John G. Bourke carried off a grisly trophy when "Big Bat" Pourier gave him two necklaces of human fingers.<sup>82</sup> But perhaps of greatest interest were the relics of the Custer and Rosebud battles. Although it has been said that Dull Knife's band did not engage in those fights, the evidence found in their tipis on November 25, 1876 testified to the contrary.<sup>83</sup> A guidon of the 7th Cavalry served as a pillowcase in one lodge. In another, the soldiers found a guard roster of Troop G, 7th Cavalry. Horses branded "US" and "7" grazed among the captured ponies. Canteens, curry combs, nose-bags, memorandum books--all stamped with company letters--hinted at Cheyenne battles with the army. Someone discovered a buckskin jacket which, by its marks and appearance, touched off speculation that it might have belonged to Tom Custer. The soldiers also found the hat of a sergeant killed in Crook's

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<sup>80</sup>Bourke Diary, XXII, 1432. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, pp. 31-32.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Garnett interview, Ricker Collection, Tablet 1, p. 24, Microfilm Reel 1. For a description of the necklace, see Capt. John G. Bourke, "The Medicine-Men of the Apaches," Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, 1887-1888 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1892), pp. 481-482.

<sup>83</sup>Hyde, Red Cloud's Folk, p. 287.



engagement with Crazy Horse the previous June.<sup>84</sup>

But neither scouts nor troops found the most prized possessions of the Cheyennes--the four sacred Medicine Arrows and the sacred Buffalo Hat or Bonnet. Wrapped in a coyote skin, the sacred arrows lay in a black and red lodge that stood 40 or 50 yards inside the southern edge of the clearing. Next to the arrow lodge stood a red and black tipi that housed the sacred Buffalo Hat. When Black Hairy Dog, the Cheyenne "Arrow-Priest," saw troops charging down the canyon, he had time to escape with his holy objects. Likewise, Coal Bear, keeper of the Buffalo Hat, must have rescued his sacred treasure, because there is no evidence that the Cheyennes lost their holy objects in the fight with Mackenzie. As those possessions always traveled with the main camp, their presence further indicates that the village embraced all but a handful of the Cheyennes off the reservation.<sup>85</sup>

While soldiers and scouts went about the business of destruction, some of the Pawnees eyed a herd of almost 100 ponies that grazed some three-quarters of a mile west of the village, in the angle formed by the Red Fork and its southern

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<sup>84</sup> Bourke Diary, XVII, 1429-1432. Jerry Roche in Ibid., XX, 1667. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, pp. 30-31.

<sup>85</sup> See Grinnell, Cheyenne Indians, I, 89, 233; II, 106. Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 355. Frederick W. Hodge (ed.), Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico (2 vols.; Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 30; Washington: Government Printing Office, 1907), II, 253-254.



branch. The horses stood within 200 or 300 yards of the breastwork which protected several Cheyennes.<sup>86</sup> Earlier in the day some Sioux scouts came down from the south wall and tried to capture the ponies. Cheyenne rifles drove them back. Later, some Shoshones tried their hand at claiming the horses. They too failed.<sup>87</sup> Now, Captain North asked permission to make another attempt. With Frank's blessing, Luther and a Pawnee named Peter Headman, rode through the bushes along the bed of the stream. When about 200 yards from the herd, the scouts ducked low in their saddles and galloped between the ponies and the ridge. Waving blankets and yelling above the blast of rifles, the two scouts drove 95 horses down to the village. Although Cheyenne bullets dropped four of the ponies, North and Headman rode back untouched.<sup>88</sup>

The hostile riflemen proved annoying to the Pawnees in the village, especially the Cheyenne who lay hidden in the hills about half a mile west of the camp. The boom of his big Sharps buffalo gun identified him as the marksman who wounded the two soldiers on the grassy plain.<sup>89</sup> He fired at intervals of 10 minutes, particularly at suppertime, when the

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<sup>86</sup>Luther North in Motor Travel, XXI, 11 (Feb., 1930), 20. Letter, Judge to Nohl, Sept. 29, 1961.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid. North in Motor Travel, XXI, 11 (Feb., 1930), 20.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>North, Man of the Plains, p. 217. North's account in Motor Travel, XXIII, 5 (Aug., 1931), 19.



scouts kindled their cook-fire. About dusk, as the North brothers rested on a log, a stray mule walked 30 feet from them on the other side of the campfire. Far off in the hills, the big Sharps roared. The mule crumpled.<sup>90</sup> The exhibition of marksmanship prompted Luther North to observe: "If that fellow lowers his sights a little he will make us move." But Frank assured him that it was growing too dark for accurate shooting. Just then, a bullet kicked a tin cup full of coffee from its place on the log between the brothers. The Norths lost no time vacating their seat.<sup>91</sup> Frank shouted orders for the Pawnees to pile bundles of dried meat around the fire. The scouts crouched behind the breastwork while they finished their supper. And, after firing once or twice more, the sniper fell silent.<sup>92</sup>

In fact, firing diminished all over the field. Dusk also found the Cheyenne village well on its way to destruction. All but about 10 lodges north of the creek had been burned when, later that night, Young Two Moons and his followers crept towards the camp.<sup>93</sup> The warriors found three buffalo robes in one of the tipis. But, as Young Two Moons

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid. North, Man of the Plains, pp. 216-217.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid. North in Motor Travel, XXIII, 5 (Aug., 1931), 19.

<sup>92</sup>North, Man of the Plains, pp. 216-217. Motor Travel, XXIII, 5 (Aug., 1931), 19. Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 353.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 367.



threw the robes across his pony, someone downstream shouted and fired a shot. Firing broke out in all directions as the Cheyennes rode back to their breastworks.<sup>94</sup> Before long, the hostiles slipped back into a network of canyons, leaving behind 25 of their people dead, and upwards of 500 ponies captured.<sup>95</sup> Sixteen Cheyenne scalps dangled from the belts of Pawnee and Shoshone scouts. Mackenzie believed that his enemy suffered heavier casualties. Months later, when Dull Knife's band surrendered, they admitted 40 killed in the fight, but did not mention the number wounded.<sup>96</sup>

The fugitives withdrew into a canyon about four miles away. There they huddled over a hundred small fires. Some pawed the snow, hoping to find grass and willows from which to fashion couches.<sup>97</sup> Those who fled from the east end of camp no doubt suffered the most because, sleeping naked, they had little time to clothe themselves when the Pawnees struck. Others, who lived in the lower end of the camp, had more time to dress, and some even escaped on horseback. But most probably had time to snatch no more than a few articles of cloth-

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Crook's enclosure, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Bourke Diary, XVII, 1425. Cf., North in Motor Travel, XXIII, 3 (June, 1931), 18. Grouard in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 170.

<sup>96</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, pp. 27-28. Grouard in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 170.

<sup>97</sup>Bourke Diary, XVIII, 1502-1503. Jerry Roche in Ibid., XX, 1671.



ing and weapons before taking to the ravines and hills.<sup>98</sup>  
So, almost destitute of food, the fugitives killed six or seven of the ponies that proved too weak to accompany them in their flight.<sup>99</sup>

On the other side of the ledger, one officer and five enlisted men felt the fatal sting of Cheyenne bullets.<sup>100</sup> One of them, Pvt. John Sullivan of Troop B, 4th Cavalry, was the only soldier to lose his scalp in the engagement.<sup>101</sup> Twenty-six others lay wounded--including Private An-zi, a Shoshone whose severe wound in the stomach made him the only casualty suffered by the Indian scouts.<sup>102</sup> The battle also cost Mackenzie 15 cavalry mounts and 4 Pawnee ponies.<sup>103</sup> After the firing diminished, the command concentrated south-east of Hospital Hill where Doctors Wood and Le Garde tended the wounded. Mackenzie personally supervised the construction of 30 litters that would transport his casualties to the supply camp on the Crazy Woman's Fork. He also donated the only tent

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<sup>98</sup>Crook's enclosure, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>99</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1432. Jerry Roche in Ibid., XX, 1671.

<sup>100</sup>Crook's enclosure, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>101</sup>Jerry Roche in Bourke Diary, XX, 1665.

<sup>102</sup>Crook's enclosure, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.



in the column for their comfort.<sup>104</sup> While men worked all night to finish the travois, other troopers--on the south-east side of the Red Butte--buried Pvt. James Baird, Co. D, 4th Cavalry, the only soldier interred on the field.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup>Wheeler, Frontier Trail, pp. 179, 182.

<sup>105</sup>Crook's enclosure, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Bourke Diary, XX, 1667, 1692. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 179. Mackenzie's report says that Baird was buried "by mistake", but does not explain the statement.



CHAPTER X  
THE MAILED FIST

On Sunday, November 26, the 4th Cavalry awoke to eight inches of snow.<sup>1</sup> While the men readied themselves for the trail, scouts rode into the devastated camp and announced a large rearguard of hostiles about six miles away in strong defensive positions.<sup>2</sup> But, aware that he had reached the point of diminishing returns in the engagement with Dull Knife, Mackenzie elected to let "General Winter" administer the coup de grace to the enemy. His decision surprised many officers who thought that he should remain until Crook's infantry arrived. Some believed that the colonel appeared too eager to leave the canyon, and the feeling seemed "very general" that his "advantage over the savages was not pressed as vigorously as it should have been under the circumstances."<sup>3</sup> Mackenzie nevertheless lived up to his reputation as a conservor of manpower and ordered a withdrawal.

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<sup>1</sup>North, Man of the Plains, p. 217. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Jerry Roche's article in New York Herald, Dec. 24, 1876, in Bourke Diary, XX, 1688. See also his article in Motor Travel, XXII, 5 (Aug., 1930), 16.



He had fought the greatest Indian engagement of his career. Comparable in scale to the Custer battle,<sup>4</sup> the fight cost Mackenzie casualties that exceeded the total of all his Indian engagements. Armed with short-range carbines, and burdened with wounded, he could not hope for a successful pursuit of the hostiles.<sup>5</sup> His decision to withdraw before Crook arrived perhaps reflected a realization of the true nature of Indian warfare. Mackenzie now seemed to understand that the number of casualties inflicted on hostiles was far less significant than the demoralization that attended their eviction from snug winter quarters. The deprivation of proper clothing, provisions, and ponies--not bloodshed--generally broke the red man's will to fight. In this respect the Dull Knife battle was typical of Indian warfare.<sup>6</sup> But Mackenzie would not know the full impact of his victory until another five months had passed.

About 11:00 on the morning of November 26, he gave the order to mount.<sup>7</sup> As the command rode off through a blizzard, two or three warriors crept into the ruined village. There,

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<sup>4</sup>Based on the numbers engaged, the length of the fight, and the quantities of casings found by O. W. Judge.

<sup>5</sup>Cf., Jerry Roche in Motor Travel, XXII, 5 (Aug., 1930), 16.

<sup>6</sup>Col. Richard I. Dodge, Our Wild Indians: Thirty Three Years' Personal Experience among the Red Men of the Great West (Hartford: A. D. Worthington & Co., 1882), p. 492.

<sup>7</sup>McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 21. Jerry Roche's article of Dec. 24, 1876 in Bourke Diary, XX, 1691. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 32.



over the naked and scalped bodies of two Cheyenne women, the tribesmen wailed at the desolation that surrounded them. The troops did not molest them.<sup>8</sup>

With wails of grief echoing through the lonely canyon, Mackenzie set a course that almost paralleled his incoming route.<sup>9</sup> The column plodded 10 or 12 miles through the snow, while riders eased the suffering of the wounded by holding up the poles of their litters.<sup>10</sup> That night, when Mackenzie called a halt, details stacked the dead by the side of the trail where they sprawled frozen in grotesque positions. The wounded, with heads and shoulders supported by pack saddles, lay in a row, their feet absorbing the warmth of the fire. The night passed quietly.<sup>11</sup>

At 10 o'clock the next morning Mackenzie broke camp. With Troop H, 3rd Cavalry, bringing up the rear, the command trudged 9 or 10 miles west of north over a trail made slippery by the snowfalls of the past two mornings.<sup>12</sup> Sometime before noon, scouts rode up and told of a skirmish they fought

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<sup>8</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1432, 1434. Jerry Roche's article of Dec. 24, 1876, in Ibid., XX, 1691.

<sup>9</sup>Bourke's entry in Ibid., XVII, 1432.

<sup>10</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 33. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 181.

<sup>11</sup>McClellan's account in Motor Travel, XXII, 6 (Sept., 1930), 10. Bourke Diary, XVII, 1432.

<sup>12</sup>McClellan's account in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 21. Bourke Diary, XVII, 1433.



with Dull Knife's people a few miles to the west.<sup>13</sup>

Fearing attack with the column strung out over the rugged trail, the colonel ordered his scouts to the head of the command. The movement raised a rash of rumors that predicted fighting.<sup>14</sup> But, about noon, word reached Mackenzie that Col. Richard I. Dodge and a column of infantry stood some four or five miles ahead. When he heard of Mackenzie's approach, however, General Crook ordered Dodge to countermarch to the camp on the Crazy Woman Fork.<sup>15</sup> That evening the cavalry bivouacked on a fork of the Powder River where, about two hours after making camp, a shot startled the troops. The men soon relaxed, however, when Indian scouts appeared with slabs of meat. A herd of buffalo had wandered too near the camp.<sup>16</sup> Although the soldiers enjoyed full stomachs that night, a lack of grass and rest seriously weakened the horses.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Garnett interview, Ricker Collection, Tablet 1, pp. 26-27, Microfilm Reel 1. McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 21.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid. Ibid., XXII, 6 (Sept., 1930), 9-10. Jerry Roche's article of Dec. 24, 1876 in Bourke Diary, XX, 1691.

<sup>15</sup>Crook to Sheridan, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 11 (Feb., 1931), 20. Jerry Roche's article of Dec. 24, 1876, in Bourke Diary, XX, 1691. Cf., Dodge, Our Wild Indians, pp. 497-498.

<sup>16</sup>McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 21.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.



Private McFarland also grew weaker and, in the early hours of November 28, died.<sup>18</sup> At 8:00 a.m., Mackenzie broke camp. The command plowed through a dense snowstorm over a trail almost identical to that of the march to the Cheyenne village.<sup>19</sup> The falling snow dulled the reports of pistols as all along the column troopers shot their played-out horses. In fact, some men feared that if the animals did not get grain soon, the entire command would be on foot.<sup>20</sup> That evening, after a march of 10 miles, the troops bivouacked on the Right Fork of the Crazy Woman's Fork. There Mackenzie distributed the captured ponies. The Pawnees selected 10 horses--besides the 96 taken in the village--and an extra mount went to those out on scout.<sup>21</sup> The Sioux, on the other hand, disagreed over their allotment of 20 or 30 ponies. One warrior knocked down another with his gun, then jumped on his stomach with both feet. To the disgust of observers, the fallen man made no effort to defend himself.<sup>22</sup> After the "knock-down" ended, the men rolled into their blankets for the night.

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<sup>18</sup>Frank North's diary in Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19. Bourke Diary, XVII, 1434.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 21.

<sup>21</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1434. Frank North's diary in Motor Travel, XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. Luther North, Man of the Plains, p. 218.



Daylight on the morning of November 29 found the command laboring 10 miles downstream, anticipating the rest and shelter that awaited at the wagon train. The severe cold and deep snow had told heavily on men and mounts.<sup>23</sup> When the column struggled into the camp on the Crazy Woman's Fork, officers and men dashed off to receive mail. As they read long-awaited letters, glowing rumors promised a return to winter quarters. Other stories, however, claimed that White Antelope and his Cheyennes plotted an attack on the Powder River Expedition.<sup>24</sup> So, at 7:00 a. m. on November 30 (Thanksgiving) Mackenzie sent Luther North and four men across a beautiful winter landscape to scout the area around Clear Creek.<sup>25</sup> The colonel probably intended to take the fight to the enemy because, 4 hours later, each company received orders to mount 25 of its best men and stand ready to move at a moment's notice.<sup>26</sup> The scouts were expected to return that evening and report the Cheyennes close at hand.<sup>27</sup>

In the meantime, all officers and men turned out

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<sup>23</sup>McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 21.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid. Ibid., XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 22.

<sup>25</sup>Frank North's diary in Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19.

<sup>26</sup>McClellan's diary in Ibid., XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 22. Ibid., XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 21.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. Frank North's diary in Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19.



mounted for funeral ceremonies. At noon a procession crunched through the snow, while massed trumpeters blew a dirge. Behind them, burial parties from the various companies carried the bodies of five enlisted men and one officer.<sup>28</sup> Crook and Mackenzie, accompanied by the senior officers of the command, marched in the rear. The burial detail lowered the dead enlisted men into the grave, then eased the remains of Lieutenant McKinney into a pine box for shipment to his home in Memphis, Tennessee.<sup>29</sup> An Episcopal service was read, followed by the solemn sound of "Taps," and three volleys fired over the grave by a squad of cavalrymen. As he stood in the snow, the colonel may have recalled that day four years before when a slender, young lieutenant with chestnut hair and brown eyes reported to the 4th Cavalry.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps Mackenzie remembered the cordial meeting, and how he quickly saw that McKinney would make a fine officer. He grew fonder of the young subaltern, considering him one of the most gallant officers and honorable men that he had ever known.<sup>31</sup> Once, when he learned that

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<sup>28</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1439-1440. Ibid., XX, 1692. McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 21. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, pp. 184-185.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid. Jerry Roche's article of Nov. 29, 1876, in Bourke Diary, XX, 1647.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 1692. Bourke's account in Motor Travel, XXII, 2 (May, 1930), 18. Carter, On the Border, p. 338.

<sup>31</sup>Crook's enclosure, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Carter, On the Border, p. 338.



the lieutenant owed \$500, Mackenzie said to him: "Here is my personal check for that amount. I do not want any note from you; pay it whenever you can conveniently. Keep out of debt."<sup>32</sup> And now McKinney was gone. Although the effects of his passing are unknown, one officer claimed that Mackenzie wept openly at the funeral.<sup>33</sup> Probably few men commanded that much affection from the "Old Man."

The day after the funeral, Luther North and his Pawnees returned without sighting an Indian village.<sup>34</sup> So, on December 2 the Powder River Expedition broke camp at daylight and marched 28 miles to Cantonment Reno. As the horses plodded over the slippery trail their riders pondered the reason for the move, no doubt hoping that it promised a return to winter quarters.<sup>35</sup> But visions of cozy barracks evaporated upon their arrival at Reno when scouts reported Lane Deer and a war party en route from the Belle Fourche to the Little Powder River.<sup>36</sup> So, at nine o'clock the next morning, the command moved out of Cantonment Reno. The weather grew colder and, to keep from freezing, troopers led their ex-

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Frank North's diary in Motor Travel, XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid. McClellan's diary in Ibid., XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 22-23. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 192.

<sup>36</sup>Grouard's statement in De Barthe, Life and Adventures, p. 171.



hausted mounts through the snowdrifts. That evening they straggled into camp on the Dry Fork of the Powder River.<sup>37</sup>

The dawn of December 4 broke fiercely cold. Under overcast skies the men saddled, packed, then waited all morning for instructions.<sup>38</sup> At noon, Mackenzie rode to Crook's tent. He returned shortly with orders to unload the wagons and instructions for each company to send all but 50 men back to Fort Fetterman with the wounded.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps a reduced command would ease the nagging problem of forage. The 40 wagons pulled out of camp, leaving the remainder of the expedition in bivouack until December 6, when they trudged over to the Belle Fourche.<sup>40</sup> But, because of Crook's indecision or secretiveness, not even Mackenzie knew the plan of campaign.<sup>41</sup> For the next five days grumbling soldiers pushed over 40 miles downstream.<sup>42</sup> Each day shots rang out, announcing the steady deterioration of

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid. Bourke Diary, XVII, 1441. McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 22-23. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 192.

<sup>38</sup>Bourke Diary, XVII, 1441. North, Man of the Plains, p. 220.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid. McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 23.

<sup>40</sup>Frank North's diary in Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19. See Frank North's diary in Luther North, Man of the Plains, p. 220n.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>42</sup>McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 9 (Dec., 1930), 23. Ibid., XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 20. Frank North's diary in Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19.



the horses. At the same time, the small drove of cattle that accompanied the expedition also dwindled.<sup>43</sup>

On December 10, shortly after the column bivouacked along the Belle Fourche, seven miners from Deadwood appeared. Equipped with a wagon, several horses, and a fair arsenal of weapons, they planned to prospect for gold in the Big Horn Mountains. Frank North advised them to turn back, but the miners rode on, confident of their ability to protect themselves.<sup>44</sup> About three or four o'clock the following morning, however, one of the prospectors staggered into camp, babbling about an Indian attack some five miles upstream. Half-crazed by the pain of frozen feet, the miner did not know the fate of his partners.<sup>45</sup> Before daybreak, therefore, Mackenzie dispatched Luther North and 10 Pawnees to investigate. They found a dead prospector, a looted wagon, and nine horses missing. The scouts also located three of the frightened miners, as well as the trail of five Indians heading south. But, exhausted horses forced North to call off pursuit and return to the column.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>McClellan's diary in Ibid., XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 20.

<sup>44</sup>Frank North's diary in Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19. Luther North, Man of the Plains, p. 221.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. Frank North's diary in Motor Travel, XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19.

<sup>46</sup>Luther North, Man of the Plains, p. 221. McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 20. Frank North's diary in Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19.



The attack on the miners gave spurs to a rumor that Crazy Horse lay in camp only 40 miles away, his village surrounded by rifle pits.<sup>47</sup> Despite the story, Mackenzie remained in bivouac on December 12, resting his horses and enjoying a break in the cold weather. While the mercury climbed to eight degrees below zero, men peeled off their bulky outer clothing and went about camp clad only in several layers of underwear.<sup>48</sup> Mackenzie found the day balmy enough to shed his heavy blue overcoat, his fur hat, and overshoes. Some of the men noted that the colonel had gained weight, now weighing perhaps 165 pounds. And, in keeping with his personality, Mackenzie wore (without ostentation) the regulation cap and plain officer's undress uniform.<sup>49</sup>

The warm spell continued on December 13, as did rumors. When the command marched six miles downriver and pitched its tents around a tree that housed nine dead Indians, the troops heard that the expedition would return to Fort Fetterman as soon as the wagons returned with supplies.<sup>50</sup> So, on December 15, after drawing rations for five days, the men watched for other signs of a move. None came. Instead, the mail arrived

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<sup>47</sup> McClellan's diary in Ibid., XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 21.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. McClellan's account in Ibid., XXII, 11 (Feb., 1931), 19-20. Dodge, Our Wild Indians, p. 508.

<sup>49</sup> McClellan's account in Motor Travel, XXII, 11 (Feb., 1931), 19. Cf., Hatfield's description in Ibid., XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 22.

<sup>50</sup> McClellan's diary in Ibid., pp. 21-22.



from Fetterman, and with it a trader authorized by General Crook.<sup>51</sup> Soldiers found that the hardy peddler charged "wonderful prices," hawking fruit for a dollar a can. Men who preferred a liquid diet could buy inferior whiskey at 75 cents a drink from a "wild-cat" trader who set up shop on the flank--that is, until Mackenzie put him out of business.<sup>52</sup>

For the next week the weather turned alternately clear and stormy, warmer and colder. The Powder River Expedition remained in bivouac while rumors continued to promise a return to Fort Fetterman. The stories seemed well-founded on December 21 when the Sioux scouts left for home.<sup>53</sup> Sure enough, a lack of forage decreed that the campaign must end. With horses on half rations, and with no prospects of getting more, Crook and Mackenzie no longer could delay their return. Even after Mackenzie reduced his command, culled broken-down horses, and relieved the Shoshone and Sioux scouts, his animals required 30,000 pounds of grain a day.<sup>54</sup> But recent blizzards had blocked the Union Pacific Railroad to Fort Fetterman. Snow also filled Medicine Bow Gap, making wagon travel nearly impossible.<sup>55</sup> To make matters worse,

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. Frank North's diary in Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19.

<sup>54</sup>Bourke's account in Ibid., XXII, 2 (May, 1930), 19. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, pp. 36, 38.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 36-37.



General Sheridan sent word that expenses for transportation and forage had exceeded the monthly average of \$60,000 and that appropriations would not permit an expenditure of more than \$28,000.<sup>56</sup> The expedition was doomed.

On the morning of December 22, therefore, the command retraced its steps up the Belle Fourche.<sup>57</sup> For the next three days the column fought fearful cold and strong winds as it toiled 33 miles. Two mules froze to death.<sup>58</sup> And, on Christmas Eve, the troops experienced their coldest day. While the horses went hungry, the thermometer froze at 42 degrees below zero. That night a man on guard suffered frozen feet. Another had three fingers badly frost-bitten, while other soldiers reported frozen hands and feet. Ambulances gained many passengers that day.<sup>59</sup> The animals also suffered terribly. With grain exhausted, and only sparse grass to be pawed from under deep snow, many horses collapsed on Christmas during the march to Pumpkin Buttes.<sup>60</sup> Yet Mackenzie lost relatively few mounts due to his good judgment in marching,

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Frank North's diary in Motor Travel, XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19. McClellan's diary in Ibid., XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 21-22.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid. Frank North's diary in Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid. McClellan's diary in Ibid., XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 21-22. Cf., Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 39.

<sup>60</sup>McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 22. Frank North's diary in Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19.



selecting campsites, and requiring that the men pamper their faltering animals.<sup>61</sup>

Hardship continued on December 26 as the command pushed across Pumpkin Buttes into the fangs of a blizzard. Minute crystals of ice transformed facial hair into frozen mats. The nostrils of horses and mules bristled with icicles as they labored over the glassy road. At one point, the grade proved so icy that the straining teams failed to make headway until scores of men with lariats dragged the wagons over the rise.<sup>62</sup> Leaving Pumpkin Buttes behind, the column plodded across a monotonous landscape robed in snow. Spurred on by prospects of comfortable winter quarters, the expedition reached Wind Creek early that afternoon and camped.<sup>63</sup> That night Mackenzie turned the animals loose in the hope that they might find grass, or at least keep from freezing to death.<sup>64</sup>

From the camp on Wind Creek, the command toiled southward through a snowstorm, over a road known as "heap ravines." And, on December 29, they pitched their tents about two miles

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<sup>61</sup>Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 195.

<sup>62</sup>McClellan's diary in Motor Travel, XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 22. Frank North's diary in Ibid., XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 42. Luther North, Man of the Plains, p. 223.

<sup>63</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, pp. 39-41. Frank North's diary in Motor Travel, XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19.

<sup>64</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, pp. 39-41.



above Fort Fetterman.<sup>65</sup> But, because a scarcity of forage at the post denied his cavalry a haven, Mackenzie led the horse soldiers towards Fort Laramie.<sup>66</sup> Before reaching that post, however, Mackenzie, Crook, and several officers left the command. They rode to Cheyenne, Wyoming to attend the court martial of Col. J. J. Reynolds.<sup>67</sup> Reynolds, whom Mackenzie no doubt remembered with distaste, faced charges of mismanagement in his fight with Crazy Horse on March 17, 1876.<sup>68</sup> Some 100 officers gathered at Cheyenne for the trial as Crook's party checked into the Inter-Ocean Hotel on the evening of January 3, 1877.<sup>69</sup>

For Mackenzie, however, Cheyenne was just a stopover. He was on his way east under orders from J. D. Cameron, Secretary of War. It is said that, in December, 1876, President Grant called on the colonel for what might have become the gravest test of his career. Grant wanted Mackenzie to command all troops in Washington in the event of a national emergency arising from the disputed presidential election between Rutherford B. Hayes and Samuel J. Tilden. For this

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<sup>65</sup>Frank North's diary in Motor Travel, XXIII, 1 (Apr., 1931), 19. McClellan's diary in Ibid., XXII, 10 (Jan., 1931), 22.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid. Bourke Diary, XIX, 1549.

<sup>67</sup>Dorst in Cavalry Journal, p. 381. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 194. Bourke Diary, XIX, 1550.

<sup>68</sup>Clippings from Cheyenne Sun, Jan. 4 and 5, 1877, Ibid., XX, 1729-B, 1732.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid. Bourke's entry in Ibid., XIX, 1551.



statement historians have only the word of Joseph H. Dorst. Dorst, then a lieutenant in the 4th Cavalry and later Mackenzie's adjutant and confidant, claims that the colonel once revealed the reasons for his trip to Washington after the Powder River Expedition.<sup>70</sup>

Although the question may remain forever moot, there are scraps of evidence that tend to support Dorst's statement. For example, while in New York on January 3, 1877 Mackenzie received a peculiar telegram from General Sherman. It read:

Have seen Secretary who says the President only advises you to stay here not strictly on duty but in case of necessity. I advise you not to incur expense by reason thereof as in my opinion the case will not arise.<sup>71</sup>

One can only guess the nature of the "necessity" or "case," but it seems significant that this tour in the East is the most ambiguous entry in Mackenzie's personal file. The official record reads: "Commanding Cavalry forces on the Powder River Expedition to December 31, 1876; on duty under orders of the Secretary of War at Washington, D. C. to March 1, 1877."<sup>72</sup>

On February 19, 10 days after the Electoral Commission

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<sup>70</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 18. Although R. G. Carter did not know of this incident (he was discharged from the army in 1876), he believed that Dorst's statement was true. See Carter, Corral Dust, pp. 1-6.

<sup>71</sup>Telegram from Sherman to Mackenzie, Jan. 23, 1877, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>72</sup>Statement of service, Ibid.



awarded Florida's vote to Hayes, Capt. A. T. Rockwell, Assistant Quartermaster in Washington, received the following dispatch:

You are respectfully informed that under instructions of the Secretary of War Colonel R. S. Mackenzie, 4th Cavalry, is viewed as on duty in this city from January 12, 1877--<sup>73</sup>

So, if Mackenzie was to command troops in a national emergency, his assignment to the quartermaster department was probably a stratagem to lull suspicion. Moreover, the absence of a termination date on Rockwell's instructions also lends weight to Dorst's claim. But three days later, the Adjutant General received orders from the Secretary of War to direct Mackenzie to return to his proper station on March 1.<sup>74</sup> When Secretary Cameron sent that message, Hayes had won two of the four disputed states and seemed certain to win a third at any time. So, with the crisis apparently settled, Mackenzie returned to Camp Robinson.

He resumed command of the post and the District of the Black Hills on March 13, 1877.<sup>75</sup> Although he returned to the "unqualified and lasting admiration and gratitude" of General Crook, Mackenzie must wait a month before learning the extent of his victory over the Cheyennes.<sup>76</sup> He no doubt knew that

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<sup>73</sup>Adj. Gen. to Capt. Rockwell, Feb. 19, 1877, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>74</sup>Adj. Gen. in AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>75</sup>Statement of service in Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Crook to Sheridan, Dec. 8, 1880, in ACP File.



the capture of Dull Knife's village was the richest prize ever won by the army on the northern plains, and that its devastation dealt a severe blow to Cheyenne power and prestige.<sup>77</sup> His triumph, enhanced by the simultaneous winter operations of Col. Nelson A. Miles, convinced most Sioux and Cheyennes that neither remote strongholds nor sub-Arctic temperatures would stay the ever-growing numbers of Long Knives. To a people accustomed to semi-hibernation during the cold months, this proved a demoralizing revelation. Mackenzie's victory on the Red Fork showed the hostile Indian that wherever he roamed off the reservation, no matter the weather or terrain, minions of the Great White Father would hound him until he gave up in despair. It was therefore probably no coincidence that Dull Knife's band was the first to surrender in the spring of 1877.<sup>78</sup>

By mid-April, word reached Camp Robinson that the Cheyennes were on their way in to give themselves up.<sup>79</sup> Crook and Mackenzie, accompanied by their staffs, rode to the Red Cloud agency to await the tribesmen. On Saturday, April 21, the fugitive Indians appeared under a white flag. Led by Lt. Philo Clark and interpreter Bill Rowland, 524

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid. Crook to Sheridan, Nov. 28, 1876, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 185. Bourke, On the Border, p. 417. O. O. Howard, My Life, p. 521.

<sup>78</sup>Anderson in North Dakota History, pp. 82, 93. Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 44.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid. Bourke, On the Border, p. 394.



bedraggled Cheyennes rode in compact formation behind Dull Knife, Little Wolf, Standing Elk, and lesser chiefs.<sup>80</sup>

When they sighted the waiting officers, the Indians broke ranks and, singing and shouting, cavorted up to Crook and Mackenzie. Professing peaceful intentions for the future, the Cheyennes surrendered 600 ponies, 68 long arms, and 34 pistols.<sup>81</sup> Then the effects of Mackenzie's victory became apparent. The tipis of the Indians were nothing more than lodge-poles covered with remnants of old canvas, ancient hides and robes, or even pieces of gunny-sack. Almost entirely without blankets, the Cheyennes owned but a scant number of buffalo robes. Many hobbled by on frozen feet, while nearly all seemed hungry.<sup>82</sup> The fugitives said that since their fight with Mackenzie they had lived on pony meat, supplemented by such things as they could scavenge from the abandoned camps of the Powder River Expedition. The story rang true, for spectators saw no cooking utensils among their pitiful belongings.<sup>83</sup> In response to their utter destitution, Mackenzie wasted no time issuing supplies to the Indians, giving priority to the wounded and feeble.

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<sup>80</sup>Bourke Diary, XXII, 1905-1907, 1923. Article from New York Tribune, Apr. 23, 1877, in Ibid., 1932. Anderson in North Dakota History, p. 93.

<sup>81</sup>Bourke Diary, XXII, 1905-1908, 1932.

<sup>82</sup>New York Tribune, Apr. 23, 1877, in Ibid., p. 1933. Bourke's entry in Ibid., pp. 1905-1908, 1932.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid. Wheeler, Frontier Trail, p. 185.



The Cheyennes welcomed the food, one gobbling so much that he died of "surfeit."<sup>84</sup>

Later that afternoon, Crook and Mackenzie held a peace council. They listened as the Cheyennes told of their struggle over the Big Horn Range to the village of Crazy Horse, and how they met a cool reception from the Sioux whose resources could not stand the drain put on them by the newcomers.<sup>85</sup> So, when Crazy Horse failed them, their last hope became despair. Embittered, the Cheyennes decided to surrender.<sup>86</sup> Although the Indians later claimed that Crazy Horse treated them kindly and supplied most of their wants, their obvious destitution on April 21, 1877 belied that story.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, many Cheyennes asked permission to accompany the white soldiers in the fight against Crazy Horse, following the example of their brothers who enlisted before the Powder River Expedition.<sup>88</sup>

When the Cheyennes finished their story, Mackenzie spoke. He admonished the tribesmen for their flight from the reservation and for the resistance that brought them such misery. He said that General Crook gave them food, not be-

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<sup>84</sup>Bourke Diary, XXII, 1911. Article from Chicago Tribune, Apr. 23, 1877, in Ibid., p. 1928.

<sup>85</sup>Bourke's entry in Ibid., pp. 1910, 1854. Howard, My Life, p. 521.

<sup>86</sup>Bourke Diary, XXII, 1854.

<sup>87</sup>Grinnell, Fighting Cheyennes, p. 368. Hyde, Red Cloud's Folk, p. 288.

<sup>88</sup>Bourke, Mackenzie's Last Fight, p. 44. Howard, My Life, p. 521.



cause they deserved it, but because the general pitied the Indians.<sup>89</sup> After the speech, Dull Knife said to Mackenzie: "You are the one I was afraid of when you came here last summer."<sup>90</sup> Although the old chief had already fled the reservation by the time Mackenzie arrived at Camp Robinson, Dull Knife's remark indicated something of the fear and respect with which the Indians regarded Bad Hand.

The following day, another 291 Cheyennes surrendered to Colonel Miles at the mouth of the Tongue River.<sup>91</sup> By May 15, 869 others turned themselves in, showing "unusual docility and friendliness" towards the whites.<sup>92</sup> They demonstrated their goodwill on May 6 when Crazy Horse led his band to the agency. As the 889 Sioux (217 of them warriors) trooped into Red Cloud, rumors warned of their savage resistance to disarmament.<sup>93</sup> But behind the agency buildings, a company of Cheyenne scouts watched for signs of rebellion among the Sioux.<sup>94</sup> Perhaps due to confidence in the Cheyennes, Mackenzie remained

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<sup>89</sup>Article from Chicago Tribune, Apr. 23, 1877, in Bourke Diary, XXII, 1928.

<sup>90</sup>Article from New York Tribune, Apr. 23, 1877, in Ibid., pp. 1932-1933.

<sup>91</sup>Anderson in North Dakota History, p. 82.

<sup>92</sup>Bourke Diary, XXII, 1914. Anderson in North Dakota History, p. 82.

<sup>93</sup>Bourke Diary, XXIII, 1988. Chicago Tribune, May 8, 1877, in Ibid., p. 2005. Sheridan to Sherman, May 6, 1877, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>94</sup>Bourke Diary, XXIII, 1988.



in his headquarters while Lieutenant Clark accepted the surrender of 2,000 Sioux ponies and 117 stand of arms.<sup>95</sup>

In the weeks to come, the Cheyennes held aloof from the Sioux, preferring the company of the Arapahoes.<sup>96</sup>

Near the end of May, Mackenzie received orders to march his companies back to Fort Sill.<sup>97</sup> He had not seen the last of the Cheyennes, however. Less than three months later, on August 5, he rode to Fort Reno, Indian Territory, to superintend the arrival of 937 reluctant Northern Cheyennes.<sup>98</sup> As he saw to their establishment at Darlington, and transferred them to the agent, Mackenzie must have pitied his former enemies.<sup>99</sup> And, before long, he learned of their dissatisfaction with the meager rations issued at the Cheyenne-Arapaho agency. With an insight that he often displayed on Indian affairs, the colonel foresaw that if justice was not done the Northern Cheyennes, they would bolt the reservation within two years. When it came, Mackenzie argued, the outbreak would result from starvation, and blame could be laid

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<sup>95</sup>Chicago Tribune, May 8, 1877, in Ibid., p. 2005. Sheridan to Sherman, May 6, 1877, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>96</sup>Bourke Diary, XXII, 1862; XXIII, 1989.

<sup>97</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>98</sup>Mackenzie to Gen. John Pope, Aug. 12, 1877, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Report of Indian Agent J. A. Miles in RSI, 1877 (Serial 1800), p. 481.

<sup>99</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, Aug. 12, 1877, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



at the door of the government. Little wonder that he wanted at least six companies constantly available at Fort Sill.<sup>100</sup>

As always, Mackenzie regarded the threat of force as a positive element in Indian administration. He hewed to the belief that troops proved a "very great check" on the reservation Indian who must be confronted by force before he would accept authority. The colonel regarded soldiers as the greatest aid available to an Indian agent, rather than any inconvenience to him. In fact, Mackenzie maintained that if troops were removed from the agency, peace probably would not last for two weeks.<sup>101</sup>

For all his belief in harmony through force, the colonel proved himself a friend to the Indian. In the fall of 1877, when many Americans agitated for the release of the tribesmen held prisoner in Florida, and for their return to the reservation, Mackenzie found himself in agreement.<sup>102</sup> While he had no personal interest in the captive Indians, and dreaded being accused of "improperly or facetiously" opposing General Sherman's views, the colonel's sense of duty goaded him into breaking silence.<sup>103</sup> Not to state

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<sup>100</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, Sept. 4, 1877, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>101</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, July 14, 1877, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>102</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, Sept. 6, 1877, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.



his views, thought Mackenzie, would be to neglect his duty to both citizens and military superiors, and especially to the "true interests" of the Indian. He therefore counseled the return of many prisoners from Florida--despite a belief that Fort Sill already supported about as many tribesmen as it was "judicious" to have there.<sup>104</sup>

In view of the "very good" behavior of the Cheyennes, Mackenzie advised that a "very considerable portion" of the tribe be returned to their families in the Indian Territory.<sup>105</sup> On the other hand, while the general conduct of the Kiowas had been "excellent" since 1874, the colonel could not agree with those who urged the immediate return of all of them. Instead, he would be willing for at least half the best behaved Kiowas to rejoin their families. But the worst characters--notably Lone Wolf and White Horse--should never be allowed to return to Fort Sill.<sup>106</sup> Mackenzie also felt that the good conduct of the Comanches entitled them to consideration. Regarding none of them as "remarkably bad" Indians, he thought that all the Comanches should return from Florida because, of that group, only Black Horse served time for homicide. And he had murdered a "notoriously dangerous" white man who "deserved to be killed."<sup>107</sup> Besides, reasoned Mack-

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid.



enzie, the confinement of 21 Kwahadis and their families-- recently turned over to him by the Kiowas and Comanches-- would prove a sufficient check on the Comanches for at least a year.<sup>108</sup> The Indians had earned the colonel's consideration in an affair that might have ended in violence.

The incident took place in the summer of 1877 when the Kwahadis sneaked into the Comanche camp at Fort Sill.<sup>109</sup> When word of their presence reached Mackenzie, he told the Indians to deliver the fugitives or be confined to the guardhouse. Before long, a deputation of Comanche chiefs appeared before the colonel and, with haughty manner, launched into a series of speeches. While Horace Jones, the post interpreter, translated the tirade, Mackenzie sat silently at his desk, apparently attentive. At one point in the harangue, however, he summoned his acting adjutant and whispered instructions to mount all troops, issue a hundred rounds of ammunition, and leave the horses in their stalls so that the Indians would not suspect the preparations. The adjutant left the room and Mackenzie turned his attention back to the chiefs. But when word came that the troops were ready, he stood up and, without the least trace of excitement, quietly said:

Jones, tell these Indians I have listened to their talk long enough. Tell them, that if they do not bring those renegade Qua-hadi Comanches to the guardhouse in twenty minutes (here he paused and spoke deliberately), I

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>Parker, Old Army, p. 49.



will go out to their camps and kill them  
all. Repeat that, Jones, just as I have  
said it.<sup>110</sup>

The Indians seemed dumbstruck. They rushed to their ponies, galloped madly from the post and, a few minutes later, returned with the fugitives.<sup>111</sup> Their haste suggested that few men--red or white--would risk calling the colonel's bluff--if it was a bluff.

While the incident typified Mackenzie's administration, so did his concern for the welfare of his charges. During both tours of duty at Fort Sill he managed the Indians with a blend of sympathy and firmness, discipline tempered with justice. Whenever he considered their welfare in jeopardy, his sense of duty and humanity prodded him to state his views--even at the risk of displeasing superiors. But, despite the colonel's deep sensitivity to human suffering, a mailed fist always lay clenched beneath the velvet glove.

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid. Lt. Parker was present during the affair. For data on Horace P. Jones, see Joseph B. Thorburn, "Horace P. Jones, Scout and Interpreter," Chronicles of Oklahoma (1924), II, 380-391.

<sup>111</sup>Parker, Old Army, p. 49.



## CHAPTER XI

### BACK TO THE BORDER

At the end of the Red River War several bands of Indians took refuge in the mountains of northern Mexico. From their strongholds the tribesmen inflicted heavy losses on the stock raisers of the frontier counties of Texas.<sup>1</sup> Forays became so intense that from October, 1877 to October, 1878 hostile Indians killed 48 people and wounded 6 in the Department of Texas.<sup>2</sup> Mescaleros and Lipans were probably the most active marauders. The Kickapoos, on the other hand, peacefully tended their farms in Mexico. They so dreaded reprisal from Mackenzie that when a band of Lipans camped nearby, the Kickapoos grew very uneasy.<sup>3</sup>

They had good cause to fear another attack by the Americans, because the Mexican government could not or would not stamp out marauders. There was even evidence that

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<sup>1</sup>Brig. Gen. Edward O. C. Ord, quoted in Committee on Military Affairs, Testimony on Texas Border Troubles, Jan. 12, 1878; House Misc. Doc. 64, 45th Cong., 2nd Sess., Vol. VI (Serial 1820), p. 13. For more data see Rutherford B. Hayes, Message on Mexican Border Troubles, Nov. 12, 1877; House Exec. Doc. 13, 45th Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. I (Serial 1773), passim.

<sup>2</sup>Ord in Testimony on Texas Border Troubles (Serial 1820), p. 13. Ord's report of Oct. 2, 1878 in RSW, 1878 (Serial 1794), p. 82.

<sup>3</sup>Judge Thomas M. Paschal quoted in Ibid., p. 84.



Indian and Mexican bandits still thrived under official protection in some towns of northern Mexico. In Santa Rosa, several reputable Americans reported that it was not uncommon to see Indians publicly selling Texan horses with undefaced brands to prominent Mexican merchants.<sup>4</sup> At Piedras Negras, the Mexican garrison of Col. Jesús Nuncio ate stolen American beef.<sup>5</sup> Some observers went so far as to claim that the Mexican government provided the bandits with arms and ammunition.<sup>6</sup> Others reported that bands of armed men--wearing the uniform and carrying the arms of the Mexican soldier--plundered along the Rio Grande in what some people regarded as perpetual "quasi-border warfare."<sup>7</sup> So, when talks between American and Mexican ministers came to naught, the United States government decided to act.<sup>8</sup>

Hoping that a show of strength might force the Mexican authorities to punish marauders, Brig. Gen. Edward O. C. Ord

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 83. Cf., RSW, 1874 (Serial 1615), pp. 4-27. Sworn deposition of the Alcalde of Jimenez, Aug. 17, 1878, in Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Message on Mexican Border Troubles (Serial 1773), passim. Testimony on Texas Border Troubles (Serial 1820), pp. 1-312.

<sup>7</sup>Resolution Relating to the Mexican Frontier, June 8, 1874; House Misc. Doc. 289, 43rd Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. V (Serial 1621), pp. 1-2.

<sup>8</sup>Special Committee, Report on Texas Frontier Troubles, Feb. 29, 1876; House Report 343, 44th Cong., 1st Sess., Vol. II (Serial 1709), passim.



--commanding the Department of Texas--collected troops along the Rio Grande.<sup>9</sup> No doubt many Texans were delighted when Mackenzie and six companies of the 4th Cavalry received orders to march to Fort Clark. Leaving half the regiment in the Department of the Missouri, the colonel and his troopers began the trek southward on December 17, 1877.<sup>10</sup> As they left Fort Sill, Mackenzie seemed convinced that this time the problems of the Mexican border would not be solved by one raid. "As sure as that sun rises and sets," he said, "there will be war with Mexico within six months."<sup>11</sup>

Such somber thoughts found an equal in the dismal weather. It rained every day after leaving Fort Sill, drenching the command and its baggage.<sup>12</sup> In what came to be known as the "Mud March of the 4th Cavalry," it took 13 days to slog the 40 miles to the Red River.<sup>13</sup> But, refusing to give up, Mackenzie attempted to march every day. Christmas found the riders hauling wagons through the ooze. On New Years Day they were still at their sloppy work.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Ord's report of Oct. 2, 1878 in RSW, 1878 (Serial 1794), p. 81.

<sup>10</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives, Parker, Old Army, p. 86.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. Cf., Mackenzie's letter of Mar. 9, 1876, in Report of the Transfer of the Indian Bureau (Serial 1709), pp. 55-56.

<sup>12</sup>Parker, Old Army, p. 87.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 88.



When the column reached Henrietta, Texas (some 50 miles north of Fort Richardson), a delegation of citizens came forth to meet Mackenzie. To show their gratitude for services rendered by the 4th Cavalry, the people of Henrietta held a banquet and ball for the officers. Mackenzie declined the invitation, at first, but later consented.<sup>15</sup> He was no doubt anxious to reach Fort Clark and whatever duty awaited him along the border and in no mood for festivities. So, during the celebration, when the mayor tried to ply him with whiskey from a flask, Mackenzie made some excuse to escape to the far side of the table. The evening ended on a sour note when some enlisted men, well oiled by "rot-gut" liquor, struck up a free-for-all. They did not get off without punishment.<sup>16</sup>

The 4th Cavalry quit Henrietta within a few hours after the ball, resuming the march through snow, rain, and more mud.<sup>17</sup> The tortuous progress proved a heavy drain on supplies and, by the time the column limped into Fort Griffin, it stood in great need of provisions. So, Mackenzie requested rations from the post commander. When he refused, the colonel used his superior rank to commandeer supplies.<sup>18</sup> As soon as it was re-provisioned the command departed Fort

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 89-90.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 94.



Griffin and headed for the Mexican border. At Fredericksburg, Mackenzie left the column and rode to San Antonio for a conference with General Ord. After a short briefing on the state of affairs along the Rio Grande, the colonel rode to Fort Clark to take command of the District of the Nueces.<sup>19</sup>

With his usual vigor, Mackenzie lost no time preparing his command for aggressive action. He authorized Lieutenant Colonel Shafter, post commander at Fort Duncan, to take immediate action against raiders if the occasion arose.<sup>20</sup> As winter gave way to spring, Mackenzie grew impatient, believing that affairs on the border demanded more forceful action than taken by General Ord. The department commander did not respond to the colonel's liking when a "reliable citizen" sent word that the Lipans resided in Santa Rosa, Mexico. So, Mackenzie informed his superior that he would take some "steps" of his own.<sup>21</sup>

He authorized Lieutenant Colonel Shafter to accept Lipan prisoners should they be offered by Brig. Gen. A. R. Falcon of the Mexican Army.<sup>22</sup> And, early in March, 1878, Mackenzie wrote to General Falcon, requesting cooperation for the sup-

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 95.

<sup>20</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Mar. 9, 1878, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Mackenzie to Lt. Col. William R. Shafter, Feb. 25, 1878, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



pression of bandits and hostile Indians.<sup>23</sup> The colonel thought Falcon an "upright" man who, although anxious to cooperate, was either hampered by instructions from superiors, or by an uncooperative Mexican citizenry.<sup>24</sup> So, it probably came as no surprise when General Falcon wrote that the Lipans had permission to live near Santa Rosa and that his limited authority would not permit the action proposed by Mackenzie. Falcon could do little more than forward the American officer's letter to higher authority and await the outcome, if any.<sup>25</sup>

In the meantime, Mackenzie continued to bolster the defenses of Texas in accordance with orders from General Ord. To protect the mail and settlements, he established eight sub-posts or camps in the District of the Nueces by the 30th of April.<sup>26</sup> Detachments of cavalry gave hot pursuit to all marauders who penetrated the region, giving them little chance to do much damage. The defense system proved so successful that, for the year in which Mackenzie served along the Rio Grande, raiders committed only three murders.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Mar. 19, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>A. R. Falcon to Mackenzie, Mar. 13, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ord's report of Oct. 1, 1878 in Col. M. L. Crimmins, "General Mackenzie and Fort Concho," West Texas Historical Association Yearbook, X (Oct., 1934), 30-31.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.



In May, Mackenzie hired one of the Mexicans (probably José Piedad Tafoya) who formerly traded with Comanches on the Staked Plains. In his past services to the army the ex-Comanchero always proved "sagacious" and "very reliable!"<sup>28</sup> Mackenzie therefore sent the man into Mexico to ingratiate himself with the "class of people" from whom the colonel received his information.<sup>29</sup> By this time, Mackenzie seemed reconciled to the idea of striking the Lipans near Santa Rosa.<sup>30</sup> He saw no other course that would alleviate the suffering of west Texas, especially after Col. Jesús Nuncio wrote that revolutionary movements in Mexico prevented him from taking action against the Indians.<sup>31</sup>

Although Mackenzie resolved to violate Mexican territory as soon as his agent returned from Santa Rosa, he grew uneasy at the prospects of striking without sufficient authority. He remained unsatisfied after Ord wrote what was in effect a complete approval of Mackenzie's proposed action. The colonel, however, wanted "explicit approval" for the "moral support" it would give him.<sup>32</sup> So, on May 30, after

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<sup>28</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, May 9, 1878, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Ord to Mackenzie, May 30, 1878, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, May 28, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.



collecting troops at Fort Clark for the "special purpose" of punishing the Lipans, General Ord offered additional assurance.<sup>33</sup> He said that if Mackenzie crossed the Rio Grande at any point, either in pursuit of raiders or on a fresh trail, and thought that he could reach the Lipan camp, he would "take advantage of the first opportunity to do so."<sup>34</sup>

So, early June found Mackenzie ready to move. He nervously awaited his slow-moving infantry support and watched Mexican revolutionaries collecting along the Rio Grande.<sup>35</sup> On June 11, however, after the Mexicans made no effort to cross, he accompanied Capt. Samuel B. M. Young and a battalion to the border. With 4 companies of the 8th Cavalry, 2 of the 4th, and some Seminole scouts, the command moved from a camp 15 miles above the mouth of Devil's River (the San Pedro) to "Winker's Crossing" of the Rio Grande.<sup>36</sup> Due to high water, however, Mackenzie did not ford the river until the afternoon of June 12. Then, pushing across without mishap, he set a southwesterly course for 10 miles before going

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<sup>33</sup>Ord to Mackenzie, May 30, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, June 1 and 3, 1878, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, May 24, 1878, Ibid. Mackenzie to commander of Fort McKavett, May 25, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, June 23, 1878, Ibid. Hereinafter this important document will be cited only as "Mackenzie's report."



into a dry camp for the night.<sup>37</sup>

Meanwhile, the main body of the expedition, under Lieutenant Colonel Shafter, gathered on the north bank of the Rio Grande.<sup>38</sup> With 3 battalions of infantry, 3 batteries of artillery, and 2 troops of cavalry, Shafter planned to march 150 miles to Santa Rosa. There, while Mackenzie scouted the mountains, he would establish a base of operations. Shafter's 40 wagons, laden with rations for 30 days, were to supply Mackenzie for his campaign against the Indians.<sup>39</sup>

At six o'clock on the morning of June 13 the mounted portion of the expedition broke camp and marched seven miles south southwest. Pausing to water the animals, the command trudged due west for a few more miles and halted for lunch. Two o'clock found the troopers back in the saddle, following a trail that led to a small waterhole. After the horses drank their fill, the column resumed the march until 6:30 p.m. Then, after a trek of 14 miles that afternoon, they made another dry camp. While the troopers passed an uneventful night, all was not well.<sup>40</sup>

Mackenzie's guide fell ill and, although the trail must

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Cf., Parker, Old Army, p. 103. Parker accompanied Mackenzie on the expedition.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Mackenzie's report.



be followed as soon as possible, the surgeon pronounced him too sick to travel during the heat of the day.<sup>41</sup> So, at 2:00 a. m. on June 14 the command started a nine-mile march to Burro Mountain, where the guide expected to find abundant water.<sup>42</sup> The spring proved disappointing. It furnished barely enough water to brew coffee and a drink for the pack mules. The horses went thirsty.<sup>43</sup> The guide assured Mackenzie that he would find another spring about 35 miles distant. After breakfast, therefore, the colonel sent the guide with the lead company to locate the waterhole, while the rest of the column followed from Burro Mountain.<sup>44</sup> Obeying the guide's directions, Mackenzie marched 12 miles to reach a point only 4 miles from his starting place. The error convinced the colonel that his stock might die before he reached water. To prevent further tragedy, Mackenzie hurried a message to Colonel Shafter, warning him not to cross the Rio Grande. If he had already done so, Shafter must return to the American side.<sup>45</sup> Because Mackenzie saw that the sick guide and dry waterholes spelled disaster for the expedition, he decided to return to Fort Clark. Only the timely discovery of water changed his plans. When he saw the horses in

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid. Parker, Old Army, pp. 105-106.

<sup>44</sup>Mackenzie's report.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid. Parker, Old Army, pp. 105-106.



better condition than he had hoped, Mackenzie elected to comb the country on the San Diego and San Rodríguez Rivers. He sent word to Colonel Shafter to await his arrival.<sup>46</sup>

Shafter crossed the Rio Grande on June 15 and marched along the San Diego River. He established a camp on that cold mountain stream and awaited Mackenzie's arrival on June 17.<sup>47</sup> But, because it rained all that night, boggy ground limited the expedition to only six miles the following day.<sup>48</sup> Not until 1:00 a. m. on June 19 did Mackenzie lead the column to Remolino on the headwaters of the San Rodríguez and near the scene of his attack on the Kickapoos in 1873. This time, however, the invaders found a small body of Mexican regulars under Col. Pedro I. Valdéz.<sup>49</sup> Mackenzie knew Valdéz, or "Colonel Winker" as he was called, and regarded him as a "very gallant but corrupt" soldier--although probably no more corrupt than the average high-ranking Mexican officer.<sup>50</sup> At least one American officer regarded Colonel Valdéz as the bravest man he had ever known, and Mackenzie thought him more feared than any other Mexican soldier on the frontier.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie's report.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid. Parker, Old Army, pp. 105-106. Seyburn, History of Tenth Infantry, pp. 64-65.

<sup>48</sup>Mackenzie's report.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid. Parker, Old Army, p. 106.

<sup>50</sup>Mackenzie to Augur, June 6, 1873, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid. Porter in Southwestern Historical Quarterly, p. 373.



So, when Mackenzie found himself confronted by Mexican regulars, he immediately invited Colonel Valdéz to join him against cattle thieves and Indians. Valdéz replied that although he opposed lawlessness, he had orders to repel los americanos.<sup>52</sup> Mackenzie saw that the Mexican lacked the strength to contest him. He sent word that he bore no hostility towards Mexico and informed Colonel Valdéz that Captain Young's command would camp for a time where it was, and suggested that the Mexicans bivouac on the far side of Remolino. Although both commanders promised to give warning before attacking, the American served notice that Valdéz stood directly in his line of march, an advance that would begin at 3:00 p. m.<sup>53</sup>

Sometime after two o'clock, Col. Jesús Nuncio arrived with additional troops and took command of the Mexican forces. He immediately sent a message that said that the Americans had violated and outraged the dignity of the Mexican Republic.<sup>54</sup> Nuncio added that the only way that the U. S. forces could escape an encounter was if Mackenzie publicly pledged his word of honor to "give satisfaction," both to Nuncio's superiors and the Mexican nation. If, under solemn promise, the American commander agreed to Nuncio's proposition, Mexican troops would move down and cover the rear of the Yankee column

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<sup>52</sup>Mackenzie's report.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. Parker, Old Army, pp. 106-107.

<sup>54</sup>Mackenzie's report.



until it crossed the Rio Grande.<sup>55</sup> Mackenzie immediately declined Nuncio's offer. He thought that he had received a correct translation of it, although he later decided that Nuncio's message was "impertinent."<sup>56</sup>

3:00 When Mackenzie rejected the offer, he also informed the Mexican commander that he would advance at the time previously indicated. At 3:00 p. m., therefore, Colonel Shafter marched down the right bank of the San Rodríguez, directly towards the Mexican troops. Captain Young's battalion of cavalry and Seminole scouts rode down the left bank, ready to flank the Mexicans if they attacked Shafter.<sup>57</sup> But, confronted by superior numbers--not to mention a battery of Gatling guns--Colonel Nuncio withdrew without firing a shot.<sup>58</sup> Because of the "entire inadequacy" of his force, Nuncio chose a wise course.<sup>59</sup>

The American command continued down the San Rodríguez for about nine miles and camped. At six o'clock on the morning of June 20 Mackenzie resumed his trek to the Rio Grande. After a march of only eight miles, the column bivouacked at 9:30 a. m. About noon, however, as Mackenzie waited for the

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<sup>55</sup>Translation of Nuncio's letter enclosed with Mackenzie's report.

<sup>56</sup>Mackenzie's report. Parker, Old Army, p. 107.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie's report.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid. Parker, Old Army, p. 108.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid. Nuncio's report.



sun's heat to abate, he spotted the dust of Mexican troops. Nuncio's men seemed to go into camp some five or six miles away on the San Rodríguez. The Mexican troops did not show themselves, however, not even when Mackenzie broke camp at 3:00 p. m. and marched seven miles to another bivouac area.<sup>60</sup>

The next morning at six o'clock, with Shafter's right flank protected by the cavalry of Captain Young, Mackenzie left the San Rodríguez and marched to within one and a half miles of Monclava Viejo. Before crossing the Rio Grande, Mackenzie sent a lieutenant into the hamlet to assure its people that the Americans meant to do no harm.<sup>61</sup> When the officer returned, he reported that Mexican pickets occupied a high hill that overlooked the American right flank. So, Mackenzie sent the lieutenant to inform Colonel Nuncio that he would not ford the river if the Mexicans intended to attack.<sup>62</sup> Instead of giving a definite answer, the Mexican commander sent Colonel Valdéz and a major to confer with Mackenzie. During a rather vague discussion, the Americans gathered that Colonel Nuncio wanted an apology or "reparations" for their presence in Mexico.<sup>63</sup> Mackenzie remarked that the question of apology or responsibility could only be settled on the higher levels of government. Whereupon, Colonel

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid. Parker, Old Army, p. 108.

<sup>61</sup>Mackenzie's report.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid. Parker, Old Army, p. 108.

<sup>63</sup>Mackenzie's report.



Valdéz closed the interview with "great courtesy and dignity," saying that he felt authorized to tell the American to recross the Rio Grande, but "to guard himself from attack like a cavalier."<sup>64</sup>

After the conference, Mackenzie ordered Captain Young to seize the high hill that overlooked the American and Mexican positions. Young's cavalry and Seminoles broke into a trot when they reached the foot of the hill.<sup>65</sup> Portions of Troop A, 8th Cavalry, under Capt. A. B. Wells, deployed as skirmishers, showing "marked energy" as they forced the Mexican pickets to retire. Meanwhile, the rest of Young's command trotted to the west of the hill to flank the Piedras Negras road against which Colonel Shafter directed his force. There too the Mexicans withdrew without fighting, and retreated about three miles.<sup>66</sup> Colonel Valdéz sent a message that in effect stated that he did not wish to interfere with the American expedition. Always a gentleman, Mackenzie sent word that he was to have met Valdéz and that he hoped to someday enjoy a friendly visit with the Mexican officer at Fort Clark.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, the American commander exhibited sympathy and chivalry towards his opponent. He believed that the Mexicans should not be criticized for withdrawing when they lacked

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid. Parker, Old Army, p. 108.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie's report.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid. Parker, Old Army, p. 108.

<sup>67</sup>Mackenzie's report.



the manpower to fight.<sup>68</sup> So, instead of inflicting the "indignity" of passing through Nuncio's regular station at Piedras Negras, Mackenzie ordered Shafter to return to Monclava Viejo and cross the Rio Grande at that point.<sup>69</sup> The expedition forded the river without Mexican interference, although deep water forced each cavalryman to carry a foot soldier across with him.<sup>70</sup>

Mackenzie returned from Mexico with the knowledge that a shortage of water and the sickness of his guide had doomed the expedition.<sup>71</sup> But, while a failure in a strict military sense, the invasion impressed Mexican officials with American determination to stop depredations along the Rio Grande. This became even more evident after General Ord approved Mackenzie's action and made it a guide for the future.<sup>72</sup>

Ord, who once seemed hesitant about provoking hostilities with Mexico, now became aggressive. In a confidential message, he told Mackenzie that he wanted the Mexican troops

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<sup>68</sup>Asst. Adj. Gen. to Ord, June 22, 1878, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>69</sup>Mackenzie's report.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid. Parker, Old Army, p. 109.

<sup>71</sup>Mackenzie quoted in letter from Sheridan to Sherman, June 24, 1878, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>72</sup>Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas to Mackenzie, July 29, 1878, Ibid.



kept in the field a while longer.<sup>73</sup> The colonel refused, seeing no object in further "humiliating" the Mexicans.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, such action would require special orders. Rather, Mackenzie argued, "war ought to be declared on Mexican territory."<sup>75</sup> General Sheridan agreed, knowing that the colonel's authority was not broad enough to give him confidence when the risk of collision with Mexican regulars appeared so "imminent."<sup>76</sup>

General Ord nevertheless hatched plans for a second crossing, to occur as soon as the drought ended. So, on July 4 Mackenzie again forded the Rio Grande.<sup>77</sup> A large part of the cavalry had splashed across when a courier galloped up with a telegram from Washington. The message informed Mackenzie that the Mexican government of Porfirio Diaz had agreed to take punitive steps against border raiders.<sup>78</sup> Ord remained skeptical and, on July 29, issued instructions regulating the pursuit of raiders into Mexico. He expected the commander of an American expedition to notify Mexican

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<sup>73</sup>Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, to Mackenzie, June 24, 1878, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>74</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, June 25, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Sheridan to Sherman, June 24, 1878, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>77</sup>Parker, Old Army, p. 109.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.



troops of his crossing the border.<sup>79</sup> The American officer could then request that Mexicans punish the marauders--if it did not endanger the safety of U. S. troops--or allow the raiders to escape. But, if the Mexicans interfered with the American force, they would be attacked. Or, if the raiders took refuge in a town and Mexicans tried to protect them, Ord authorized U. S. troops to attack.<sup>80</sup> When word of these instructions reached General Sherman, he conferred with the Secretary of State. Sherman learned that the government did not want to provoke war with Mexico.<sup>81</sup> Instead, the General-in-Chief advised Ord to establish more telegraph stations along the Rio Grande, increase the vigilance of troops so as to destroy raiding parties on the American side of the river, and to avoid conflict with Mexican soldiers as much as possible.<sup>82</sup>

Mackenzie, on the other hand, seemed to concur with Ord that the Mexicans would not seriously resist a "respectable force of regulars."<sup>83</sup> So, on August 15, when word reached him that stolen cattle had just been taken to Mexico, the colonel took immediate action.<sup>84</sup> The cattle were driven to

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<sup>79</sup>Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, to Mackenzie, July 29, 1878, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Sherman to Sheridan, Aug. 8, 1878, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Ord to Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Aug. 19, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Mackenzie to Col. Jesús Nuncio, Aug. 16, 1878, Ibid.



New Town, a place regarded by Ord as a nest of raiders and a "terror" to the Texas frontier.<sup>85</sup> Ord also believed that bandits controlled the village as a sort of local garrison established by Colonel Nuncio.<sup>86</sup> So, Mackenzie immediately dispatched Lt. William A. Thompson and the Seminole scouts to pursue the thieves. Moreover, at 10:00 p. m. on August 15 he sent Captain Young to follow with Troop A, 4th Cavalry, Troop B, 8th Cavalry, and Co. E, 10th Infantry.<sup>87</sup> The column forded the Rio Grande and took possession of New Town at 4:30 the following morning. But Thompson and Young not only found the scattered tracks of the cattle impossible to trace, but also discovered that the principal bandit--a man named Anola--and his henchmen had escaped.<sup>88</sup>

In the meantime, Mackenzie wired Colonel Nuncio that his troops had either crossed or were about to cross the Rio Grande and inquired if Mexican forces would attack them.<sup>89</sup> Eager to avoid conflict, Nuncio wrote back asking for the

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<sup>85</sup>Ord to Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Aug. 17, 1878, Ibid. New Town stood on the south bank of the San Diego River near its junction with the Rio Grande. See map on page 1, Testimony of Texas Border Troubles (Serial 1820).

<sup>86</sup>Ord to Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Aug. 17, 1878, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>87</sup>Lt. William A. Thompson to Asst. Adj. Gen., District of the Nueces, Aug. 16, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Aug. 19, 1878, Ibid. Cf., Deposition of Alcalde of Jimenez, Aug. 17, 1878, in Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Mackenzie to Nuncio, Aug. 16, 1878, Ibid.



markings of the stolen cattle, and assured Mackenzie that the Mexicans would do all in their power to punish the thieves. Nuncio also expressed "confidence" that Mackenzie would suspend the invasion of Mexico in view of the friendly relations between the two governments.<sup>90</sup> For all that, his cooperative attitude did not scotch rumors that Nuncio not only ignored the stolen cattle, but protected the thieves.<sup>91</sup>

The issue did not come to the test, because after losing the trail of the cattle on the evening of August 16, Captain Young re-crossed the Rio Grande at Hackberry Crossing.<sup>92</sup> He reluctantly returned to American soil, for he wanted to drive the Mexican troops from Piedras Negras. Mackenzie would not hear of it, however.<sup>93</sup> He saw no reason to attack Mexican forces merely because they ate American beef. To his mind such an act would simply provoke war --and war was not yet within the scope of his orders.<sup>94</sup> Not that he felt squeamish about war, he did not. In fact, the

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<sup>90</sup>Nuncio's reply enclosed with Ord's telegram to the Division of the Missouri, Aug. 17, 1878, in Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Deposition of Alcalde of Jimenez, Aug. 17, 1878, Ibid. Ord to Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Aug. 17, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Lt. Thompson to Asst. Adj. Gen., District of the Nueces, Aug. 16, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Capt. Young to Mackenzie, Aug. 16, 1878, Ibid. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Aug. 19, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid.



colonel believed that a formal declaration of war on Mexico would be "well and pleasant in a military sense," and the only efficient way to stop depredations.<sup>95</sup> Having given more than passing thought to the subject, Mackenzie suggested that U. S. troops should be marshaled at San Antonio for an invasion of Mexico. While soldiers occupied northern Mexico as far south as Monterrey and Saltillo, other American forces would seize Mexico City.<sup>96</sup> In view of the attitude of Mexican authorities, the colonel argued, any lesser measure would be as they had been for years--"inefficient and trifling."<sup>97</sup> So, troops continued to gather at Fort Clark. By the fall of 1878 Mackenzie commanded 16 companies of the 4th and 8th Cavalry, the 10th and 20th Infantry--by far the largest concentration of soldiers in the Department of Texas.<sup>98</sup>

In September, however, affairs along the Rio Grande turned for the better. A Monterrey newspaper, the official organ of the State of Nuevo Leon, made an "ex cathedra" pronouncement that blamed internal troubles for Mexico's inaction against the raiders.<sup>99</sup> The paper promised that the government

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<sup>95</sup>He advised war as early as June 25. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, June 25, 1878, Ibid. Cf., Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, July 5 and Aug. 19, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, July 5, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Aug. 19, 1878, Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>RSW, 1878 (Serial 1794), p. 14.

<sup>99</sup>Translation of the editorial in Ibid., p. 85.



would undertake the extermination of the marauders. The article denied that Mexicans had participated in such activities, and pointed out the economic benefits of freeing northern Mexico from the scourge of Indian raiders.<sup>100</sup> On September 9, therefore, negotiations began when Mackenzie sent Captain Young to meet Lieutenant Colonel Vega of the Mexican Army.<sup>101</sup> In an amicable discussion the two officers agreed that American troops were to pursue thieves to the Rio Grande, immediately notify the nearest Mexican commander, and request that the owners of the stolen livestock, or their agents, accompany Mexican soldiers in pursuit. Young and Vega also arranged for Mexican troops to patrol the Rio Grande between Piedras Negras and Las Vacas. Upon receipt of reliable information from the Americans, they would pursue and "summarily punish" the raiders.<sup>102</sup>

Within a month after the agreement, conditions on the Rio Grande improved greatly. Mackenzie could take satisfaction in the knowledge that his determination to exploit the vulnerability of Mexico did much to convince that country and its new president to take punitive measures against border raiders. The colonel also demonstrated good judgment when he

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<sup>100</sup>Ibid.ation of the

<sup>101</sup>Capt. Young to Asst. Adj. Gen., District of the Nueces, Sept. 22, 1878, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.



declined to humiliate Mexican troops. While counseling war, he was less aggressive than General Ord. Although Mackenzie showed little faith in Mexican goodwill, he never gave up hope for a peaceful settlement. As usual, he had the good sense to realize when force or the threat of force had accomplished its goal. In this respect Mackenzie differed from many officers who allowed military measures to become an end in themselves.

After the crisis dissipated, Mackenzie occupied himself with the routine duties of a district command. On November 11, 1878, however, orders detailed him to Washington, D. C. as a member of an entrenching tool and equipment board.<sup>103</sup> He left Fort Clark on December 3 and, 13 days later, the board convened.<sup>104</sup> During the course of their deliberation, Mackenzie and his colleagues suggested the adoption of equipment that would saddle the Quartermaster Department with annual deficits of over half a million dollars.<sup>105</sup> Their recommendations, although based on field experience, evoked strong objections from the Quartermaster General. When they adjourned on April 1, 1879, the board could point to no significant accomplishment.<sup>106</sup> On April 30 Mackenzie returned to Fort Clark

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<sup>103</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Sherman to Sec. of War, July 15, 1879, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Dec. 2, 1878, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>105</sup>Sherman to Sec. of War, July 15, 1879, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid.



and an uneventful summer.<sup>107</sup>

Early in the fall of 1879 he received a summons to appear as a witness before a civil court in Lawrence, Kansas.<sup>108</sup> In the event that he was required to attend the trial, Mackenzie wanted temporary duty in the Department of the Missouri which would give him a chance to inspect the six companies of the 4th Cavalry stationed there. He also worried about the chances of being sent east for the winter, preferring a tour there a year hence. But if the army planned to send him to the Atlantic coast, Mackenzie wanted to know definitely in time to make "arrangements" for his mother during the cold months. In any case, he would have to leave Fort Clark by September 25 to attend to "money affairs" that demanded his attention in San Antonio and Boerne.<sup>109</sup> So, on September 24, 1879 Mackenzie left Fort Clark. He did not travel east, but presumably settled his financial business in Texas prior to appearing before the court in Kansas.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>Ibid. Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>108</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Sept. 13, 1879, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid. Dorst says that Mackenzie bought a ranch at Boerne, but does not say when. See Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 18.

<sup>110</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Cf., Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, to Ord, Oct. 14, 1879, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



## CHAPTER XII

### CRISIS IN COLORADO

Less than a week after Mackenzie left Fort Clark, Indian discontent exploded into open war--this time at the White River Ute agency in northwestern Colorado. On September 29, 1879, after months of dissatisfaction, the Utes revolted.<sup>1</sup> They killed their agent, N. C. Meeker, nine of his employees, and carried off several women and children. Then the warriors ambushed a relief column under Maj. T. T. Thornburgh some 25 miles north of the agency. Pouring down a hot fire from the high bluffs, the tribesmen killed Major Thornburgh, 10 of his men, and wounded 33 others. The startled soldiers retired into a circle of wagons where, behind a barricade of dead horses and mules, they lay besieged until October 5 when a relief column under Col. Wesley Merritt came to their rescue. Merritt stationed his troops at the White River agency and awaited government reaction.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For causes of the outbreak see RSI, 1879 (Serial 1910), pp. 82-88, 90-91. RSW, 1879 (Serial 1903), pp. 7-8, 44. Hon. S. B. Moxey to Gen. W. T. Sherman, Oct. 17, 1879, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>2</sup>RSW, 1879 (Serial 1903), pp. 8-13, 44. RSI, 1879 (Serial 1910), pp. 93-94. Gen. Wesley Merritt, "Three Indian Campaigns," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, LXXX (Apr., 1890), 732-737. For a dramatic treatment of the uprising, see Marshall Sprague, Massacre: The Tragedy at White River (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1957).



Alarmed by the bloody eruption, both the War and Interior Departments feared that violence would spread to the southern Ute bands at Los Pinos agency, as well as infect the Navahos and Apaches of New Mexico.<sup>3</sup> The Secretary of the Interior therefore rushed Special Agent Charles Adams to the Uncompahgre reservation at Los Pinos in west-central Colorado to confer with Ouray, a friendly and influential Ute chief who might be able to arrest the spread of warfare.<sup>4</sup> In case Adams failed in his mission, General Sherman ordered Sheridan to hold Merritt's troops at White River and to collect another force--"preferably under Mackenzie"--at Alamosa, Colorado.<sup>5</sup> If need be, Sherman resolved to send every soldier from the Atlantic coast to quell the outbreak.<sup>6</sup> So, on the evening of October 2, a telegram reached Fort Clark, ordering six troops of the 4th Cavalry to Colorado. Within 15 minutes after receipt of the wire, the regiment completed arrangements for the march north.<sup>7</sup> And, on October 6, the leading elements of the 4th Cavalry entrained for Fort Hays, Kansas, followed three

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<sup>3</sup>RSW, 1879 (Serial 1903), p. 12.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 12, 44.

<sup>5</sup>Sherman to Sheridan, Oct. 17, 1879, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives. Sherman to Sheridan, Oct. 24, 1879, RSW, 1879 (Serial 1903), p. 12.

<sup>6</sup>Sherman to Sheridan, Oct. 17 and Dec. 29, 1879, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>7</sup>Capt. John A. Wilcox to Adj. Gen., Dept. of Texas, Oct. 4, 1879, Dept. of Texas (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



days later by headquarters and the remainder of the companies.<sup>8</sup> At least one Texas politician resisted the transfer of Mackenzie's regiment. General Sherman tried to sooth him by writing: "Mackenzie cannot be everywhere, but we promise other and excellent officers to replace him...."<sup>9</sup>

The 4th Cavalry paused at Fort Hays long enough to leave the regimental band and Troop A before pushing on to Fort Garland, Colorado.<sup>10</sup> Their colonel joined them at Fort Garland after his appearance before the court in Kansas ended on October 27.<sup>11</sup> For the next few weeks reinforcements trickled into the fort until Mackenzie commanded about 1,500 officers and men.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, Merritt's strength at White River increased to 1,500 while Col. Edward Hatch and about 450 troops from New Mexico concentrated at Fort Lewis.<sup>13</sup> All the while, countless rumors warned that war would not only spread among the four Ute bands which numbered 4,164 (about 800 of them skillful warriors), but also to New Mexico and Wyoming.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Parker, Old Army, p. 117. RSW, 1880 (Serial 1952), p. 127.

<sup>9</sup>Sherman to S. B. Moxey, Oct. 17, 1879, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>10</sup>Parker, Old Army, p. 117.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>12</sup>RSW, 1879 (Serial 1903), p. 12.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.



By late October, however, General Adams coaxed the hostiles into surrendering the captive white women and children.<sup>15</sup> He then began peace negotiations, while Mackenzie stood ready to move to the Los Pinos agency at the first sign of trouble.<sup>16</sup> General Sherman wanted the colonel to allow the Indian Bureau all the time it needed to secure the killers of Agent Meeker and his employees. Besides, snow-clogged mountain passes made military operations impossible until March, 1880.<sup>17</sup> But Sherman did not need to caution Mackenzie about the use of force, because when General Adams asked him to move troops to Lake City--where the peace commission would sit in early November--Mackenzie objected. His experience with Indians led him to conclude that such a movement would be "peculiarly objectionable" until the commission finished its business.<sup>18</sup> Adams did not press the point.

While peace negotiations dragged on through the winter of 1879-80, Mackenzie used the time to prepare for the day when he would march over the Rockies to the Uncompahgre reservation at Los Pinos. Like General Sherman, he saw that

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 12, 44. Sherman to Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Dec. 29, 1879, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, Nov. 2, 1879, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.



subsistence and maintenance of troops in the rugged mountains would be his main problem. He would have to depend chiefly upon cattle driven along with the column. Sherman wanted no "half-way measures this time," so Mackenzie requested that two of the old, well-organized pack trains be sent to Fort Garland.<sup>19</sup>

For all that, manpower seemed the greatest problem. Mackenzie began to complain about a shortage of recruits for the companies of the 4th Cavalry and 19th Infantry. His complaints grew stronger until February, 1880 when superiors tired of his grumbling.<sup>20</sup> The Adjutant General lashed back: "This is not the first time in which that officer has presumed to arraign the action of this office upon his assumption of facts that do not exist."<sup>21</sup> General Sherman, who personally directed the assignment of all available recruits, considered himself a better judge of the wants and needs of each regiment than Mackenzie could possibly be.<sup>22</sup> Whatever justification Mackenzie felt that he had for his complaints, the 4th Cavalry gained 313 recruits by June 30,

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<sup>19</sup>Pope's report in RSW, 1880 (Serial 1952), p. 83. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, Nov. 2, 1879, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives. Mackenzie to Sheridan, Dec. 25, 1879, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>20</sup>Adj. Gen. to Pope, Feb. 19, 1880, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid. Adj. Gen. to Pope, Mar. 17, 1880, Ibid.



1880--by far the highest number of replacements received by any mounted regiment.<sup>23</sup> Yet, the Adjutant General had not heard the last complaint from Mackenzie, whose feelings of persecution gained in depth and frequency.

Meanwhile, preparations continued. When spring came to Colorado, Mackenzie dispatched Christopher Gilson, an employee of the Quartermaster Department, to scout along the Uncompahgre and Gunnison Rivers.<sup>24</sup> Gilson, an "entirely reliable man," left Fort Garland in April and visited all Indian villages as far as the mouth of the Uncompahgre. He found the Los Pinos Utes camped within four or five miles of their agency, fully reconciled to leaving their homeland for a new reservation.<sup>25</sup> Most of the White River Utes, on the other hand, were scattered along the north bank of the Gunnison within 40 miles of their agency. They threatened to kill Gilson if he did not give up his reconnaissance. Before leaving, the scout noted that, besides 1,500 to 2,000 ponies, the White Rivers owned many Winchester, Sharps, and Springfield carbines, and plenty of ammunition.<sup>26</sup> Their surly

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<sup>23</sup>RSW, 1880 (Serial 1952), p. 34.

<sup>24</sup>Report of Christopher Gilson, May 11, 1880, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Gilson's report to Mackenzie, Apr. 13, 1880, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Apr. 17, 1880, Ibid. Gilson to Mackenzie, May 11, 1880, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>26</sup>Gilson to Mackenzie, Apr. 13, 1880, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



attitude terrified employees at Los Pinos agency who feared that they might share the fate of Agent Meeker. Isolated by roads so bad that not even the mail could plow through, the frightened whites subsisted on nothing but bread and coffee.<sup>27</sup>

Aware of their plight, Mackenzie and four companies of the 4th Cavalry under Maj. Eugene Beaumont began the 200-mile trek to Los Pinos on May 16, 1880.<sup>28</sup> The following day, the supply wagons and two Hotchkiss guns, escorted by 12 companies of the 16th, 19th, and 23rd Infantry also marched out of Fort Garland.<sup>29</sup> After crossing the San Luis Valley, the expedition entered the mountains at the mouth of Saguache Creek and plodded over to Cochetopa Pass. From there the "Fort Garland Column" marched westward, generally parallel to but south of the Gunnison River.<sup>30</sup> The last days of May found the command descending Cedar Creek to the "furious torrent" of the Uncompahgre River. They followed the river valley until it narrowed into a canyon about 15 miles north of Los Pinos, near present-day Montrose. There the column left the gorge and marched across the plateau until it ended abruptly near the town of Ouray.<sup>31</sup> The road plunged nearly 1,000 feet

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Pope to Adj. Gen., no date, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Cf., Parker, Old Army, p. 127.

<sup>29</sup>Pope to Adj. Gen., no date, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, May 19, 1880, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>30</sup>Parker, Old Army, p. 127.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 128.



at a "seemingly perpendicular" angle, making it necessary to chop down large trees and lash them behind the wagons in order to brake their descent.<sup>32</sup>

On May 31 the cavalry battalion rode into Los Pinos agency.<sup>33</sup> There, due to the influence of Chief Ouray, Mackenzie found the Utes civil. He also noted that they were very independent and "richer" than any Indians he had ever seen.<sup>34</sup> While their good behavior soon raised his optimism, the colonel's experience led him to be cautious. For he "...never felt the spirit of prophecy moving very strongly on any Indian subject."<sup>35</sup> Mackenzie seemed even less inclined to predict success for the peace commission. He harbored a mild contempt for "old Meacham" and old Many-penny" whom he regarded as "chronic commissioners."<sup>36</sup> Although the colonel thought that these men "complicated" affairs with the Utes, he cooperated fully with them, standing ready to send troops anytime the commissioners asked for

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 129.

<sup>33</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, May 31, 1880, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>34</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, June 29, 1880, Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.



them.<sup>37</sup> But if Mackenzie felt contempt for the peace commission, he reserved his greatest scorn for the government. That body, he thought, seemed unable to "make up its mind" to punish the White River Utes for killing their agent, his male employees, outraging their women, and attacking "without provocation" a body of troops.<sup>38</sup> On the contrary, noted Mackenzie, the government appointed the leader of the attack chief of police. Such mild treatment seemed beyond the colonel's comprehension as he remarked: "Under a serious government nothing like it has perhaps ever happened."<sup>39</sup>

At least he could take consolation in the fact that no violence disrupted the peaceful summer at Los Pinos. The agency remained so tranquil that by the end of June Mackenzie reflected that he had "...never passed more quiet uneventful weeks since the command left Fort Garland unless it be while at that place."<sup>40</sup> He seized the opportunity to graze his animals and hoard grain at Fort Garland in order to have a full month's supply in case of need.<sup>41</sup> His men also enjoyed excellent health, and the colonel saw that they drilled many hours a day. Even in semi-permanent camps Mackenzie demanded

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid. Lt. Lawton to G. W. Manypenny, July 16, 1880, Ibid. Mackenzie to Manypenny, July 17, 1880, Ibid. Mackenzie to Agent W. H. Berry, July 18, 1880, Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, June 29, 1880, Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.



that his officers and men pursue the usual routine of garrison life. Shaves, haircuts, and general neatness of dress were the rule.<sup>42</sup> No doubt such spit and polish irked many enlisted men, and may account for the "unpleasantly large" number who deserted. More likely, they could not resist the lure of high wages in the mining camps of the surrounding country.<sup>43</sup> At any rate, the 4th Cavalry suffered one of the highest rates of desertion in the army, and the number of courts martial testified to Mackenzie's efforts to stem the flow.<sup>44</sup>

He also found cause for complaint in July when orders from higher headquarters sent a company of infantry back to Fort Garland. Mackenzie complained that the movement "disarranged" his command. For one reason, he strongly favored the cantonment of five or six companies of infantry at Uncompahgre during the coming winter.<sup>45</sup> The government also recognized the need for a cantonment near the agency, as well as one to be situated adjacent the new reservation which the commissioners would choose.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid. Parker, Old Army, p. 130.

<sup>43</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, June 29, 1880, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>44</sup>RSW, 1880 (Serial 1952), p. 33.

<sup>45</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, July 10, 1880, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>46</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, July 21, 1880, Ibid. The Cantonment on the Uncompahgre was later named Ft. Crawford. See Maj. John H. Nankivell, "Fort Crawford, Colorado, 1880-1890," Colorado Magazine, XI, 54-64.



On July 17, while preparing for one of several scouting expeditions that summer, Mackenzie received a message from Commissioner Manypenny. The commissioner expected perhaps a hundred families of White River Utes to arrive the following week for a general council with the Uncompahgres and the peace commission. Manypenny feared that if the Indians saw troops moving in their direction they would break off negotiations. So, he asked Mackenzie to suspend operations for a few days.<sup>47</sup> The colonel agreed, although believing that a show of force would have a "beneficial effect" on the Utes. Maybe he forgot that only the previous fall he had found such a display "peculiarly objectionable."<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, he withdrew into the mountains above the agency and grazed his animals. Mackenzie took it upon himself to suspend compliance with orders from higher authority because, if the Indian commissioners failed in their mission, they might blame their lack of success on an unwise movement of troops.<sup>49</sup> As always, Mackenzie was acutely aware of the friction between the Interior and War Departments, and worked to save the army from discredit.

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<sup>47</sup>Manypenny to Mackenzie, July 17, 1880, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>48</sup>Mackenzie to Manypenny, July 17, 1880, Ibid. Cf., Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, Nov. 2, 1879, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>49</sup>Mackenzie to Manypenny, July 18, 1880, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, July 21, 1880, Ibid.



On July 26, however, the colonel resumed his reconnaissance. The command moved up the Gunnison to Grand River, thence northeastward over the Grand River Mesa to Leon Park. From there the column marched back to Los Pinos via Surface Creek, arriving at the agency on August 8.<sup>50</sup> On August 26 General Sheridan visited the Cantonment on the Uncompahgre. The day after his arrival, at a review and inspection of the command, Sheridan expressed great pleasure at its appearance. He stayed only a few days, then moved on to Gunnison City. When Sheridan left the cantonment, Mackenzie and two companies of cavalry rode with him--hunting and fishing on the way.<sup>51</sup>

Mackenzie probably did not return to Uncompahgre, because September 14 found him traveling east to appear as a witness before the Warren Court of Inquiry.<sup>52</sup> Although officially assigned to that duty until October 28, the colonel spent some time at the home of his brother Morris in New York City.<sup>53</sup> And, from October 4--when he received a delay of 30 days--Mackenzie added two more extensions to his leave.<sup>54</sup> From December 20, 1880 to January 15, 1881, he conferred with

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<sup>50</sup>Parker, Old Army, p. 131.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., Oct. 4, 1880, Ibid. He gives his return address as 126 East 24th St., New York City, which various other documents show is the home of his brother.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.



Generals Pope and Sheridan.<sup>55</sup>

No doubt part of their conversation centered around Mackenzie's failure to win promotion to Chief Signal Officer, a post left vacant by the death of Brig.Gen. Albert G. Myer on August 24, 1880.<sup>56</sup> Shortly after Mackenzie arrived in the East, strong support developed for his elevation to brigadier general. Not the least of his supporters was General Crook who regarded the colonel as a man of "excellent education and studious research."<sup>57</sup> In a laudatory letter to President Hayes, Crook praised Mackenzie for his "unsurpassed" gallantry and asked consideration for his promotion. But, while Crook correctly noted that Mackenzie performed all his deeds without "parade," he erred when he stated that the colonel had no one to "chant his praises."<sup>58</sup>

Early in December, no less than 13 congressmen (5 of them from New Jersey) requested that President Hayes promote Mackenzie to brigadier general.<sup>59</sup> Political support also came from the office of the district attorney in Newark, New Jersey. That source assured Hayes that the colonel's many

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<sup>55</sup>Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., Nov. 21 and 28, 1880, Ibid. Statement of service, Ibid.

<sup>56</sup>RSW, 1881 (Serial 2015), p. 1.

<sup>57</sup>Crook to Pres. Hayes, Dec. 8, 1880, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Letter from U. S. Senate to Pres. Hayes, Dec. 9-10, 1880, Ibid.



friends would be "gratified" by his advancement.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, a former brigade commander in the Civil War reminded the president that Mackenzie had always been a strong Republican and that the "united Texas influence" anxiously watched for his promotion.<sup>61</sup> But, on December 15, 1880, President Hayes promoted Col. William B. Hazen to Chief Signal Officer.<sup>62</sup> Neither Mackenzie's outstanding service, nor the endorsement of Pope, Crook, and Sherman, nor even the personal friendship of Sheridan could outweigh the excellent record and 11 years' seniority of Colonel Hazen.<sup>63</sup> While there is no evidence that Mackenzie fell prey to discrimination, the growing frequency and vigor of his sometimes questionable complaints did little to strengthen his cause. Not even political support could swing the decision to his favor. Although it is doubtful that Mackenzie solicited or even approved of such aid, neither is it likely that he tried to suppress it. No doubt his appointment to West Point resulted from political connections<sup>64</sup> and, while such support probably did not effect his advancement during the Civil War, it is certain that from 1880 to 1882 several politicians spoke on

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<sup>60</sup>A. I. Keasbey to Pres. Hayes, Dec. 11, 1880, Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Thomas W. Hyde to Pres. Hayes, Dec. 13, 1880, Ibid.

<sup>62</sup>RSW, 1881 (Serial 2015), p. 1. Heitman, Historical Register, I, 517.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 2. Cf., Albuquerque Review, Oct. 28, 1882, p. 3.



his behalf.

It might be noted also that at the time that Colonel Hazen won his promotion to Chief Signal Officer, Col. Nelson A. Miles donned the star of a brigadier general.<sup>65</sup> His elevation might have proved a source of bitterness to Mackenzie who, it is said, harbored a feeling of rivalry with the commander of the 5th Infantry. This interpretation is usually illustrated by a probably apocryphal story of a young officer who sidled up to Mackenzie one night as he stood gazing at the heavens. Seeing his commander's meditation, the young subaltern remarked: "There's Miles between you and that star Colonel." The story ends with Mackenzie turning away--nervously snapping the stumps of his fingers.<sup>66</sup>

Maybe as a sop for his failure to win promotion, Mackenzie received command of the Department of Arkansas by virtue of his brevet rank of brigadier general.<sup>67</sup> The Department of Arkansas, created on January 31, 1881, formed part of the Division of the Gulf under Maj. Gen. John Schofield.<sup>68</sup> Although embracing Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, and the Indian Territory, the Division fulfilled little or no military purpose.<sup>69</sup> As far as Mackenzie was concerned, the Department of

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<sup>65</sup>Heitman, Historical Register, I, 708-709.

<sup>66</sup>Parker, Old Army, p. 48.

<sup>67</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>68</sup>RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), p. 32.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.



Arkansas provided little outlet for his energy other than presenting problems in the purchase of forage or the management of a national cemetery.<sup>70</sup> So it might be that the Army-Navy Register of April 23, 1881 hit on the truth while discussing the possible selection of Mackenzie as commandant of the new cavalry-infantry school at Fort Leavenworth. The magazine observed that "General Mackenzie is anxious to be relieved of the Department of Arkansas, which is so soon to be abolished."<sup>71</sup> Despite Mackenzie's protest that no one had the right to express his wish to be relieved, the Register proved prophetic on one point.<sup>72</sup> On May 9, 1881, President Garfield abolished the Division of the Gulf, and with it the Department of Arkansas. The next day Mackenzie left Little Rock and hurried north to rejoin his command.<sup>73</sup>

While the colonel concluded his affairs in Arkansas on May 9, five troops of the 4th Cavalry marched out of Fort Hays to the strains of "The Girl I Left Behind Me" and entrained for Fort Garland.<sup>74</sup> Under Maj. Eugene Beaumont, the command

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<sup>70</sup>Files of the Dept. of Ark. and the Div. of the Gulf yield only routine administrative materials.

<sup>71</sup>Enclosed in Mackenzie's letter to the magazine, Apr. 25, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Col. E. S. Otis, 20th Inf. was made head of the school. See Heitman, Historical Register, I, 762.

<sup>72</sup>RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), p. 32. Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid. RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), p. 32.

<sup>74</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Parker, Old Army, p. 133.



found Garland rife with rumors of a proposed Indian uprising. Because the Utes resented the treaty that would uproot them from their ancestral soil, some observers predicted an outbreak. So, with the Utes in such a dangerous mood, Beaumont did not stop to refit at Fort Garland. He pushed on to bolster the six companies of the 23rd Infantry that had cantoned all winter at Uncompahgre.<sup>75</sup>

Beaumont and his troops arrived at Los Pinos on June 3 and, as predicted, found the well-armed Utes sulky and semi-hostile. Some even fortified themselves on a mountain as negotiations for their removal continued.<sup>76</sup> Agent Berry asked Major Beaumont to provide transportation and escort for a party of Utes and peace commissioners who planned to inspect the sites for the proposed reservation. The major refused, saying that he had neither orders nor authority for such action.<sup>77</sup> On June 6, however, Mackenzie arrived and promptly furnished the required wagon and escort.<sup>78</sup> Four days later, the commissioners climbed into an ambulance and left Los Pinos, accompanied by a delegation of Utes and a detachment of cavalry.<sup>79</sup>

Their departure left Mackenzie to reflect on the pros-

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>RSI, 1881 (Serial 2018), p. 384.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, June 10, 1881, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



pects of an uprising. He knew that the sites chosen for the new reservation would determine largely the behavior of the Utes.<sup>80</sup> He also knew that men who understood the Indians best found them in a "peculiarly dangerous" frame of mind, and "ripe" for an outbreak.<sup>81</sup> Although they did not wish to live together, Ute bands shared not only a tighter bond than ever before, but also a closer relationship with the Navahos than perhaps at any previous time.<sup>82</sup> Mackenzie therefore realized that the slightest spark might weld an alliance of hostile Indians.

Although he did not anticipate an outbreak--at least not during the summer--he looked to his defenses.<sup>83</sup> Surveying the six companies of cavalry and nine of infantry, he found them weakened by a shortage of pack mules, the transfer of officers and, above all, an insufficient number of recruits.<sup>84</sup> The colonel lamented such "obvious pressing necessities" and offered to give up his "important command" if they were not remedied.<sup>85</sup> The perennial shortage of troops, perhaps aggravated by failure to win promotion, sharpened Mackenzie's feelings of persecution. While he felt "secure" in the support of

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid.



Pope and Sheridan, he charged that officials in the government lacked confidence in him.<sup>86</sup> He unburdened himself in a letter to the Department of the Missouri, a letter that revealed more of his state of mind than of affairs at Uncompahgre. The colonel scribbled:

For a considerable period of years it is quite well known that I have desired duty in an eastern city to which I believed I had some claim. The mental and physical relaxation would be well and also in years I have found it so very difficult to procure what is essential without the risk of being regarded as captious and troublesome by the authorities in Washington. This causes immense injury to the standing of an officer.<sup>87</sup>

Complaints availed nothing. The shortage of troops worsened as summer wore on. On August 14, after an exchange of battalions left the 14th Infantry with 4 companies totaling but 102 enlisted men, Mackenzie wrote off his dismounted units as of little value.<sup>88</sup> Also, during August, 36 troopers of the 4th Cavalry took their discharge, with more slated to go in the fall.<sup>89</sup>

While Mackenzie grumbled, talk of an uprising continued. Although Los Pinos remained peaceful, and Uncompahgre scouts helped capture two Pah Utes suspected of murder in the vicinity,

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, Aug. 14, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.



tension remained high.<sup>90</sup> It increased after July 1 when the peace commission returned and laid their removal plans before a delegation of Indians.<sup>91</sup> The commissioners hoped to complete the relocation as soon as possible, but found that the Uncompahgres did not want to settle on the southeastern portion of the Uintah reservation near the junction of the Green and White Rivers in Utah. Nor did the White River Utes relish thoughts of sharing the Uintah reservation. The southern Utes, on the other hand, found little cause for discontent. They would continue to occupy nearly all their lands along the valleys and streams that fed the San Juan River from the north.<sup>92</sup>

As the day for removal drew closer, cavalry searched for a site for a proposed fort in the area of White and Grand Rivers. The new Uncompahgre agency would necessitate a military post, a post at which Mackenzie wanted at least 150 men stationed.<sup>93</sup> To his mind a fort must stand near the homes and families of Indians as a constant deterrent to outbreak.

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<sup>90</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, June 20, 1881, Ibid. Report of Agent W. H. Berry, Sept. 10, 1881, in RSI, 1881 (Serial 2018), p. 78. Mackenzie to Pope, July 4, 1881, Letter Book (Gilcrease Museum).

<sup>91</sup>Parker, Old Army, p. 134.

<sup>92</sup>J. J. Russell, Ute Commissioner, to Sec. of Interior, July 18, 1881, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Pope's report of Sept. 22, 1881 in RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), p. 115.

<sup>93</sup>J. J. Russell to Sec. of Interior, July 18, 1881, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



He had found that pursuit of hostiles seldom proved "fruitful."<sup>94</sup> Also, the colonel considered the possibility that the Utes might refuse to migrate. In that event, he would require all peaceful Indians to turn over their arms and ponies and camp near the agency. Those who did not would be regarded as hostile wherever found.<sup>95</sup>

On July 12 Mackenzie wrote for instructions governing the use of force in case the Uncompahgres refused to move.<sup>96</sup> In answer, the War Department sent orders that did not directly command anything. In fact, Mackenzie would get no instructions until after the Utes defied authority--and then from the Secretary of the Interior.<sup>97</sup> The colonel therefore felt "thrown" on his own responsibility.<sup>98</sup> Although he knew that if trouble erupted he would not have time to refer it to Washington, Mackenzie ordered 80 miles of telegraph wire strung to link him with the capital. His men completed the task three days before the Utes were to start for their new reservation.<sup>99</sup> Meanwhile, the instructions for handling recalcitrant Utes

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<sup>94</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, Aug. 2, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, June 10, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, Aug. 14, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>97</sup>J. J. Russell to T. A. McMorris, July 22, 1881, Ibid. Pope to Mackenzie, Aug. 19, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>98</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, Aug. 14, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid. Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 14.



also alarmed General Pope. He knew that Mackenzie viewed an undecided Indian policy as "criminal," and seemed to fear that the aggressive colonel might take the bit in his teeth.<sup>100</sup> Pope therefore admonished Mackenzie not to use force against the Utes until so ordered in writing by either the Commissioner of Indian Affairs or the local agent. Because, said Pope, under no condition must it be said or intimated that an act of the military brought on hostilities.<sup>101</sup>

The crisis began on Monday, August 22, 1881, when Agent Berry informed the principal Utes that they must prepare to move to their new home on Thursday.<sup>102</sup> While the Indians already understood the plans for relocation, this was the first time a date had been set. To the agent's surprise, they flatly refused to go, although they agreed to confer again the following day.<sup>103</sup> On Tuesday, however, Agent Berry and Judge Thomas A. McMorris found the Utes still intractable. Some of them even retired to the summit of a lofty mountain where they apparently proposed to defend themselves. Judge McMorris telegraphed the Secretary of the Interior and asked for authority

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<sup>100</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, Aug. 14, 1881, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Pope to Mackenzie, Aug. 19, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, Sept. 2, 1881, Ibid. RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), p. 116.

<sup>103</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, Sept. 2, 1881, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



to use force.<sup>104</sup> On August 24, therefore, Mackenzie received orders to proceed with the removal of the Utes.<sup>105</sup> He immediately equipped his 10 companies of cavalry (about 300-400 men) with 200 rounds of ammunition and cooked rations for 3 days. Then he sent word to the chiefs to meet him at the cantonment.<sup>106</sup>

On Thursday afternoon, August 25, about 20 Utes answered Mackenzie's summons. Stringing their bows, the surly Indians crowded around the colonel and his unarmed officers as he read the telegram from the Secretary of the Interior.<sup>107</sup> In an "intensely dramatic" scene, Mackenzie coolly informed the Utes that he expected them to draw rations the next day and start their journey on August 27.<sup>108</sup> The Indians launched into a harangue, while Mackenzie stood listening, hat in hand. He soon found their talk "irrelevant" and, putting on his hat, said:

It is not necessary for me to stay here any

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid. Parker, Old Army, pp. 51-52.

<sup>105</sup>Sec. of Interior to McMorris, Aug. 24, 1881, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. McMorris to Mackenzie, Aug. 24, 1881, Ibid. Cf., Pope to Mackenzie, Aug. 24, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Parker, Old Army, p. 52. Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 14. Parker & Dorst were witnesses.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., p. 15. Parker, Old Army, p. 52. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, Sept. 2, 1881, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid. Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 15. Parker, Old Army, p. 52.



longer. You can settle this matter by discussion among yourselves. All I want to know is whether you will go or not. If you will not go of your own accord, I will make you go. When you have sufficiently discussed this matter and have arrived at a conclusion, send for me. Remember, you are to go, at once.<sup>109</sup>

It was as if there was no one present but Mackenzie, "and the silence was that of death."<sup>110</sup> As he strode from the room, the Utes stood dumb-struck by such summary treatment. Within 10 minutes--their defiance gone--the Indians sent for the colonel and asked if he would allow them to consult the old men of the tribe before deciding.<sup>111</sup> He agreed, but added: "If you have not moved by 9:00 tomorrow morning, I will be at your camp and make you move."<sup>112</sup> So, on Friday morning, August 26, the "delicate business" ended. The Utes promised to obey all orders before Mackenzie returned them to the charge of their agent and withdrew to await developments.<sup>113</sup>

With characteristic vigor and decision, he had averted a potentially serious outbreak. As usual, he commended the "temper" of his officers and men, also finding words of praise

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<sup>109</sup>Ibid. Cf., Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 15. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, Sept. 2, 1881, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>110</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 15.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid. Cf., Parker, Old Army, pp. 52-53.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, Sept. 2, 1881, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>113</sup>Ibid. Agent Berry to Mackenzie, Aug. 26, 1881, Ibid. Parker, Old Army, p. 53.



for the personnel of the Interior Department.<sup>114</sup> It is significant that Mackenzie derived a great sense of pride from the incident. For not the defeat of Mow-way or the Kickapoos, or the fight in Palo Duro Canyon, or even the victory over Dull Knife apparently gave the satisfaction he gained from the bloodless settlement of the Ute crisis. It spoke well of a soldier who, in the last notable act of his career, "considered what he did on this occasion the greatest deed of his life."<sup>115</sup>

Pride must have succumbed to pity shortly after sunrise on August 27 when 1,458 Utes left the land of their fathers. Driving before them 10,000 sheep and goats, and 8,000 ponies, the Indians began the trek to their appointed home.<sup>116</sup> As they trooped past Mackenzie and his soldiers, the Utes broke into a run, strewing their belongings along the road as they fled.<sup>117</sup> The colonel was too much a humanitarian to derive satisfaction from such a pitiful spectacle.

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<sup>114</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, Sept. 2, 1881, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>115</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 15.

<sup>116</sup>Walker D. Wyman, "A Preface to the Settlement of Grand Junction: The Uncompahgre Utes 'Goes West'," Colorado Magazine, X, 22-27.

<sup>117</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, Sept. 2, 1881, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



## CHAPTER XIII

### PROMOTION AND DECLINE

As the Utes trudged towards their new home, on September 2, 1881, a courier galloped into the camp of the 4th Cavalry with news of an Apache outbreak in Arizona.<sup>1</sup> Mackenzie and the regiment must go. So, marching to Gunnison, the command boarded trains for Santa Fe. Their arrival in New Mexico was delayed by heavy rains and extensive washouts until September 11.<sup>2</sup> Mackenzie reported to General Pope in Santa Fe and found his superior confused by conflicting reports sent by Bvt. Maj. Gen. O. B. Willcox, commanding the Department of Arizona.

General Willcox had an outbreak on his hands but did not know where to find the enemy. He knew little more than that the uprising capped a summer of discontent at the San Carlos agency. There Chiricahua Apaches had grown excited by the incantations of a White Mountain medicine man who prophesied that several warrior chiefs would return from the grave

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<sup>1</sup>Parker, Old Army, p. 135. Pope to Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Sept. 5, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Pope's report in RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), p. 121.



and deliver the Indians from their white overlords.<sup>3</sup> Apache hysteria burst into violence when Col. Eugene A. Carr--commanding nearby Fort Apache--arrested the medicine man at Cibecue Creek. Around 5:00 on the evening of August 30, about 100 heavily armed warriors attacked the soldiers. Although some of Carr's Apache scouts joined the assailants, his troopers beat off the tribesmen.<sup>4</sup> The next morning, with Carr still in the field, the Indians struck Fort Apache. They failed to overcome its garrison, however, and withdrew. Their disappearance left Colonel Carr to lick his wounds and, without scouts, ignorant of the location of the fugitives.<sup>5</sup>

While Carr loitered at Fort Apache, a barrage of rumors bombarded Willcox's headquarters in Prescott. The department commander heard that Carr's command had been annihilated, and that the hostiles cut off Fort Apache from reinforcements by holding the mountain pass between the post and the railroad to the south.<sup>6</sup> So, with communications interrupted by the

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<sup>3</sup>Report of Gen. O. B. Willcox, Dec. 12, 1881, Dept. of Arizona (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Pope to Sheridan, Sept. 13, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Ralph H. Ogle, "Federal Control of the Western Apaches, 1848-1886," New Mexico Historical Review, XV (1940), 294-300.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. Willcox's report of Dec. 12, 1881, Dept. of Arizona (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. For Cibecue fight see Maj. Gen. Irvin McDowell in RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), pp. 143-147.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. Ogle in New Mexico Historical Review, pp. 294-300. Willcox's report of Dec. 12, 1881, Dept. of Arizona (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid. Reports and correspondence in RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), pp. 143-147.



heaviest rain storms of recent years, and the only road to Fort Apache impassable even for pack mules, Willcox was both alarmed and confused.<sup>7</sup> He not only dreaded an uprising of the nearly 5,000 Apaches on the San Carlos reservation, but feared that they might ally with the Navahos who had sent a deputation to the Chiricahuas in early August.<sup>8</sup> Willcox did not have the men to handle a major crisis.<sup>9</sup> With but 1,184 soldiers scattered over the territory, he was to police the San Carlos reservation which embraced 4,550 square miles, guard numerous white settlements, and patrol the Mexican border which, from Yuma to New Mexico, stretched 382 miles.<sup>10</sup>

Willcox called for help. He wired his superior in the Division of the Pacific, Maj. Gen. Irvin McDowell, and requested all available cavalry and infantry in the Department of California.<sup>11</sup> He also asked General Pope in the Department of the Missouri to interpose troops between the Navahos and Apaches, thereby keeping the road open to Fort Apache and thwarting a coalition of tribes.<sup>12</sup> Pope agreed. He too feared

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid. McDowell's report in Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>8</sup>Willcox's report of Dec. 12, 1881, Dept. of Arizona (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>9</sup>Willcox's report of Aug. 31, 1882, in RSW, 1882 (Serial 2091), p. 147.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid. McDowell in RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), p. 139.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid. Pope's report in Ibid., pp. 120-121. Willcox's report of Dec. 12, 1881, Dept. of Arizona (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



an outbreak by the Navahos, whose restlessness made him question their agent's ability to control them. Pope therefore dispatched Col. L. P. Bradley with three companies of infantry and two of cavalry from Fort Wingate, New Mexico, towards Fort Apache. At the same time, Pope called Mackenzie and the 4th Cavalry from Colorado.<sup>13</sup>

Meanwhile, General Sheridan grew "disgusted" with Willcox, whose conflicting reports kept affairs in Arizona a "mystery."<sup>14</sup> Reliable information was still unavailable on September 15 when Mackenzie finished his conference with Pope and left Santa Fe for Fort Wingate with three companies of the 4th Cavalry.<sup>15</sup> Although he had orders to keep the road open between Forts Wingate and Apache, and to use his force against either Navaho or Apache as the situation dictated, Mackenzie did not know if he would march to Arizona or not.<sup>16</sup>

After his departure from Santa Fe, a company of scouts opened communications between Fort Apache and General Willcox at Camp Thomas. Then the gross exaggerations of the Carr affair became apparent and led Willcox to wire that he no longer

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<sup>13</sup>Pope's report in RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), p. 122. Pope to Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Sept. 5, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>14</sup>Sheridan to Sherman, Sept. 16, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Adj. Gen. to Rear Admiral C. R. P. Rodgers, Sept. 16, 1881, Ibid. The admiral's son was a lieutenant in the 4th Cavalry and later aide-de-camp to Mackenzie.

<sup>16</sup>Pope to Sheridan, Sept. 13, 1881, Ibid.



needed Mackenzie's support.<sup>17</sup> By this time, however, General Sherman entered the picture. While preferring that Willcox punish the hostiles with his own troops, the General-in-Chief resolved to "send every available man in the whole army if necessary" to crush the "annual Apache stampede."<sup>18</sup>

So, on September 17, as the remaining three companies of the 4th Cavalry left Santa Fe to join Mackenzie, General Sherman ordered Col. Edward Hatch and an auxiliary force to stand by at Fort Craig, New Mexico. At the same time, the General-in-Chief directed Mackenzie to assume command of Bradley's force and advance to Fort Apache.<sup>19</sup> He was to furnish the post with ample provisions and ammunition, and hold his command ready to assist the department commander.

But Willcox would have his chance to suppress the outbreak.<sup>20</sup> Sherman realized that while Mackenzie's presence in Arizona would not necessarily interfere with administrative control of the department, it would reflect on the ability of General Willcox--and especially on that of Colonel Carr who idled at Fort Apache. The General-in-Chief wanted both

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<sup>17</sup>Pope's report in RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), p. 121. Sherman to McDowell, Sept. 19, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives. Willcox's report of Dec. 12, 1881, Dept. of Arizona (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>18</sup>Sherman to McDowell, Sept. 16 and 20, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>19</sup>Sherman to McDowell, Sept. 17, 1881, in RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), p. 144.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.



officers to strike the Indians a blow that would "at least inspire respect."<sup>21</sup> Because, he warned, if Mackenzie crossed the Mogollón Range, Sherman would be "forced to give him supreme command of all troops operating against the Apaches because of his rank and great vigor."<sup>22</sup>

With Mackenzie near the terminus of the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad at Billings, Arizona, on September 20, and with still no favorable reports from Willcox, Sherman made his decision.<sup>23</sup> He gave Mackenzie command of all troops in the field in Arizona despite Willcox's assignment as commander of the department by the President of the United States.<sup>24</sup> Sherman did so because, with soldiers from two divisions and three departments involved in the territory, his was the only office with authority to direct operations. While the General-in-Chief may not have realized that his action would produce an anomolous and awkward chain of authority in Arizona, he knew full-well that when Mackenzie arrived he would "surely carry things with a high hand."<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, Sherman promised that if the colonel would put

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<sup>21</sup>Sherman to McDowell, Sept. 19, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup>Parker, Old Army, p. 135. Mackenzie to Pope, Sept. 21, 1881, Letter Book (Gilcrease Museum).

<sup>24</sup>Sherman to McDowell, Sept. 20, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives. Sherman to Sheridan, Sept. 20, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Sherman to McDowell, Sept. 19, 1881, Ibid.



an end to Apache wars he could "be sure of his rewards."<sup>26</sup>

On September 21, while most hostiles sought refuge within the "peace lines" and talked of surrender, the relief column from New Mexico struggled over bad roads to Fort Apache.<sup>27</sup> The troops did not arrive at the post until September 26 when Mackenzie assumed command of the District of Apache.<sup>28</sup> His force consisted of 6 companies of the 4th Cavalry and 1 of the 15th Infantry--in all, 24 officers, 274 enlisted men, and 540 animals.<sup>29</sup> Without delay, the colonel sent scouts to scour Cibecue Creek for hostiles.<sup>30</sup>

His assignment to command field forces in Arizona displeased both McDowell and Willcox who apparently conveyed their feelings to Robert Todd Lincoln, Secretary of War. At first Lincoln wanted all relief troops withdrawn from Arizona, but later bowed to Sherman's insistence that Mackenzie remain.<sup>31</sup> Sherman did not want the colonel limited to a post or district command, but ready to act according

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<sup>26</sup>Sherman to Sheridan, Sept. 20, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Willcox's report of Dec. 12, 1881, Dept. of Arizona (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>28</sup>Gen. Orders 1, District of Apache, Sept. 26, 1881, Ibid., "Misc. File, 1881." Parker, Old Army, p. 136.

<sup>29</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Arizona, Sept. 27, 1881, in Letter Book of Fourth Cavalry (RG:98), National Archives.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), pp. 144-145.



to circumstances. Although Willcox would remain in command of the department, he was to supply Mackenzie for "vigorous action."<sup>32</sup> For the moment, Willcox bowed gracefully to what he considered a usurpation of his authority.

Friction developed between the department commander and Mackenzie in late September when 74 Chiricahuas under Juh and Natchez bolted the San Carlos reservation and headed south.<sup>33</sup> When General Willcox found the wire cut between his headquarters at Camp Thomas and Fort Apache, he sent two companies of the 6th Cavalry in pursuit of the hostiles, and ordered Colonel Carr to stand guard at the San Carlos agency.<sup>34</sup> As soon as the wire was repaired on October 1, Willcox learned that General Sherman had relieved him of command in the field. The department commander therefore instructed Carr to report to Mackenzie, and immediately notified the colonel of his action to date. He also gave Mackenzie command of every unit in the field except two companies of the 1st Cavalry en route from San Carlos to Willcox Station with 47 prisoners of the Cibecue fight.<sup>35</sup>

The incident ignited a controversy. Mackenzie, who

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>33</sup>Willcox to McDowell, Oct. 11, 1881, Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid. Willcox's report of Dec. 12, 1881, Dept. of Arizona (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., Oct. 6, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Willcox to Adj. Gen., Oct. 1, 1881, Ibid.







knew that Willcox did not want him in Arizona, doubted that the department commander would support him.<sup>36</sup> So, making no allowance for the emergency faced by the general, or the disruption of communications, Mackenzie gave play to his anger. He fired off a telegram to R. C. Drum, Adjutant General of the Army, in which he grumbled that Willcox dealt with him in a "remarkable manner."<sup>37</sup> While Mackenzie commanded to an "extent," the department commander continued to issue orders. As always, Mackenzie hated divided authority, a system that he considered unworkable, and one that confused him. He summed up his stand when he wrote:

If I am to be held responsible for the management of these affairs, which I have not sought, and do not seek, I have to have complete control of troops and thorough support of the department commander.<sup>38</sup>

Up to this point Willcox had suffered in silence. But, stung by Mackenzie's allegations, he could contain himself no longer. He charged that interference with Mackenzie was "imaginary" and that the colonel's complaint in the middle of a campaign was "extraordinary action."<sup>39</sup> As the flood-gates of his anger burst, Willcox claimed that Mackenzie's charges

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<sup>36</sup>Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., Oct. 1, 1881, Ibid. Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Arizona, Oct. 1, 1881, Dept. of Arizona (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>37</sup>Mackenzie to Drum, Oct. 6, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>38</sup>Mackenzie to Drum, Oct. 1, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Willcox to Drum, Oct. 1, 1881, Ibid.



were "groundless superstitions" owing to the "anomolous position" in which Sherman placed a field officer towards his department commander.<sup>40</sup> Willcox thought it an "extraordinary status" for him to supply troops commanded by a junior officer, and asked General Sherman to relieve Mackenzie.<sup>41</sup> The General-in-Chief refused, awaiting General McDowell's evaluation of affairs in Arizona.<sup>42</sup> Not until October 5 did Sherman attempt to define spheres of responsibility and command in the Department of Arizona. Then he instructed General McDowell to order Willcox to surrender all field operations to Mackenzie and support him with all means at his command.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, Mackenzie must report to and receive orders from the department commander until the cessation of hostilities when Willcox was to relieve him in writing.<sup>44</sup>

By this time Mackenzie seemed to worry more about his "false position" than the punishment of Apaches, most of whom had already taken refuge in Mexico.<sup>45</sup> He bombarded the Adju-

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<sup>40</sup>Willcox to Drum, Oct. 2, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Adj. Gen. to Willcox, Oct. 2, 1881, Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Sherman to McDowell, Oct. 5, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Mackenzie to Drum, Oct. 6, 1881, Ibid. Willcox's report of Dec. 12, 1881, Dept. of Arizona (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



tant General of the Army with dispatches until, on October 7, General Sherman wearied of his behavior. The General-in-Chief wired that he declined to notice further communications sent by the colonel directly to the Adjutant General "in violation of orders and regulations" by not going through the usual military channels.<sup>46</sup> From then on, Mackenzie confined his complaints to General Pope in whom he confided his fears that "unwise people" would accuse him of "intriguing" to oust General Willcox from his position.<sup>47</sup>

On the contrary, Mackenzie was eager to quit Arizona. This became more certain after October 12 when he saw no large bands of Indians against which it was necessary to use troops.<sup>48</sup> In fact, his soldiers had done little to apprehend the fugitives because, after a fight with troops of the 1st and 6th Cavalry near Cedar Springs on October 2, the Chiricahuas and a few White Mountain Apaches fled into Mexico.<sup>49</sup> So, with the San Carlos reservation quiet, and 60 White Mountain Indians confined at various points in the territory, and

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<sup>46</sup>Adj. Gen. to Mackenzie, Oct. 7, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>47</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, Oct. 12, 1881, Letter Book (Gilcrease Museum).

<sup>48</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Arizona, Oct. 12, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>49</sup>Report of Maj. George B. Sanford, 1st Cav., to Willcox, Oct. 5, 1881, in RSW, 1881 (Serial 2010), pp. 146-147. Willcox's report of Dec. 12, 1881, Dept. of Arizona (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Ogle in New Mexico Historical Review, p. 297.



not over another 50 hostiles hiding in scattered parties about the country, Mackenzie saw little need for his presence in Arizona.<sup>50</sup> He foresaw trouble with raiding parties from Mexico, to be sure, but that problem easily could be solved by cooperation with Mexican authorities.<sup>51</sup> Although the colonel had always counseled joint efforts between the two countries, he now believed that the Mexicans had both the force and the desire to suppress Indian marauders.<sup>52</sup> In view of such cooperation, he concluded that the 6th Cavalry and four companies of the 1st provided Willcox with sufficient mounted troops.<sup>53</sup>

Besides, some troops of the 4th Cavalry had been in the field for 18 of the past 24 months, and Mackenzie wanted them returned to their proper stations without delay.<sup>54</sup> With winter coming on, only a permanent post could provide the thorough refitting and recruitment that the companies required. This also held true, to a degree, for the troops of the 9th Cavalry serving in Arizona.<sup>55</sup> Willcox naturally agreed with

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<sup>50</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Arizona, Oct. 12, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, Dec. 3, 1881, Dept. of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>53</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of Arizona, Oct. 12, 1881, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.



this evaluation and October 18 found Mackenzie and his command en route from Camp Thomas to Fort Apache, on the first leg of their march to Forts Wingate and Craig in New Mexico.<sup>56</sup>

Militarily speaking, Mackenzie's expedition to Arizona proved insignificant. The feared Apache war failed to materialize, and the only fight worthy of the name occurred with troops under the command of Willcox. But, if the sojourn added no luster to Mackenzie's laurels, it nevertheless pointed up the frequency and ease with which he felt himself persecuted. As in Colorado, the Arizona episode focused on his sensitivity, revealing emotions that found expression in self-righteous and aggressive obstinance that verged on insubordination. These traits, although an integral facet of Mackenzie's character, grew more pronounced with age until, within the next 26 months, rationality succumbed to delusion.

Upon his return from Arizona on October 30, Mackenzie assumed command of the District of New Mexico.<sup>57</sup> While he retained command of the 4th Cavalry, his lieutenant colonel, George A. "Sandy" Forsyth (the hero of Beecher's Island), exercised tactical control of the regiment. Although the duties of district commander removed Mackenzie from active operations for the last two years of his career, his careful

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<sup>56</sup>R. C. Drum to Sheridan, Oct. 15, 1881, Ibid. McDowell to Drum, Oct. 18, 1881, Ibid. Cf., Parker, Old Army, p. 137.

<sup>57</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.



management kept New Mexico relatively free from Indian depredations.<sup>58</sup> He not only maintained scouts in Mexico, but made special arrangements for cooperation between Mexican and American officers.<sup>59</sup>

The colonel took no chances. In February, 1882, for example, the post trader at Fort Wingate heard that the Navahos planned to rid their country of white men.<sup>60</sup> When the trader--whom Mackenzie considered a reliable man--warned him of the alleged plot, the colonel became alarmed. On such flimsy evidence he asked General Sherman to station six additional companies of cavalry in the Navaho country during the summer.<sup>61</sup> Sherman refused, no doubt remembering Mackenzie's perennial cry for reinforcements, and perhaps noting his increasing caution.<sup>62</sup>

An outbreak did come, but not in New Mexico. On April 19, 1882, the Chiricahuas under Juh, Natchez, and Gerónimo--who had fled San Carlos the previous September--sneaked back

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<sup>58</sup>Sheridan to Adj. Gen., May 4, 1882, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Pope's report of Oct. 2, 1882, in RSW, 1882 (Serial 2091), p. 99.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid. Sheridan to Adj. Gen., May 4, 1882, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>60</sup>Frank D. Reeve, "The Government and the Navaho, 1878-1883," New Mexico Historical Review, XVI, 3 (July, 1941), 309.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Pope, Feb. 16, 1882, Letter Book (Gilcrease Museum).

<sup>62</sup>Reeve in New Mexico Historical Review, p. 309.



to the reservation.<sup>63</sup> A fight ensued in which they killed several people. Then, carrying Loco's band of Warm Springs Apaches with them, the hostiles slipped away towards Mexico.<sup>64</sup> They might have lingered in New Mexico had it not been for the foresight of its district commander. When Mackenzie's spies in Mexico warned that the Indians might try such a coup in Arizona, he stationed Colonel Forsyth and six companies of the 4th Cavalry at Fort Cummings.<sup>65</sup>

Forsyth received word of the outbreak on April 21 and hurried to Lordsburg, New Mexico, with five companies of his regiment. From Lordsburg he crossed the Peloncillo or Stein's Peak Mountains into Arizona.<sup>66</sup> On April 24, while fording the Gila River, Forsyth learned that Apache riflemen had ambushed and besieged a detachment of his scouts in a canyon of the Stein's Peak Range. Recrossing the Gila, Forsyth galloped 16 miles and rescued the surviving scouts. In the engagement that followed, he failed to oust the hostiles from their "impregnable" positions in Horseshoe Canyon. The command withdrew with five men dead and five wounded. Badly in need of water, the column rode to Richmond on the Gila, watered their

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<sup>63</sup>Willcox's report of Aug. 31, 1882, in RSW, 1882 (Serial 2091), p. 147. Maj. A. K. Arnold's report in Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid. Willcox's report in Ibid., p. 147. Ogle in New Mexico Historical Review, pp. 303-304.

<sup>65</sup>George A. Forsyth, Thrilling Days in Army Life (New York & London: Harper & Bros., 1900), p. 79.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., pp. 82-83. Forsyth to Mackenzie, Apr. 24, 1882, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



thirsty mounts, and resumed the chase.<sup>67</sup>

Four days later, while Forsyth combed the Stein's Peak Mountains and the San Simon Valley, Capt. T. C. Tupper and Co. G, 6th Cavalry, encountered the hostiles in the Las Animas Mountains of New Mexico.<sup>68</sup> Although the troopers of the 6th killed 8 Apaches and captured 74 horses, they failed to dislodge the enemy from his rocky breastworks. Tupper and his men retired, and the Indians continued their flight to Mexico.<sup>69</sup> At sundown on April 29, Forsyth overtook Tupper's company and, taking command, followed the trail to the headwaters of the Janos River in Chihuahua, Mexico.<sup>70</sup> Not far from the town of Ascension, the column met soldiers of the 6th Mexican Infantry under Col. Lorenzo Garcia. The colonel politely asked Forsyth to explain his presence in the Republic, reminding him that the international agreement of six months had expired.<sup>71</sup> Although Garcia refused to allow the American commander to pursue the Apaches, he told Forsyth of his fight with the hostiles.

It seems that the day before Forsyth's appearance in Mexico, Colonel Garcia and his infantry were changing station.

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid. Forsyth, Thrilling Days, pp. 84-108.

<sup>68</sup>Maj. Arnold's report in RSW, 1882 (Serial 2091), p. 72. Willcox's report in Ibid., pp. 149-150.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid. Forsyth, Thrilling Days, pp. 108-115. Cf., Erickson in Westerners Brand Book, pp. 124-126.

<sup>71</sup>Forsyth, Thrilling Days, pp. 115-118.



They spied a cloud of dust that betrayed a band of Apaches as they fled from the scene of their fight with Captain Tupper. The Mexicans laid an ambush and, in the resulting battle, both sides lost heavily. But, as García had no cavalry, the main body of the Indians escaped.<sup>72</sup> The next day, when Forsyth rode up and asked García's permission to chase the hostiles, Sgt. Neil Erickson of Troop B, 4th Cavalry, observed that the Mexicans held several Apache prisoners. Erickson further noted that after García refused to allow pursuit by the Americans, Forsyth hurried back towards the Rio Grande before sunset. According to the sergeant, Forsyth had orders to bring the Apaches in alive, and did not want to be present when the Mexicans shot their captives.<sup>73</sup> True or not, such instructions would not have been alien to Mackenzie's character. At any rate, General Sheridan applauded the "indefatigable pursuit" that minimized Apache depredations in New Mexico.<sup>74</sup>

But if Sheridan endorsed Mackenzie's administration of the district, both he and General Sherman seemed hesitant about broadening the colonel's authority. For example, shortly after trouble broke out in Arizona, General Willcox reluctantly

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 118. Willcox's report of Aug. 31, 1882, in RSW, 1882 (Serial 2091), p. 148.

<sup>73</sup>Erickson in Westerners Brand Book, pp. 126-127.

<sup>74</sup>Sheridan to Adj. Gen., May 4, 1882, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



called for two regiments from the District of New Mexico.<sup>75</sup> Although Mackenzie and the 4th Cavalry were adjacent the troubled area, General Sheridan advised sending the 4th and 7th Infantry, and placing the Department of Arizona under command of Col. John Gibbon, 7th Infantry.<sup>76</sup> The Secretary of War, on the other hand, cautioned General Sherman that it might "embarrass future departmental arrangements" if Gibbon relieved Willcox.<sup>77</sup> Lincoln therefore sounded out the General-in-Chief on the possibility of giving Mackenzie command of all troops in the field.<sup>78</sup>

Sherman, who favored reinforcement of Arizona by the 1st Infantry and 3rd Cavalry, lost no time assuring Lincoln that it would be difficult to utilize more than those two regiments in the territory.<sup>79</sup> Besides, he warned, Mackenzie's presence might repeat the confusion of the previous fall. While the General-in-Chief suggested adding New Mexico to the Department of Arizona, with Mackenzie in command as a brigadier general, he equivocally added that the colonel would "make quick and effective work of the Apache matter without

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<sup>75</sup>Willcox's report of Aug. 31, 1882, in RSW, 1882 (Serial 2091), p. 148. Sec. of War to Sherman, Apr. 29, 1882, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Sherman to R. T. Lincoln, Apr. 30, 1882, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.



increased rank."<sup>80</sup> Then, changing the subject, Sherman pointed out that Colonel Gibbon would prove an "active and energetic" department commander, although the post called for a brigadier general.<sup>81</sup> He closed his remarks with the observation that sudden outbreaks would never end until "some lucky officer [killed] outright two or three hundred" Apaches. Sherman expected such a blow to come from the "younger more ambitious officers," and not from those of higher rank.<sup>82</sup> Into which category he placed Mackenzie, the General-in-Chief failed to say. At any rate, Mackenzie did not go to Arizona, and the merger of departments did not occur.

While it seems likely that higher headquarters regarded Mackenzie with some misgivings, it is certain that the colonel did not endear himself to his superiors in the summer of 1882. In June he again displayed aggressive sensitivity when Lieutenant Colonel Forsyth ignored the district commander and applied for a leave of absence directly to the Department of the Missouri.<sup>83</sup> Thinking that Mackenzie would not object to the leave, General Pope did not forward Forsyth's application

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, June 22, 1882, Ibid.



to him.<sup>84</sup> On June 22, therefore, Mackenzie wrote his superior:

Forsyth is an officer of my command and his application should have first been sent to me. There was another case of an officer going direct to the department staff in the past ten days instead of through my office. As Colonel Forsyth has an important command it seems to me to be particularly proper that I should have been consulted.<sup>85</sup>

General Pope not only ignored this outburst but, in early July, granted Forsyth an extension to his leave without informing Mackenzie.<sup>86</sup> This time the district commander complained vigorously that Pope had "injured" his authority.<sup>87</sup> Angered by the presumptuous reaction of his subordinate, Pope warned Mackenzie that he did not like the "tone and character" of his official letters.<sup>88</sup> General Sheridan also condemned the colonel's strictures in official correspondence, regarding them as "extraordinarily unusual." Pope accused Mackenzie of assuming powers and rights not conferred by law or regulations.<sup>89</sup> To the department commander, it was simply the "exercise of courtesy" when he asked Mackenzie for sug-

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<sup>84</sup>Ibid. Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, to Mackenzie, June 23, 1882, Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Dept. of the Missouri, June 22, 1882, Ibid.

<sup>86</sup>Pope to Mackenzie, July 7, 1882, Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Mackenzie to Pope, July 7, 1882, Ibid.

<sup>88</sup>Pope to Mackenzie, July 18, 1882, Ibid.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid.



gestions on the subject of leaves. As district commander, the colonel had no right to demand what his superior should do, or express disapproval if he did not. So, Pope concluded, if he must surrender his authority in order to preserve Mackenzie's, then the district commander "must contrive to get along without it."<sup>90</sup>

Not to be silenced easily, Mackenzie sent a reply through channels to the Division of the Missouri. He charged that Pope's reprimands were "too severe," and that he intended neither disrespect nor to assume the lawful powers of a superior.<sup>91</sup> Mackenzie argued that the "government of troops" demanded that applications for leave follow proper channels. To his mind it was more than courtesy that requests for "indulgences" go through the immediate commander and, he said, an examination of the case would vindicate him.<sup>92</sup>

The matter was examined, and the colonel gained only partial satisfaction when, in the absence of Sheridan, General Sherman passed judgment.<sup>93</sup> He pointed out that the district command had been created through convenience and necessity, and therefore its existence depended wholly on the department commander. But, while a district existed, requests

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<sup>90</sup>Ibid.

<sup>91</sup>Mackenzie to Asst. Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, July 26, 1882, Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Ibid.

<sup>93</sup>Sherman's ruling of Aug. 8, 1882, in Ibid.



for leave must be directed to its commander. Therefore, Forsyth's action was a breach of discipline, and Mackenzie could so charge.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, the district commander could not hold his superiors responsible for their decisions. Sherman ruled that Pope would be the sole judge of the "animus" of the colonel's dispatches, and observed:

I think I perceive an impatience of authority, a supersensitiveness on the part of juniors to necessary restraints and reproof by superior officers in command. Officers in command must often exercise their necessary powers in this regard, and juniors will soon find themselves seniors and will discover that the exercise of such rightful authority is far better than Courts Martial.<sup>95</sup>

With that the controversy ended. Mackenzie did not press charges against Forsyth, but neither did Pope take action against the district commander. Never again did Mackenzie cross foils with his superiors. Although the incident apparently did not damage his career, it did illustrate the lengths to which the colonel would now go to gain his point.

While harmony returned to official correspondence, peace graced the military affairs of New Mexico. In the fall of 1882 General Pope reported that the district could largely attribute its comparative quiet to the "judicious management"

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.



of Mackenzie.<sup>96</sup> Early in August troops of the district peaceably rounded up a band of recalcitrant Jicarilla Apaches and confined them at Fort Union.<sup>97</sup> Another detachment herded some Navahos back to their reservation--also without bloodshed.<sup>98</sup> The only disturbance worthy of the name occurred in the fall and winter of 1882 when some runaway Mescaleros led soldiers of the district on a rigorous and fruitless chase.<sup>99</sup> Meanwhile, Mackenzie and his staff extended their duties to include "earnest cooperation and hearty assistance" to the militia of New Mexico.<sup>100</sup>

Such harmony augured well for Mackenzie's future in the army because, after the retirement of General McDowell created a vacancy, the colonel came up for promotion.<sup>101</sup> John L. Beveridge, ex-governor of Illinois and a veteran of the Civil War, worked for his advancement. Seeing the colonel as one of "God's Noblemen" and "every inch a soldier,"

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<sup>96</sup>Pope's report of Oct. 2, 1882, in RSW, 1882 (Serial 2091), p. 99. See also Sheridan to Adj. Gen., May 4, 1882, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. Cf., Albuquerque Review, Oct. 28, 1882, p. 3.

<sup>97</sup>Letter from Indian Agent Ben M. Thomas, Sept. 1, 1882, in RSI, 1883 (Serial 2100), p. 191.

<sup>98</sup>Mackenzie's report of Sept. 26, 1883, in RSW, 1883 (Serial 2182), pp. 137-140.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., pp. 140-141. Cf., Pope's report of Oct. 2, 1882, RSW, 1882 (Serial 2091), pp. 99-100.

<sup>100</sup>Edward L. Bartlett, Adj. Gen., Report of the Adjutant General of the Territory of New Mexico for 1882-1883 (Library of the Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe), p. 89.

<sup>101</sup>Albuquerque Review, Oct. 28, 1882, p. 3.



Beveridge wrote President Chester A. Arthur that New Mexico was never more quiet and peaceful, and never did its people enjoy greater security than under Mackenzie.<sup>102</sup> Other men also took up the colonel's banner. At their convention on September 21, 1882 the Republican Party of New Mexico adopted a platform that endorsed the civil management of Gov. L. A. Sheldon and the military administration of Colonel Mackenzie.<sup>103</sup> Governor Sheldon wrote a letter on Mackenzie's behalf, as did at least one territorial delegate to Congress.<sup>104</sup> Sen. N. P. Hill of Colorado informed President Arthur that a number of Denver's "most highly respected citizens" urged the senator to use his influence for Mackenzie's promotion.<sup>105</sup> A New Jersey official likewise went on record as a supporter of the colonel.<sup>106</sup> But, if Joseph Dorst is correct, it was General Grant who tipped the scales in Mackenzie's favor. According to Dorst, Grant asked President Arthur to reward the colonel, not only as a personal favor, but as a matter of justice for Mackenzie's many years of distinguished service.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Beveridge to Pres. Arthur, Sept. 8, 1882, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Albuquerque Review, Oct. 28, 1882, p. 3. National Cyclopedia of American Biography (Old Series; 42 vols.; New York: James T. White Co.), XI, 50.

<sup>103</sup>News item in AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>104</sup>Gov. Sheldon to Pres. Arthur, Oct. 11, 1882, Ibid. Telegram from Tranquilino Luna, Oct. 16, 1882, Ibid.

<sup>105</sup>Sen. Hill to R. T. Lincoln, Oct. 5, 1882, Ibid.

<sup>106</sup>Cortland Parker to Pres. Arthur, Oct. 4, 1882, Ibid.

<sup>107</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 18.



Justice was done. On October 22 the Secretary of War informed Mackenzie of his promotion to brigadier general.<sup>108</sup> From a second lieutenant in 1862, he had earned his star in 20 years and 4 months, an excellent showing in those days of slow advancement. But, if Mackenzie greeted the promotion with pleasure, he also must have viewed it with some regret. After commanding the 4th Cavalry longer than any colonel since its creation in 1855, and forging it into the best mounted unit in the service, he must now surrender his beloved regiment.<sup>109</sup> So, on November 1, 1882 he handed the reins of the 4th Cavalry to Col. William B. Royall.<sup>110</sup>

By that time Mackenzie's physical and mental health had deteriorated to the point where he felt that he must have rest. He asked permission to go to New York or somewhere else in the East to recuperate until his services were needed in New Mexico.<sup>111</sup> Fortunately, no crisis developed in the district, and on November 17 Mackenzie left Santa Fe for the East.<sup>112</sup> As on his previous leaves, the records fail to

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<sup>108</sup>Mackenzie to Lincoln, Oct. 22, 1882, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Cf., Heitman, Historical Register, I, 22.

<sup>109</sup>In 1888 Gen. Henry W. Lawton told R. G. Carter that for years the inspection report of the War Dept. had placed the 4th Cavalry as the best in general merit. See Carter, On the Border, p. 421.

<sup>110</sup>Heitman, Historical Register, I, 70.

<sup>111</sup>Mackenzie to Sheridan, Nov. 6, 1882, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>112</sup>Special Orders 234, Dept. of the Missouri, Nov. 17, 1882, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.



disclose his activities. Other than a stay in Washington, the only fact known of his trip is that, after extending his leave on December 7, Mackenzie lived at the home of his brother Morris in New York City.<sup>113</sup> When the general returned to command the District of New Mexico on February 21, 1883, it seems likely that he brought his mother to live with him in Santa Fe.<sup>114</sup>

The ailing Mackenzie had scarcely settled down to a routine, on March 21, when Chato and 26 Chiricahuas began raiding in Arizona.<sup>115</sup> Riding stolen horses, the Apaches raced eastward into New Mexico at the rate of 75 to 100 miles a day. They killed 25 Mexicans and Americans on the way, including the prominent Judge McComas and his wife of Silver City. This murder, and the abduction of young Charlie McComas to the Sierra Madre of Mexico, evoked a storm of public outrage.<sup>116</sup> Mackenzie lost no time deploying his forces, but the elusive Chiricahuas escaped both cavalry in Arizona

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<sup>113</sup>Mackenzie to Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Dec. 7, 1882, Ibid. Statement of Service in Ibid.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid. His mother lived with Mackenzie in Santa Fe a short time before her death. Because of his promotion and leave of absence, it seems reasonable that he took advantage of his improved economic status and semi-permanent residence to bring her from the East. See Class Report for 1884 (Williams College).

<sup>115</sup>Ogle in New Mexico Historical Review, pp. 308-309. Capt. John G. Bourke, An Apache Campaign in the Sierra Madre (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 26-27.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie's report of Sept. 26, 1883, in RSW, 1883 (Serial 2182), p. 141.



and Forsyth's troops and slipped into Mexico.<sup>117</sup>

In response to the storm of protest over Chato's raid, General Sherman authorized General Crook--now commanding the Department of Arizona--to pursue the hostiles regardless of departmental or national lines. Sherman also directed Mackenzie to give his fullest cooperation to General Crook.<sup>118</sup> On April 4, therefore, Mackenzie met Crook and other officers at the Armijo House in Albuquerque. After a short conference in which the men presumably discussed international agreements with Mexico and Crook's forthcoming expedition south of the border, Mackenzie set out for Lordsburg to confer with Forsyth.<sup>119</sup> He instructed Forsyth on troop dispositions, then returned to Santa Fe and another leave of absence.<sup>120</sup>

Although the date is unknown, Mackenzie suffered at least one attack of "cerebral trouble" during his tour in New Mexico.<sup>121</sup> Perhaps it came around April 29, 1883 when

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<sup>117</sup>Bourke, Apache Campaign, pp. 27-28. Mackenzie's report of Sept. 26, 1883, RSW, 1883 (Serial 2182), pp. 141-143. Ogle in New Mexico Historical Review, pp. 308-309.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. Adj. Gen. to Sheridan, Mar. 31, 1883, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>119</sup>Clipping from Albuquerque Review, Apr. 4, 1883, in Bourke Diary, LXVII, 82. Cf., Bourke, Apache Campaign, pp. 28-29.

<sup>120</sup>Mackenzie's report of Sept. 26, 1883, in RSW, 1883 (Serial 2182), p. 143.

<sup>121</sup>Surgeon Joseph R. Smith to Adj. Gen., Dec. 19, 1883, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.



he began another, but unusually short leave.<sup>122</sup> Or maybe it was at this time that his mother died, a loss that probably added to his mental deterioration.<sup>123</sup> Whatever the reason, he returned to duty on May 15 and began the final five months of his service in New Mexico.<sup>124</sup> On Memorial Day, Santa Feans turned out for a procession in which the general and his staff participated.<sup>125</sup> Another parade at the Santa Fe Exposition on July 4 also included Mackenzie. It may be significant that, in this, probably his last ceremonial appearance as district commander, the general rode in a carriage.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup>Statement of service in Ibid.

<sup>123</sup>Class Report for 1884 (Williams College). The Territory of New Mexico kept no death records at this early date.

<sup>124</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>125</sup>Santa Fe New Mexican Review, June 9, 1883, p. 1.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., July 7, p. 1. Report of the Adj. Gen. of New Mexico, Jan. 1, 1884, in U. S., Records of the States of the United States, "New Mexico, 1882-1902," (Library, University of New Mexico), Microfilm D-1, Reel 1, p. 62.



## CHAPTER XIV

### THE FALL OF RANALD S. MACKENZIE

Mackenzie ended his service in New Mexico on October 27, 1883.<sup>1</sup> He traveled to San Antonio where, on November 1, he took command of the Department of Texas.<sup>2</sup> Within a few days his uncharacteristic behavior caught the attention of subordinates. For one thing, the general drank too much. For another, he spent his evenings in the company of a lady.<sup>3</sup> The latter practice raised rumors of matrimony, rumors that seemed to gain substance when Mackenzie ordered the commanding officer's quarters redecorated.<sup>4</sup> The stories were true. At 43 years of age, Ranald Mackenzie planned to marry.

Her name was Florida Tunstall Sharpe, the 34 year-old daughter of Warrick Tunstall and the widow of Dr. Redford Sharpe.<sup>5</sup> She first met Mackenzie between March 16 and No-

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<sup>1</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. RSW, 1884 (Serial 2277), p. 120.

<sup>2</sup>Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>3</sup>Surgeon Smith to Adj. Gen., Dec. 19, 1883, Ibid. Mrs. Pattie Lockwood Ingersoll, Recollections of General Ranald Slidell Mackenzie. A one-page typescript in the possession of Mr. W. B. Booth, San Antonio, Texas.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Mrs. Florida Tunstall Sharpe, Memoirs, p. 1. A four-page typescript resulting from an interview of Mrs. Sharpe by Col. M. L. Crimmins in 1940. Ingersoll, Recollections.



vember 28, 1868 when he came to San Antonio to preside over a court martial.<sup>6</sup> He lived at her father's boarding house near the 4th Street Bridge, not far from the famous old Molino Blanco on St. Mary's Street.<sup>7</sup> A "warm friendship" developed between the young colonel and the 18 year-old girl, a relationship that some acquaintances claimed amounted to "passion" on Mackenzie's part.<sup>8</sup> Others believed that the "courtship ran smooth and even as the cement promenade around the parade ground." But it is doubtful that Mackenzie shared a flaming romance with Florida Tunstall, for she had already promised her hand to another.<sup>9</sup>

So, in 1869, at age 20, Florida Tunstall married Dr. Redford Sharpe, an army medical officer and 19 years her senior.<sup>10</sup> After the wedding, duty called the Sharpes to Fort McKavett where the doctor reported to the commanding officer--a colonel named Mackenzie.<sup>11</sup> With the development of this intriguing situation, the documents go blank. There is no evidence of animosity at Fort McKavett, however, al-

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<sup>6</sup>Taken from a letter by a writer in San Antonio. See Santa Fe New Mexican Review, Apr. 3, 1884, p. 4. Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>7</sup>Sharpe, Memoirs, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Santa Fe New Mexican Review, Apr. 3, 1884, p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid. Cf., Sharpe, Memoirs, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid. Ingersoll, Recollections.

<sup>11</sup>Sharpe, Memoirs, p. 4. Statement of service, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.



though it was said that Mackenzie seemed "very cut up" over Florida's marriage.<sup>12</sup> Proper gentleman that he was, however, it is doubtful that he exploited the situation. Nor is it clear when, if ever, he saw Mrs. Sharpe after the death of her husband in 1873.<sup>13</sup> One thing is certain. Mackenzie lost no time courting Florida Sharpe when he met her again in 1883.

During their evenings at the old Tunstall house, the couple may have shared memories of Fort McKavett. They might have recalled the night that neighboring civilians joined the officers and their wives in a dance at the post and laughed at Mackenzie who, when the regimental band asked payment for its services, banished the musicians to the corrals to serenade the mules.<sup>14</sup> Or maybe the general and his lady chuckled at the memory of an itinerant Negro preacher who appeared at Fort McKavett one day and obtained Mackenzie's permission to preach to the soldiers of the 24th Infantry. When the sermon achieved in volume what it lacked in brevity, the colonel could stand it no longer. He dispatched his orderly to the meeting with instructions to "praise God with less noise."<sup>15</sup> But while Mackenzie and his fiancée recalled the past, they also looked to the future. Apparently to the delight of Mrs. Sharpe's 12

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<sup>12</sup>Ingersoll, Recollections.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.



year-old son "Red," they set December 19 as their wedding day.<sup>16</sup>

As plans for the marriage took shape, early in December, the general seemed to lose all control of himself. His "excesses" and "delirium" grew more pronounced.<sup>17</sup> His drinking became "worthy of the name of dipsomania," alarming those who had never known him to show the least influence of alcohol.<sup>18</sup> Although few people in San Antonio knew of the general's "eccentricity," he could not hide it from his subordinates. On December 10 a conversation with Mackenzie convinced the Chief Quartermaster that his superior was insane. Five days later another officer reached the same conclusion. Several others regarded the general as either mad or drunk.<sup>19</sup> Assistant Surgeon Passmore Middleton, who knew that dipsomania was foreign to Mackenzie, placed the general under his care on December 9. Thinking the malady temporary, Surgeon Middleton did not report Mackenzie's condition to higher headquarters. Instead, he enlisted the aid of several officers who took turns privately restraining the general.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid. Cf., The Weekly New Mexican Review, Jan. 3, 1884, p. 4.

<sup>17</sup>Surgeon Smith to Adj. Gen., Dec. 19, 1883, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid. Asst. Adj. Gen. Thomas M. Vincent, Dept. of Texas, to Adj. Gen., Dec. 19, 1883, Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>Surgeon Smith to Adj. Gen., Dec. 19, 1883, Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid. Cf., Santa Fe New Mexican Review, Apr. 3, 1884, p. 4.



They managed to keep Mackenzie under control until the eve of his marriage. The documents do not reveal a change in wedding plans, only that on the night of December 18 the general accompanied Chief Paymaster Terrell and Chief Ordnance Office Arnold into San Antonio for a "visit."<sup>21</sup> Early that evening they stopped at the old Tunstall house where Mrs. Sharpe's niece, little Pattie Lockwood, greeted Mackenzie in the parlor. The child had not gone to bed yet when the general gently patted her head and stepped out into the cold, rainy night.<sup>22</sup> He headed back to headquarters with Major Terrell, after the Chief Ordnance Officer returned to the arsenal. Before they reached the post, however, Mackenzie used some unknown stratagem to escape from Major Terrell.<sup>23</sup>

Shortly after midnight, so the story goes, a man appeared at a store across the railroad--about a mile from headquarters--and demanded some "trifling article." The two brothers who ran the establishment thought him drunk and refused to open the store. The man left threatening revenge.<sup>24</sup> An hour or so later he returned and pounded so violently on the side of the flimsy building that he emptied several shelves of crockery. Determined to subdue the offender, one brother went

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<sup>21</sup>Vincent to Adj. Gen., Dec. 19, 1883, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>22</sup>Ingersoll, Recollections.

<sup>23</sup>Vincent to Adj. Gen., Dec. 19, 1883, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>24</sup>Santa Fe New Mexican Review, Apr. 3, 1884, p. 4.



out the front entrance while the other slipped out the back door. As the latter turned the corner of the building, a figure lunged from the darkness and dealt him a stunning blow on the chest with the leg of a chair. A scuffle ensued, in which the other storekeeper dared not use his revolver for fear of shooting his brother.<sup>25</sup> About that time a dozen Mexicans raced up, beat the madman into submission, and bound him to the wheel of a cart. There he stood shivering for the rest of the night, his scanty clothing covered with blood. He could not even tell his captors his name. Not until 6:00 a. m., when the police arrived, was the "pitiable hulk" identified as the commander of the Department of Texas. The police drove Mackenzie to the post and returned him to the custody of his brother officers.<sup>26</sup>

Later that morning, Joseph R. Smith, Surgeon and Medical Director of the Department of Texas, interviewed the general. He found that Mackenzie replied "rationally" to most questions, although at times he "discoursed" in a manner "entirely personal and braggadocio."<sup>27</sup> Convinced that dipsomania was but a manifestation of mental "abberations," and not the cause of them, Doctor Smith saw that the general's derangement made him incapable of filling the duties of

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid. Cf., Vincent to Adj. Gen., Dec. 19, 1883, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid. Surgeon Smith to Adj. Gen., Dec. 19, 1883, Ibid.



his office. Thomas M. Vincent, the Assistant Adjutant General of the department, concurred with Doctor Smith. He too had known Mackenzie for years as an abstentious man.<sup>28</sup> The general showed a marked improvement on December 20. He not only suffered fewer "delusions," but grew less violent.<sup>29</sup> During the next two days, however, he became a little more "disposed to be irrational," although enjoying good physical health.<sup>30</sup> And, on December 24, when he showed no signs of improvement, Doctor Smith and two medical officers decided that he must be sent to an asylum.<sup>31</sup>

In order to spirit Mackenzie off to an institution in the East, the doctors planned to use one of his delusions as a ruse. The army needed reorganization, raved the general, an overhaul that only he and Sheridan (now General-in-Chief) could accomplish.<sup>32</sup> Taking the cue, Adjutant General Vincent suggested that Sheridan telegraph Mackenzie to come to Washington at once for consultation on the problem, bringing with

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<sup>28</sup>Ibid. Vincent to Adj. Gen., Dec. 19, 1883, Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Vincent to Adj. Gen., Dec. 20, 1883, Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Vincent to Adj. Gen., Dec. 20 and 21, 1883, Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Vincent to Adj. Gen., Dec. 24, 1883, Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Vincent to Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Dec. 24, 1883, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives. But when queried for his views on army reorganization in 1878, Mackenzie did not seem inspired or vehement. See his letter of Feb. 25, 1878 in RSW, 1878 (Serial 1818), pp. 79-85.



him his surgeon and two aides-de-camp.<sup>33</sup> General Schofield, who now commanded the Division of the Missouri, welcomed the scheme. He held no hope for a quick cure for Mackenzie, and believed that even if he recovered he could not be intrusted with the responsibilities of command.<sup>34</sup> So, hoping to whisk the general to an institution before he suspected a trick, Vincent requested a Pullman car from the Missouri Pacific Railroad.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile, Mackenzie's sister Harriet warned that her brother must not travel without Surgeon Middleton, the only person able to control him.<sup>36</sup> She telegraphed General Schofield, asking him to order her brother's confinement at the Government Asylum for the Insane in Washington, D. C. Harriet also wired the same opinion to General Sheridan and Secretary of War Lincoln.<sup>37</sup> Lincoln agreed that Mackenzie should go to the asylum in Washington, but urged the Department of Texas to keep his departure out of the newspapers.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Vincent to Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Dec. 24, 1883, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>34</sup>Schofield's endorsement, Dec. 24, 1883, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>35</sup>Vincent to Adj. Gen., Division of the Missouri, Dec. 24, 1883, Division of the Missouri (RG:98), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>36</sup>Harriet Mackenzie to Schofield, Dec. 24, 1883, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid. Harriet Mackenzie to Sheridan, Dec. 29, 1883, Ibid. R. C. Drum to Vincent, Dec. 25, 1883, Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.



By this time, Mackenzie's physical and mental condition appeared less favorable. His aides-de-camp, 1st Lt. Joseph H. Dorst and 1st Lt. Alexander Rodgers--not to mention Doctor Middleton--were "much worn" by constant attendance on him. Vincent therefore assigned two orderlies to assist the general who, apparently anticipating a conference with Sheridan, allowed himself to be prepared for the trip.<sup>39</sup> So, at 7:30 on the morning of December 26, Mackenzie and his companions climbed aboard the Pullman "Hotel Car" tendered by the Missouri Pacific Railroad.<sup>40</sup>

As the train rattled northward, on December 27, Doctor Middleton must have been surprised by a telegram from Adjutant General Drum. Drum had given permission to "friends" of Mackenzie to take him to the Bloomingdale Asylum in New York, instead of to Washington as planned.<sup>41</sup> Both Drum and Sheridan had conferred with Admiral C. R. P. Rodgers (the father of Lt. Alexander Rodgers and no doubt a friend of Randall and Morris Mackenzie) who advised the general's confinement at Bloomingdale. After listening to the opinion of two surgeons, all agreed on the New York institution.<sup>42</sup> But Har-

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<sup>39</sup>Vincent to Drum, Dec. 26, 1883, Ibid. Acting Adj. Gen. Chauncey McKeever to Paymaster General, Jan. 21, 1884, AGO (RG:94), Letters Sent, National Archives.

<sup>40</sup>Vincent to Drum, Dec. 26, 1883, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>41</sup>Drum to Dr. Middleton, Dec. 27, 1883, Ibid. Undated notation from Admiral C. R. P. Rodgers to Vincent, Ibid.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.



riet, who was not consulted about the change of plans, resisted the decision. As her brother's "nearest friend," she condemned Bloomingdale as "very bad" for him.<sup>43</sup> Harriet ignored arguments of "publicity and disturbing influences" at the asylum in Washington, and that she would not be allowed to stay at or near the institution anyhow.<sup>44</sup> Her telegrams to Sheridan and Lincoln availed nothing.

Meanwhile, Capt. E. B. Atwood, Quartermaster at St. Louis, found it impossible for Mackenzie's car to go through to Washington.<sup>45</sup> He therefore secured three sections in a Pullman car for the morning of December 28. But, realizing the lack of privacy it afforded, Captain Atwood booked a drawing room and one section on the evening train in case Mackenzie's party stayed in St. Louis until night.<sup>46</sup> When Doctor Middleton arrived, however, he positively refused both accommodations, insisting that his patient's condition rendered it "unsafe" for him to travel with other people.<sup>47</sup> Fortunately, the change of destination solved the problem and, on the morning of December 28, the Vandalia Railroad presented a coach for the exclusive use of Mackenzie and

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<sup>43</sup>Harriet Mackenzie to Sheridan, Dec. 29, 1883, Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Admiral Rodger's notation, Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Statement of R. C. Drum, Jan. 8, 1884, AGO (RG:94), Letters Rec'd., National Archives.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.



his companions.<sup>48</sup>

At 10:20 p. m. on Saturday, December 30, the St. Louis Express roared into New York. On the platform stood Morris Duer, a cousin of the Mackenzies, and Dr. Charles H. Nichols, Medical Superintendent of the Bloomingdale Asylum.<sup>49</sup> With the help of Harriet and an orderly, Mackenzie was placed in a carriage. Then, after saying goodbye to Doctor Middleton and the aides-de-camp, the party drove to the institution on Boulevard and 117th Street.<sup>50</sup>

For nearly two months Doctor Nichols observed Mackenzie and, on February 22, 1884, reported his patient's condition as "altogether unfavorable."<sup>51</sup> On the basis of 37 years' experience, the doctor diagnosed a disease usually denominated "General Paresis," or "General Paralysis of the Insane."<sup>52</sup> Doctor Nichols and his colleagues may have attached much significance to Mackenzie's fall from the wagon at Fort Sill in 1875, as well as to the sunstroke he suffered as a child.<sup>53</sup> But their diagnosis came three decades before the medical world learned that, in a very high percentage of cases, Gen-

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<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

<sup>49</sup>Letter from Charles H. Nichols to R. C. Drum, Dec. 31, 1883, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Nichols to Sheridan, Feb. 22, 1883, Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Report of Board of Examiners, Mar. 5, 1884, Ibid.

<sup>53</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 18.



eral Paresis originates in syphilitic infection.<sup>54</sup> Despite a rudimentary understanding of psychology in the 1880's, and the faulty diagnostic procedures of the day, it seems improbable that Doctor Nichols erred. As unlikely as it may seem that the straight-laced general contracted syphilis, the evidence strongly suggests that such was the case. Because, at one time or another, Mackenzie exhibited almost all the classic symptoms of General Paresis. Besides falling into the age group in which the malady is most common (ie: 30-50), the general manifested the irritability, restlessness, poor emotional control, and dipsomania that often marks its early stages.<sup>55</sup> He also suffered the delusions of grandeur and persecution that are typical of General Paresis victims, as well as most of the other symptoms of its later stages.<sup>56</sup> Like most sufferers, Mackenzie could not recognize his deterioration. He was often unable to speak distinctly and his writing grew more disorganized and practically illegible. Later, he could barely walk.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps it is worth noting that, as General Paresis advances, the repressed character-

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<sup>54</sup>Robert W. White, The Abnormal Personality (2nd ed.; New York: The Ronald Press Co., c1956), pp. 17-20, 499-504. G. Zilboorg and G. W. Henry, A History of Medical Psychology (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1941), pp. 526-551, et passim.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 404, 537. White, Abnormal Personality, p. 500.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 17, 500.

<sup>57</sup>While never well organized or graceful, his writing became almost indecipherable after 1883. See Ibid., p. 500.



istics or desires of the victim will come to the fore. So, "if a person has restrained with difficulty his aggression, his sexuality, or his desire for personal glory...the lowered control will release these strivings in vigorous and fantastic expression."<sup>58</sup>

Such understanding was of course alien to doctors in the 1880's. Not until 1894 did Fournier offer his hypothesis that General Paresis originated in syphilitic infection.<sup>59</sup>

The sketchy medical knowledge of the day, as well as public ignorance of Mackenzie's affliction, was perhaps best illustrated by The Nation magazine on January 3, 1884. It described the general as "relieved temporarily due to the affliction of serious mental trouble occasioned by nervous prostration."<sup>60</sup> Be that as it may, by late February Doctor Nichols concluded that Mackenzie would never recover, and recommended his discharge from the army.<sup>61</sup> On March 3, therefore, Secretary of War Lincoln established a board of officers to examine the general at the asylum, and to rule on his retirement as soon as possible.<sup>62</sup>

At 11:30 a. m. on March 5, 1884 the examiners convened

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 502.

<sup>59</sup>Zilboorg and Henry, History of Medical Psychology, pp. 17-18.

<sup>60</sup>The Nation, Jan. 3, 1884, p. 4.

<sup>61</sup>Nichols to Sec. of War, Feb. 27, 1884, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>62</sup>Special Orders 52, AGO, Mar. 3, 1884, Ibid.



at the Bloomingdale Asylum. When attendants ushered Ranald Mackenzie into the room, he looked into the familiar faces of Gen. Winfield S. Hancock, Gen. Samuel J. Holabird, and several officers of lesser rank.<sup>63</sup> He offered no objection to any member of the board and sat silently while two surgeons testified to his insanity.<sup>64</sup> Mackenzie refused to comment until later in the proceedings, when he addressed the board. Said he:

I think that I am not insane, I think that I have served as faithfully as anybody in the army, I would rather to die than to go on the retired list. The army is all I have got to care for. I don't wish to stay here. I am treated very kindly by Doctor Nichols and Mrs. Nichols and many others.<sup>65</sup>

The general did not speak again until after Doctor Nichols presented his observations. Then Mackenzie requested permission to make another statement. He said to the board:

You all know me, and have known me a great many years, and I think it very harsh if I am left out of the army where my services have always been gallant and honest and faithful. And for a few months sickness, I think it will be very hard if I am separated from the active list of the army.<sup>66</sup>

With that the examination ended. The board ruled that General Paralysis of the Insane incapacitated Mackenzie for further service and gave as its cause, "wounds received and exposure

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<sup>63</sup>Report of Board of Examiners, Mar. 5, 1884, Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid.



in the line of duty as an officer of the army."<sup>67</sup>

So, on March 24, 1884, Ranald S. Mackenzie went on the retired list.<sup>68</sup> He refused, however, to acknowledge the retirement notices sent him at the asylum.<sup>69</sup> He not only regarded his retirement as "most unprecedented," but fully expected his recovery and restoration to the active list.<sup>70</sup> While he waited for the day that would never come, the general made himself very comfortable at Bloomingdale, receiving friends and attending places of amusement until his discharge from the asylum on June 14, 1884.<sup>71</sup> Mackenzie then returned to the scene of his boyhood, Morristown, New Jersey, where he spent the summer. In September, however, he informed General Drum that he expected to live there only until the spring of 1885. He wrote that early in April he would travel to San Antonio to look after his "interests."<sup>72</sup> What those interests were he failed to explain. Mackenzie could have meant the ranch that Dorst says he bought near Boerne, or he could referred to Mrs. Sharpe--or both.<sup>73</sup> In any case, it is highly

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid.

<sup>68</sup>Statement of service, Ibid. Heitman, Historical Register, I, 26.

<sup>69</sup>Nichols to Drum, Apr. 4, 1884, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Drum, June 16, 1884, Ibid.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid. Mackenzie to Drum, Sept. 1, 1884, Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 18.



doubtful that he ever made the trip.

In 1886 Mackenzie moved to the home of Morris Duer at New Brighton, Staten Island. He spent his remaining days in a rather large "Gothic" house on the corner of Lafayette and Henderson Avenues.<sup>74</sup> Tended by his sister ("Aunt Hattie Mac") and two attendants, the general drifted into the advanced stages of his affliction.<sup>75</sup> Although he looked well and enjoyed a good appetite and digestion, he walked very little, and then only when supported by someone. His mind grew "very weak" and more "childish," until he could rarely make himself understood to the family that "adored" him.<sup>76</sup>

Finally, on January 19, 1889, Adjutant General Drum received a telegram from Lt. Cmdr. Morris R. S. Mackenzie. It read: "General Ranald S. Mackenzie died this morning."<sup>77</sup> He succumbed to General Paresis in the 48th year of his life. Although the extent of his material possessions is unknown, a will (drawn up in 1883) bestowed his entire estate on Morris

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<sup>74</sup>Class Report for 1887 (Williams College). The Staten Island business directory for 1882-83 lists Morris Duer's residence as the corner of Lafayette and Henderson Avenues. See Letter from Dr. Minna C. Wilkins, Staten Island Historical Society, to Nohl, spring, 1961.

<sup>75</sup>Ingersoll, Recollections. Class Report for 1887 (Williams College).

<sup>76</sup>Ibid. Ingersoll, Recollections.

<sup>77</sup>Lt. Cmdr. M. R. S. Mackenzie to Adj. Gen. Drum, Jan. 19, 1889, AGO, ACP File, National Archives.



and Harriet.<sup>78</sup> Except for family and friends the general's passing attracted little attention.<sup>79</sup> But a large concourse of friends and relatives gathered to pay last respects when Ranald Slidell Mackenzie was laid to rest ~~with full~~ honors of war in the cemetery at West Point. As attendants lowered the casket to the grave, perhaps some of the mourners noticed that neighboring tombs bore the names of Buford, Sykes, and Kilpatrick.<sup>80</sup> The general rested in good company.

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<sup>78</sup>Found in Staten Island by Dr. Wilkins, spring, 1961.

<sup>79</sup>Lt. Cmdr. Mackenzie to Drum, Jan. 19, 1889, AGO, ACP File, National Archives. Harriet Mackenzie to Drum, Feb. 1, 1889, Ibid. For obituary see New York Times, Jan. 21, 1889, p. 5. Williams College, Class of 1859, Class Letters, 1911.

<sup>80</sup>Dorst, Twentieth Annual Reunion, Appendix, p. 19.



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The personal correspondence and other papers of Randall S. Mackenzie appear to be lost. While there are indications that Joseph H. Dorst made use of them in his biographical sketches of the general, no one else seems to have had access to them or even knew that they existed. Mr. Edward S. Wallace of East Haddam, Connecticut, who has done perhaps the most research on Mackenzie in recent years, knows of no personal correspondence, although he has searched widely. Another student of the subject, Col. Truman Smith of Fairfield, Connecticut, likewise has failed to unearth Mackenzie's papers. Nor does the United States Military Academy, the New York Historical Society, or the Staten Island Historical Society possess such material--although the latter employed the services of Dr. Minna C. Wilkins who interviewed a number of older residents of Staten Island. The diligent work of Doctor Wilkins led her to discover the location and description of the house in which Mackenzie lived with his sister before his death.

Efforts to locate personal papers have not gone unrewarded, however. Correspondence with the four Duers (relatives of the Mackenzies) listed in the New York City telephone directory led to a letter from Mrs. John J. Woodruff of Somerset, Virginia. Mrs. Woodruff, a cousin of Mackenzie, offered



a few childhood memories of him. She recalls that he lived with his sister "Aunt Hattie Mac," and maintains that he was not insane, but "puerile" and "childish." According to Mrs. Woodriff, her cousin was very gentle and the children adored him.

Such unpublished recollections are not plentiful and sometimes prove disappointing. In 1940, for example, Col. M. L. Crimmins interviewed Mrs. Florida Tunstall Sharpe who was to marry Mackenzie in 1883. A four-page typescript resulted, in which the 89 year-old lady failed to mention a word about her fiancée. More helpful are the Recollections of General Ranald Slidell Mackenzie by Mrs. Pattie Lockwood Ingersoll. A niece of Mrs. Sharpe, Mrs. Ingersoll dictated a one-page typescript in which she gave her childhood memories of the days in San Antonio when her aunt planned to marry the general. Both the Sharpe and Ingersoll manuscripts are in the possession of Mr. W. B. Booth of San Antonio, Texas.

Less personal, but very valuable, are the materials at Williams College. The librarian, Wyllis E. Wright, not only offered a series of photostats taken from various books on Mackenzie, but reports from the class of 1859 as well. Furthermore, Mr. Wright generously furnished photostats of the entire "Appointment, Commission, and Personal" (ACP) file as found in Record Group 94, Records of the Office of the Adjutant General, National Archives and Records Center, Washington, D. C. Mr. Wright's generosity significantly reduced the amount of time spent on research in Washington.



Aside from official military documents, other archival materials on Mackenzie are neither unusual nor abundant. The holdings of the Texas State Library and the Texas Historical Association, while not without value, are limited to books, magazines, and newspapers. Neither the New Mexico State Records and Archives Center, nor the Division of Vital Statistics, own materials on Mackenzie or his mother. And, although official documents that deal directly with him may be found at the University of Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Historical Society, many of them are also available at the National Archives.

If relics may be considered archival materials, the discoveries of Mr. O. W. Judge of Caspar, Wyoming are of importance. Mr. Judge, an historian and writer, is probably better versed on the site of the Dull Knife battle than anyone else. He has combed the area with a metal detector, unearthing large quantities of cartridge casings, charred cooking utensils, and other metallic objects. By plotting the location of shell casings on a sketch map, Mr. Judge contributed greatly to a better understanding of the scope and troop movements of the engagement. Moreover, he often talked with Frank Graves who established a ranch on the battlefield in the early years of this century. Mr. Graves not only knew several Indian participants in the fight, but also collected large numbers of relics. Mr. Judge says that Graves once claimed that he could have filled a spring wagon with expended cartridges found on his ranch.



Save for these few sources that help pad the bones of historiography, the student of Ranald S. Mackenzie must content himself with official military records and published accounts by the general's contemporaries--until personal papers are discovered. The greatest source of official documents and maps is, of course, the National Archives. The following military records and maps were examined there and are listed below in descending order from the highest echelon in the United States Army.

### NATIONAL ARCHIVES

#### Records

Headquarters of the Army (Record Group 108). Files, 1870-1889.

These files contain orders and correspondence to and from other commands of the army.

Records of the Office of the Adjutant General (Record Group 94). Files, 1870-1889.

These files are often more revealing of health, attitudes, and personality than others. The portion entitled "Appointment, Commission, and Personal" (ACP) is especially helpful. In it the historian finds medical reports, reasons for leaves of absence, home addresses, and other more personal data than usually encountered in other official records.

Military Division of the Missouri (Record Group 98: Records of United States Army Commands). Files, 1870-1883.

From the standpoint of official correspondence for the period of the Indian wars, these files are often more valuable than those of higher or lower echelons. As the largest and most important division of the army, it handled much correspondence that cannot be located in the records of other commands.

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Because this command existed for only about three months, its files contain relatively few documents.



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Mackenzie

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Notes Mackenzie's relief from command of the Department of Texas after he became insane.

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Mackenzie's obituary.



Ogle, Ralph H. "Federal Control of the Western Apaches, 1848-1886," New Mexico Historical Review (1940).

One Who Was There, "Scouting on the 'Staked Plains' (Llano Estacado) with Mackenzie in 1874," United Service, XIII (1885), 400-412, 532-543.

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