

# ANNALS OF IOWA.

VOL. VII. IOWA CITY, OCTOBER, 1869. No. IV.

## THE ARMY OF THE SOUTH-WEST, AND THE FIRST CAMPAIGN IN ARKANSAS.

BY SAM'L PRENTIS CURTIS,

BREVET CAPTAIN AND AID-DE-CAMP TO MAJOR GENERAL CURTIS.

[Continued from page 225.]

As it is undoubtedly known to the enemy that low water prevents our iron-clad boats from reaching there, they will probably fortify the point, an important one to either belligerent; hence if an expedition proceeds up the river it will *now* be necessary to have land force sufficient to carry any work which may be there erected. You are in communication with Gen. Halleck and understand his views and expectations relative to this river. If, as is probably the case, he wishes it opened and kept open to communicate with Gen. Curtis, *or for capture of Little Rock*, I beg leave, with no confidence, however, in my own judgment of military matters, to suggest that this place, distant 90 miles, Clarendon, distant 60 miles, and Duvall's Bluff, distant 40 miles from Little Rock, the last by railroad, should be held. A regiment to each place with a few guns and cavalry would perhaps be sufficient.

I need scarce add that at this stage of water, light transports will be necessary, especially above this point, and they should be barricaded against small arms. The river is narrow, tortuous, and its banks most of the way covered with dense timber. Any expedition to be sent up the river should be started at the earliest possible moment, as the river will soon fall so as to preclude even the wooden gunboats from ascending. The number of the accompanying troops it is for your judgment to suggest. I should think five or seven thousand none too many, as that number could, if necessary, in co-operation with Gen. Curtis, move on Little Rock and end all organized opposition in this state.

For the accompanying "telegrams" designed for Gen. Halleck, please substitute in your own name whatever you may deem proper.

I remain yours respectfully,

G. N. FITCH, Colonel.

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## NOTICE.

TO THE INHABITANTS OF MONROE COUNTY, ARKANSAS:

Guerrilla bands, raised in your vicinity, have fired from the woods upon the United States gunboats and transports in White River. This mode of warfare is that of savages. It is in your power to prevent it in your vicinity. You will, therefore, if it is repeated, be held responsible in person and property. Upon a renewal of such attacks an expedition will be sent against you to seize and destroy your personal property.

It is our wish that no occasion for such a course shall arise, but that every man shall remain at home in pursuit of his peaceful avocation, in which he will not be molested unless a continuance of such barbarous guerrilla warfare renders vigorous measures on our part necessary.

Given at headquarters, on steamboat "White Cloud" at St. Charles, Ark., this 23d day of June, 1862.

By order of G. N. Fitch, Colonel Commanding U. S. forces.

(Signed)

JNO. D. CARODIN, Act. Adj't.

HEADQUARTERS U. S. FORCES, }  
ST. CHARLES, ARK., June 24, 1862. }

MAJ. GEN. WALLACE:

*Sir*:—Subsequent to my report of 21st inst. guerrilla bands have twice fired into the gunboats and transports from the woods opposite St. Charles, and once upon the pickets above the town, killing one of the mortar boatmen, who was detailed at Memphis as a part of a gun squad to act with this regiment, and a seaman on the gunboat Lexington. To put a stop to such barbarous warfare, Maj. Bringhurst was sent with four companies, escorted by the gunboats "Cincinnati" and "Lexington," up Indian Bay into the county of Monroe, where these bands were said to have been raised, with orders to post conspicuously copies of the accompanying notice. The expedition was successful, seizing some ammunition that was about to be used by the bands, and bringing in three prisoners who were charged with aiding and abetting them. One of the prisoners, Moore, appears to be a surgeon of the Confederate army on furlough obtained upon tender of his resignation, which has not been finally acted upon. As surgeon, he claims exemption from captivity under an agreement between belligerents. He was not taken as such, but as a member or aiding in the formation of guerrilla bands. An investigation of the case is now being made. An expedition was planned for this morning at 6½, up the river to Crochet's Bluff, where considerable cotton was said to be concealed, and one or two mounted guerrilla bands stationed. At that hour a note was received from Capt. Winsler, requesting the expedition might be deferred until the next day. The request was complied with and preparations made to clear the under-brush opposite this place to deprive the guerrillas of cover. These preparations were suspended by notice from Capt. Winsler of his intention to immediately take the gunboats out of the river, under an apprehension that a fall in the water might render it inconvenient to do so if he longer

delayed. Conscious that the small force under my command could not be able, unsupported by gunboats, to hold the place and insure the safety of the transports, orders were reluctantly given to call in the pickets and embark the troops for the purpose of accompanying the gunboats to the mouth of the river.

Very respectfully yours,

(Signed)

G. N. FITCH, Col. Com'd'g 46th Ind. Vols.

HEADQUARTERS ARMY OF THE TENNESSEE, }  
MEMPHIS, June 26, 1862. }

COL. G. N. FITCH, Com'd'g Expedition on White River:

*Sir*:—I send five steamers loaded with supplies for Gen. Curtis' army. As they necessarily pass through a hostile country, great caution will have to be exercised to prevent these supplies from falling into the hands of the enemy, or from being destroyed.

I have selected you as commander of the expedition, and reinforce you with two additional regiments, as you will perceive from special orders accompanying this.

It would be impossible to give full special instructions for the management of this expedition. Much must necessarily be left to the discretion of the officer in command. I would suggest, however, that two pieces of artillery be placed on the bow of the boat intended to lead. That all of them be kept well together. When you tie up for the night, strong guards be thrown out upon the shore, and that troops be landed and required to march and clear out all points suspected of concealing the foe.

It is desirable those supplies should reach Gen. Curtis as early as possible. As soon as the boats can possibly be discharged, return them, bringing your entire command to St. Charles, or to where you now are.

It is not intended that you shall reach Gen. Curtis against all obstacles, but it is highly desirable that he should be reached.

I am Colonel, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

(Signed)

U. S. GRANT, Maj. Gen. Com'd'g.

HEADQUARTERS INDIANA BRIGADE, }  
MONTGOMERY'S POINT, ARK., 27th June, 1862. }

MAJOR-GENERAL U. S. GRANT, COMM'D'G DIST. WEST TENN., MEMPHIS:

*Sir*:—You are probably aware by this time that owing to the rapid fall of White River, the iron-clad gun boats, considering it unsafe to remain longer as high up as St. Charles, descended to the Mississippi. Having but one regiment with me, which was entirely insufficient to protect both sides from the attack of guerrillas, and hold the town and ensure safety to the transport "White Cloud," laden with stores for Gen. Curtis' command, the regiment and transports accompanied the gunboats to the mouth of White River to await farther orders. At this place your letter of instructions, of the 26th inst., was handed me, and in obedience thereto, and to former instructions, this command will proceed again up White

River, and I beg that you will send without delay, another transport with 200 or 300 cavalry, which are indispensable in scouring the country and protecting the infantry from the annoyance of guerrillas. They can join this command at St. Charles or above. The excessive heat and character of the country, render the assistance of cavalry highly necessary, indeed almost indispensable.

The route from St. Charles, a few miles back of the town, is through a prairie country, through which rove mounted rangers, in addition to foot guerrillas. In my dispatch to Major Gen. Wallace, which you may have seen, I stated that he undoubtedly could have passed "Duvall's Bluff," which was then only partially fortified, without much difficulty, if the gun boats could have been prevailed upon to proceed up the river, but that the bluff would be strengthened as soon as the enemy discovered we had returned down the river. I am now advised that there are two or three heavy guns mounted there, with a considerable force of infantry.

It will be necessary to successfully attack that place, for an additional force of infantry, besides the cavalry, to be sent, as I fully stated to Gen. Wallace, and if it is absolutely necessary to open communication with Gen. Curtis I would respectfully ask that you send the reinforcements of infantry and cavalry as soon as possible, in light transports, with rations for the troops; the transports can be used, if necessary, to lighten the boats now freighted for Gen. Curtis. Upon a consultation just had with the commanders of the gunboat fleet, I fear they will refuse to escort the troops and transports any farther than St. Charles, and thus, for the third time, compel the expedition to return. Above Duvall's Bluff we could proceed without the aid of gun boats, as we could, indeed, from St. Charles, with a force of 4,000 infantry and a corresponding number of cavalry and guns.

Very respectfully, your ob't serv't,

(Signed)

G. N. FITCH,

Col. 46th Ind. Vols., White River Expedition.

HEADQUARTERS, TRANS. MISS. DISTRICT, }  
LITTLE ROCK, ARK., June 25th, 1862. }

COL. G. N. FITCH, COM'D U. S. FORCES AT ST. CHARLES:

COLONEL: A copy of your proclamation of 23d inst., addressed to the citizens of Monroe county, has come into my hands. I have the honor to enclose you a copy of an order recently issued by me, authorizing the formation of companies to operate at will, in the absence of specific instructions, against the forces of the United States Government, and accepting all such into the service and pay of the Confederate States. They are recognized by me, as the commander of this Department, as Confederate troops, and I assert it my indisputable right to dispose and use those troops along the banks of the White River, or wherever else I may deem proper, even should it prove annoying to you in your operations.

I have thought it but just that I should furnish you with a copy of my order, that you may act advisedly, and I respectfully *forewarn* you, that should your threat be executed against any citizens of this district, I shall retaliate, man for man upon the Federal officers and soldiers who now are and hereafter may be in my custody as prisoners of war.

I have the honor to be, Colonel,

Very respectfully, your ob't servant,

(Signed)

T. C. HINDMAN, Major General Commanding.

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HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES FORCES, }  
 St. CHARLES, ARK., 28th June, 1862. }

MAJ. GEN. T. C. HINDMAN, Com'd'g C. S. A. Forces, Little Rock, Ark. :

Sir:—Yours of 25th inst. was placed in my hands, under flag of truce, this P. M., together with a copy of your General Order, No. 17, dated 17th inst. You advise me that you have been placed in possession of a copy of my proclamation of 23d inst. to the citizens of Monroe County, Ark., notifying them that they will be held responsible in person and property for any injury they themselves or those raised in their midst might thereafter inflict in the name or under the guise of that savage warfare, outlawed by the civilized world, known as guerrilla warfare. You will permit me to suggest that your objections to any proclamation, comes with ill grace from you, when accompanied with your own above referred to, which order is but an encouragement to rapine and murder upon the part of those of this state if there be such so lost to all sense of honor as to avail themselves of your permission to commit such depredations. You must be aware that your Captains of Tens will soon become little else than highway banditti, more terrible to citizens of your own state than to soldiers and sailors of the United States. It was doubtless in pursuance of the policy indicated in your order, that your troops, who defended this place on the 17th, fired upon a part of the crew of the "Mound City" (who were scalded by an accident to the machinery of that boat) while helpless in the river, in which they had sprung to relieve their torture. It is believed that no troops of a civilized country would have dared to adopt such a course without being assured of being sustained by their commanding officer, especially after the world knew that when a similar accident happened to a Confederate gunboat, during the late naval engagement at Memphis, the United States soldiers and sailors had risked their lives to rescue those from the Mississippi who from the same cause had sought relief by jumping overboard. Your threat will not deter me in executing the letter of my proclamation in every case in which my judgment dictates its propriety or necessity.

Very respectfully yours,

(Signed)

G. N. FITCH, Col. Com'd'g U. S. Forces.

U. S. GUNBOAT "LEXINGTON," }  
CLARENDON, ARKANSAS, June 30, 1862. }

COL. G. N. FITCH:

*Sir*:—Upon consultation with, and the advice of the pilots of the "Lexington" and the White River pilot of the "White Cloud," I have reluctantly concluded that I cannot proceed any further up this river with the gunboats. I will be compelled to leave this point to-morrow at the latest. Will you be pleased to inform me in what manner my command can be of further aid to you.

Respectfully, &c.,

(Signed)

JAMES W. SHIRK,  
Lieut. Com'd'g, and Senior Naval Officer pres't.

HEADQUARTERS INDIANA BRIGADE, }  
CLARENDON, ARK., June 30, 1862. }

JAMES W. SHIRK, Lieut. Com'd'g:

*Sir*:—Yours of to-day is received, in which you say that "you have reluctantly concluded" not to "proceed any further up this river with the gunboats." If it is unsafe on account of the stage of water for the gunboats to proceed, it must be equally so for the transports, as at least two of them draw as much water as the former.

I shall be constrained, therefore, being deprived of the support of the gunboats in any effort which might be made to ascend, to direct the transports to accompany them down the river. This I do not only with an extreme reluctance, but under the conviction that the effect upon Gen. Curtis' command will be disastrous. Did the number of troops under my command justify the effort, I would permit the heavy laden transports to return with you, and proceed up the river with the lighter ones, but under the knowledge we possess that Duvall's Bluff is fortified, and a force of from 4,000 to 6,000 of the enemy stationed there, I do not feel justified in making the attempt, as it might result, when deprived of the support of the gunboats, in what I am particularly cautioned against in my instructions from Gen. Grant, namely, the supplies "falling into the hand of the enemy or being destroyed."

Under these embarrassing circumstances the only "further aid" you can render to "my command," will be to remain, if you deem it safe for your ships, somewhere between this point and the mouth of the river until an effort can be made to communicate with Gen. Curtis, or Gen. Grant's further pleasure in the premises be known.

Respectfully, &c.,

(Signed)

G. N. FITCH, Col. Com'd'g Brigade.

HEADQUARTERS INDIANA BRIGADE, }  
ON ST. "WHITE CLOUD," WHITE RIVER, ARK., July 3, 1862. }

MAJ. GEN. U. S. GRANT, Com'd'g at Memphis:

*Sir*:—About 3 o'clock A. M. of the 28th ult., we left Montgomery's Point and ascended White River to St. Charles. About 200 of the ene-

my's cavalry left that place upon our approach. In the evening a flag of truce entered our camp, the bearer bringing a communication from Gen. Hindman, C. S. A., a copy of which, together with my answer and papers pertaining to the subject matter of the correspondence, are forwarded herewith.

On the 30th ult. we reached Clarendon, being frequently fired upon during the day by guerrillas from the river bank; one man killed and six wounded of the 43d Indiana. Strong mounted parties, supposed to be Texas cavalry, were seen below and at Clarendon, who fled at our approach. At that place we tied up to examine the river, which, a short distance above, became very narrow and crooked, with sharp turns. During the examination, scouting parties were sent into the interior from both sides of the river. One of the parties visited the plantations of several of the men known to be members of the guerrilla band who had fired upon us the day before, and took from them six horses and mules. A small scouting party of infantry, mounted on transportation horses, towards evening had a skirmish with a superior number of Texan cavalry. A sergeant of Co. "I," 46th Indiana, one of the party, is missing. We ascertained here that Duvall's Bluff, ten miles above by land and 40 by water, is fortified with two guns, supposed to be eight inch, and from 10 to 20 smaller ones, and a force assembled there of about 6,000.

On the morning of the 1st, cannonading was heard in that direction, but every inquiry for thirty-six hours failed to elicit its cause. That it could have been no decisive action, is certain from the fact that, if the enemy had been victorious, their victory would have been trumpeted in our vicinity, and a knowledge of it readily obtained; while, had our troops gained a victory, there would have been but little difficulty, in the length of time mentioned, in communicating with them; but all efforts, directed to that end, did not enable us to ascertain the presence of our troops near Duvall's Bluff.

The gunboat "Lexington" ascended the river 15 or 20 miles. The result of its examination of the river was the determination expressed by Capt. Shirk, in his letter to me of the 30th June, a copy of which, together with a subsequent correspondence on the same subject, accompanies this. In pursuance of the determination arrived at by him, we left Clarendon on the morning of the 3d July; descended the river a few miles and met the 24th Indiana Col. Spicely, directed by you to report to me, and the "Acacia," which had left a short distance below a barge of coal, for which I immediately sent another boat. With the force now at my disposal, I shall continue efforts independent of the gunboats, to pass the supplies to Gen. Curtis or to communicate with him, at least until the time mentioned in my private note to you of to-day, as that within which there is reason to hope for direct intelligence from him, unless you should direct otherwise. From what I can have stated heretofore of the force of the enemy above, the result of the effort may well be deemed doubtful, but I shall endeavor at least not to risk the loss of the supplies. My views in

relation to the necessity of cavalry and a still larger force of infantry, as expressed in my previous report to Gen. Wallace and yourself, have undergone no change, but on the contrary their correctness strengthened by every additional day's observation.

Though the supplies go by water, and light transports can continue to ascend the river for several weeks to Augusta, if not to Jacksonport, the expedition in support of the transports must, from the nature of the country and character of the river and force of the enemy, be one mainly by land, until the river is thoroughly opened.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

(Signed)

G. N. FITCH, Col. Com'd'g Brigade.

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HEADQUARTERS INDIANA BRIGADE, }  
 ABERDEEN, ARK., July 6, 1862. }

MAJ. GEN. GRANT, Com'd'g at Memphis:

SIR:— We arrived here yesterday. A scouting party was sent out, who discovered the enemy within two miles of the place; one prisoner was taken. The morning of the 6th a reconnoissance was ordered, consisting of about two hundred of the 24th Indiana, under Col. Spicely, followed at an interval of half an hour by the same number of the 43d, under Lt. Col. Farrar, and again, after a like interval, by another detachment of the same number, jointly from the 34th and 46th, with a Dahlgren boat howitzer, which last detachment I accompanied. The remainder of the command, under Lt. Col. Cameron, were ordered to hold themselves in readiness, if required, for support. Col. Spicely was directed to proceed upon the road on which the enemy had been discovered the evening previous, and attack him whenever and wherever he met him and in whatever number. He followed the Duvall's Bluff road four miles, to an open road immediately upon the border of Grand Prairie, where his skirmishers discovered and drove in the enemy's pickets. Their main body, all mounted, made an attack upon his front, which was quickly repulsed, but, availing themselves of a point of thick timber which concealed their movements, they very soon afterwards attacked simultaneously his front, one flank and rear, charging up to within twenty paces of the ranks, but were repulsed with severe loss and fled in every direction—the main body followed the Duvall road. Soon afterwards a note, a copy of which accompanies this, was received by me, having joined the advance, asking permission to bury their dead, and the answer, of which I send you a copy, was returned. At the end of the thirty minutes, our troops were advanced in pursuit. The wagons conveying the enemy's dead were but a short distance beyond our front, with an escort, but of course not molested, we taking a parallel road, inclining more to the right, with a view of again engaging, if possible, the main body, who were seen retreating in such direction as would take them across our road some four miles in the prairie. The intense heat of the day, and the uselessness of the pursuit of mounted men by infantry, in-

duced me to recall the troops after they had advanced three miles. Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon Col. Spicely and the men and officers of his regiment engaged. The enemy's force, as shown by their muster-roll, which fell into our possession, was 450; our own engaged, 200. Their loss, as admitted by prisoners and secession sympathizers in the vicinity, was 84 killed, wounded and missing. But few prisoners were taken from the facility afforded them to escape by being mounted. Our loss is one killed and 21 wounded, according to the accompanying list.

Very respectfully, yours,

(Signed) G. N. FITCH, Col. Com'd'g White River Expedition.

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GRAND PRAIRIE, 1 o'clock A. M., }  
 July 6, 1862. }

TO THE COMMANDER OF U. S. FORCES ON GRAND PRAIRIE :

*Sir* :—I send Lieut. J. W. Blanton, under flag of truce, to the battle-field for my killed, to bury, also my wounded. I hope, sir, you will continue the ordinary courtesies of war.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

(Signed) P. H. WHEAT, Sr. Capt. Com'd'g Squadron.

P. H. WHEAT, Sr. Capt. Com'd'g C. S. A. Troops, Grand Prairie:

*Sir* :—Having a few moments since joined the detachment with which the troops under your command were engaged, your note was handed me. I will withdraw from the battle-field the troops under my command to enable your party to collect your dead; for this purpose thirty minutes will be allowed. Your wounded in our hands will be cared for.

(Signed) G. N. FITCH, Col. Com'd'g U. S. Forces.

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HEADQUARTERS INDIANA BRIGADE, }  
 CLARENDON, July 7, 1862. }

MAJ. GEN. U. S. GRANT, Com'd'g at Memphis :

*Sir* :—Desirous of ascending as high as possible for the purpose of continuing efforts to obtain Gen. Curtis' whereabouts and communicate with him, and advised that another body of the enemy were between Aberdeen and Duvall's Bluff, I directed the flotilla to ascend to this place with a view of here joining it overland, and marched the troops, accompanied with two howitzers attached to wagons, in the direction of the latter place. We left Aberdeen at 5 P. M. About two miles beyond the scene of yesterday's action a small picket of the enemy was discovered. The march was continued (being a moonlight night and a level prairie), distant from Aberdeen twelve miles, and about (12) midnight, a body of the enemy (mounted) was discovered a short distance to the left of the advance guard, consisting of a company and a half of the 34th Indiana. The object of the enemy appeared to be to cut off the advance from the main body, distant three-fourths of a mile. Capt. Hunter, commanding officer of the advance,

promptly formed, facing the enemy, and gave them a volley. They fled but rallied in about a half mile. Being with the advance, I ordered up a howitzer, which, with two or three well directed discharges, sent the enemy out of sight. As we were approaching a grove perpendicular to our line of march, skirmishers were thrown forward. They soon reported a considerable body of the enemy forming in the grove, as manifested by hearing the commands of their officers. One party, which showed itself outside the grove near the left of the line of skirmishers, was fired upon by them. The troops were so formed as to constitute three sides of a square. The front looking to the grove, its centre occupying the road, in which and forming a part of the front was placed one of the howitzers, the other covered the open space to the rear. Being thus formed, the whole command was ordered forward to within six hundred yards of the grove. The sound of preparations upon the part of the enemy became so distinct as to indicate an object of the howitzer, which was accordingly directed to shell the grove. After a few discharges the enemy were heard in full and rapid flight on the Duvall road. The command was moved forward to the edge of the grove, and so hasty had been the enemy's flight, canteens, cooking utensils, provisions, saddles and bridles were found scattered about, and a number of their horses captured and one prisoner. We learned from him that Col. Shefer, Arkansas troops, had that evening assumed command, superceding the officer who had been in command in the action the day previous, because of some charge of cowardice or incompetency against him. The enemy's loss is not known. One dead body was found near our line of march. We were distant from Duvall's Bluff seven miles, from Clarendon, ten. Several thousand of the enemy were known to be at and between us and the former place, and a force was supposed to be between us and the latter place. After a short rest, we continued our march reaching this place, and joined the flotilla soon after sunrise. No information of the positively reliable character relative to Gen. Curtis' position or movements could be obtained, but sufficient of a circumstantial character to render it very probable that he is thirty (30) miles from here, at or near Cotton Plant, on Cache River, which empties into White at this place. Although the men are very much exhausted with heat and a long night's march, I shall this P. M. commence a march up the Cache with the command accompanied by three 12-pound boat howitzers, with crews extemporized from the infantry. The enemy's pickets are within three miles of here, and he is known to be in large force between here and Cotton Plant, but I feel confident of defeating all his forces this side of the crossing of the Cache, six miles on the march, and holding that line until your reinforcements reach me, which will probably be during to-morrow or next day.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

(Signed)

G. N. FITCH, Col. Com'd'g Brigade.

HEADQUARTERS INDIANA BRIGADE, }  
CLARENDON, ARK., July 9, 1862. }

MAJ. GEN. U. S. GRANT, Com'd'g at Memphis:

Sir:—In accordance with the intention expressed in my report of yester-

day, the troops were formed at 6 P. M. of that day, on the river bank for the march up the Cache, when a transport was reported ascending the river. The troops were held in readiness but the expedition delayed for the arrival of the transport. Upon its arrival your despatch of the 6th was immediately placed in my hand, in which you state, "I have not the troops here, if I were to send all I have got, to reinforce you sufficiently to insure the success of the expedition up White river; Gen. Halleck positively refuses to send me more;" and in which you directed me to "remain at St. Charles, awaiting a certain contingency," of course the expedition up the Cache was abandoned; I deeming it useless to bring on an engagement with the enemy's troops on this side of the river with no adequate force to cross it or to follow up any advantage to open the communication with Gen. Curtis. Your direction to remain at St. Charles, I presume, would not preclude my remaining here instead of that point, the length of time you indicate, but in the absence of any probability of aid to follow up the expedition, and in view of the low and falling water, (the gunboats and transports having dragged upon the bar a mile below this place in ascending), we will descend again to St. Charles, from whence there is good water to the mouth of the river, and await the time you indicate. The most remote period to which in my message to Gen. Curtis, our ability to remain with the heavy transports in the river on account of the water, was the 14th inst.; soon after that time, therefore, if nothing is heard from him, or any additional despatch received from you, we shall probably leave the river for Memphis.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

G. N. FITCH,

Col. 46th Ind. Reg't Com'd'g White River Expedition.

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ST. CHARLES, July 10, 1862.

MAJ. GEN. GRANT, Com'd'g, Memphis, Tenn.

*Sir* :—We arrived here last evening. The report prevails here among the few so-called "Union Men," (a part of whom claim our protection and propose remaining with us,) that Gen. Curtis is on the Cache River, endeavoring to reach or communicate with us.

We will remain here the time indicated in yesterday's despatch, and if no reinforcements or further orders arrive, and no *positive* intelligence from Gen. Curtis, will, agreeable to your orders, proceed to Memphis. My regrets at this necessity (if it occurs) because of its probable effect upon Gen. Curtis's Command, have been heretofore expressed. With even 100 cavalry, a battery, and 1,000 more infantry, I would attempt communication with him up Cache. The attempt with caution, I believe would be successful; at all events there need be no risk of disaster.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

(Signed)

G. N. FITCH, Col. Com'd'g Brigade.

HEADQUARTERS INDIANA BRIGADE, }  
ON BOARD "WHITE CLOUD," WHITE RIVER, ARK., July 14, 1862. }

MAJ. GEN. GRANT, Com'd'g at Memphis:

*Sir*:—My despatches to you of the 8th from Clarendon, and 10th from St. Charles, apprised you that circumstantial evidence, sufficient in my mind to justify a movement of the command in that direction, was obtained, that Gen. Curtis was at or near Cotton Plant, on Cache River. In the former despatch you were advised that an expedition was fitted out and on the point of starting, but was abandoned in consequence of receipt of yours of the 6th inst., and that the fleet left Clarendon that evening soon after it arrived at St. Charles. On the evening of the 11th a scouting party brought in a prisoner whose statement was positive that, Gen. Curtis had been but two or three days previous to that, at Cotton Plant seeking to make his way to Clarendon, where he was expected to arrive that evening, (11th). Immediately two transports with howitzers and six companies of troops, under Maj. Grill, of 24th Indiana, were ordered to return to Clarendon with dispatch and ascertain the truth of the statement and communicate with him if possible. On arriving at that place, 2 P. M. of the 12th, Maj. Grill ascertained that Gen. Curtis had been there the evening of the 9th, and that his rear guard, cavalry, had left on the road to Helena only two hours previous. The howitzers on the transports fired signals all the afternoon. Hearing no response they returned to St. Charles, reaching there about one A. M. of the 13th. A strong scouting party was immediately ordered, led by myself, with a view of reaching that road and intersecting his line of march. This party left camp at 3 A. M., and after a laborious march of 18 miles finding he had passed the point where we reached the Helena road, eight hours, it was deemed useless for infantry, the only troops at my command, to attempt, especially during the extreme heat which prevailed, to overtake him, and not absolutely essential it should be done, as it was presumed that his army could not be more than 20 to 30 miles from Helena, and his advance perhaps already there. The party therefore returned to the transports, and they were ordered to leave forthwith for Helena. On the morning of the 9th, soon after our attack of the night previous upon a camp of the enemy, seven miles from Duvall's Bluff, that place was evacuated, the enemy taking his guns and munitions to Little Rock, tearing up the railroad track behind him, and he appeared to be concentrating all his troops at that place.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

G. N. FITCH, Col. Com'd'g Brigade.

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