

GENERAL HARRISON TO MAJ. GEN. VINCENT.

(War-1812.)

HEAD QUARTERS FORT GEORGE

3d Nov. 1813

SIR

Lieutenant Le Briton, an officer of your service, arrived at Detroit on the 15th Ult. bearing a flag and a letter to me from Genl Proctor, requesting humane treatment for the prisoners in my possession and the restoration of private property and papers. This letter was directed to me at the Moravian Town and as the subject was not of the importance to authorise the Lieutenant, pursuing me to Detroit, I was somewhat surprised at his doing so. It did not appear to me proper to permit him to return in that way as I was upon the point of setting out for this frontier by water, I conceived that that mode of conveyance would be full as agreeable to him and would enable him to meet Genl Proctor as expeditiously as by the land route—I regret that the badness of the weather and other causes, which he will explain, has detained him until this time.

Understanding that you are the senior officer, I have determined to address my answer to you—with respect to the subject of General Proctor's letter—those which I have the honor to enclose you from the British Officers, who were taken on the 5th Ultimo, to their friends, and the report of Lt. Le Briton; will satisfy you, that no indulgence which humanity could claim in their favor or the usages of War sanction, has been withheld. The disposition of the property taken on the field of action or near it, was left to the Commanding Officer at Detroit—The instructions given to this gentleman and the well known integrity and generosity of his character will ensure to the claimants, the utmost Justice and liberality in his decisions. In making this statement I wish it however, to be distinctly understood, that my conduct with regard to the prisoners and the property taken, has been dictated solely by the motives of humanity, and not by a belief that it could be claimed upon the score of reciprocity of treatment towards the American prisoners who have fallen into the hands of General Proctor. The unhappy persons of this description who have escaped from the tomahawks of the Savages in the employment of the British Government, who fought under the immediate orders of that officer, have suffered all the indignities and deprivations which Human Nature is capable of supporting. There is no single instance that I had heard of in which the property of the officers has been respected. I am far from believing that the conduct of General Proctor has been thought an example, worthy of

imitation by the greater part of the British Officers and in the character of General Vincent I have a pledge that he will unite his exertions with mine to soften as much as possible the fate of those, whom the fortunes of war may reciprocally place in our power.

But, Sir, there is another subject upon which, I wish an explicit declaration—will the Indians who still adhere to the cause of His Britannic Majesty be suffered to continue that horrible species of warfare which they have heretofore practised against our troops and those still more horrible depredations upon the peaceable inhabitants of our frontiers? I have sufficient evidence to show that even the latter have not always been perpetrated by small parties of vagrant Indians acting at a distance from the British Army; some of the most atrocious instances having occurred under the eyes of the British Commander and the Head of the Indian Department. I shall pass by the tragedy of the river Raisin and that equally well known, which was acted on the Miami river after the defeat of Col. Dudley, and select three other instances of savage barbarity committed under the auspices of General Proctor.

In the beginning of June a small party of Indians, conducted by an Ottawa chief, who I believe is now with the British Army under your command, left Malden in bark canoes, in which they coasted Lake Erie, to the mouth of Portage River, the canoes were taken across the portage to the Sandusky bay, over which the party proceeded to the mouth of Cold Creek and from thence by land to the settlements upon that river, where they captured three families, consisting of one man and twelve women and children. After taking the prisoners some distance, one of the women was discovered to be unable to keep up with them, in consequence of her advanced state of pregnancy. She was immediately tomahawked, stripped naked, her womb ripped open and the child taken out; three or four of the children were successively butchered as they discovered their inability to keep up with the party. Upon the arrival of the Indians at Malden two or three of the prisoners were ransomed by Col. Elliott and the others by the citizens of Detroit, where they remained until taken off by their friends upon the recovery of that place by our army. I have been informed the Savage Chief received from Col. Elliott, a *reprimand* for his cruelty.

On the 29th or 30th of the same month, a large party of Indians were sent from Malden on a war expedition to Lower Sandusky—On a farm near that place they murdered the whole family, consisting of a man, his wife, son and daughter.

During the last attack upon Fort Meigs by Genl. Proctor, a party headed by a Seneca, an intimate friend of Tecumseh's was sent to endeavour to

detach from our interests the Shawanese of Wapockanata. In their way thither, they murdered several men and one woman who was working in her cornfield.

I have selected, Sir, the above from a long list of similar instances of barbarity which the history of the last 15 months could furnish, because they were perpetrated, if not in the view of the British commander by parties, who came immediately from his camp and returned to it, who even received their daily support from the King's Stores and who in fact (as the documents in my possession show) formed part of his army. To retaliate then upon the Subjects of the King would have been justifiable by the laws of War and by the usages of the most civilized Nations. To do so has been amply in my power. The tide of fortune has changed in our favor and an extensive and flourishing province opened to our Arms. Nor have instruments of Vengeance been wanting. The Savages, who sued to us for mercy would gladly have shown their claims to it, by reacting upon the Thames, the bloody scenes of Sandusky and Cold Creek. A single sign of approbation would have been sufficient to pour upon the subjects of the King, their whole fury. The future conduct of the British officer will determine the correctness of mine, in withholding it. If the Savages should be again let loose upon our settlements, I shall with Justice be accused of having sacrificed the interests & honor of my country and the lives of my fellow citizens, to feelings of false and mistaken humanity. You are a soldier Sir—and as I sincerely believe possess all those honorable sentiments which ought always to be found in men who follow the profession of Arms. Use then I pray you, your authority and influence to stop that dreadful effusion of innocent blood, which proceeds from the employment of those Savage Monsters, whose aid (as must now be discovered) is so little to be depended upon, when it is most wanted, and which can have so trifling an effect upon the issue of the war. The effect of their barbarity will not be confined to the present generation. Ages yet to come will feel the effects of the deep rooted hatred and enmity which they must produce between the two Nations. I deprecate most sincerely the dreadful alternative which will be offered to me, should they be continued, but I do solemnly declare that if the Indians, that remain under the influence of the British Government are suffered to commit any depredations upon the citizens within the Districts that is confided to my protection, I shall remove the restrictions which have hitherto been imposed upon those who have offered their services to the U. States and direct them to carry on the War in their own way. I have never heard a single excuse for the employment of the Savages by your Government unless we can credit the story of some British officer,

having dared to assert that "as we employed the Kentuckians, you had a right to make use of the Indians." If such injurious statements have really prevailed to the prejudice of a brave, well informed and virtuous people, it will be removed by the representations of your officers, who were lately taken upon the river Thames. They will inform you, Sir, that so far from offering any violence to the persons of their prisoners these "*Savages*" would not permit a word to escape them, which was calculated to wound or insult their feelings—this too with the sufferings of their friends and relatives at the river Raisin and Miami fast upon their recollection.

I have the honor to be Sir

Your very Humble Servt

WILLIAM HENRY HARRISON

Major Genl. commanding the N. Western Army of the United States.

P. S. I pledge myself for the truth of the above statement, in relation to the murders, committed by the Indians.

W. H. H.

To Maj. Gen. Vincent

Commg. the British Forces at Burlington Heights.