

MAJOR MUIR TO COLONEL PROCTOR.

(War-1812.)

MIAMI RIVER 2 miles above Fort Miami Sept 30th 1812

SIR,

I beg leave to acquaint you that on the morning of the 27th instant as I mentioned to you in my former letter of the 27th it was intended to have attacked the Enemy on his march, and every thing was ready for that purpose, however in the morning it was thought necessary to send out a reconnoitring party to see if he was likely to move, and Captain Caldwell and Lieut. Askin of the Militia and a party of sixty Indians were sent out for that purpose. In the course of an hour, some shots were fired and our parties returned leaving one Indian whom they reported to be killed, and said that the enemy was on his march towards us—Still no further steps were taken by the Indians to prevent his progress, soon after another Indian came in and reported that the Enemy was within less than two miles of us, and that another Indian had been killed by them I then requested Colonel Elliott to inform me, what the Indians intended to do; he went to Round Head (the principal chief) and returned immediately saying “I might chuse any place in the plain which I thought best adapted to the use of the guns, and that the Indians would flank them.” I told him I should occupy the road skirting the wood; where they would be ready to act in any situation as soon as this arrangement took place, and the Troops were at their stations as a guard to the guns—Colonel Elliott rode up to me, and said the Indians would not come that way, and requested I would retire through the woods, and stop at the first place where I could take up a good position, and that they would flank us as they said before. We then commenced our retreat

and at the distance of about four miles in our rear, there was a small opening in the wood, where they supposed the guns might be disposed of to advantage, but I soon convinced them to the contrary, by showing them that the guns could not possibly throw a shot more than one hundred yards in any direction, and I told them the Guns were brought for the purpose of battering Fort Wayne, but would not answer to fight in the woods, and that as soon as we arrived at Fort Defiance I would endeavour to send them off and should then be at liberty to act according to circumstances. I then made every arrangement and had the artillery and stores embarked in boats under the direction of Lieut Troughton, with orders to proceed to Amherstburg with as much expedition as possible. This Service being arranged and sent off, I went to the Indian Camp where the Indians were at Council, and was soon given to understand that they were determined to meet the Enemy at an advantageous spot in the morning—The next morning (the 28th) about an hour before day light I received a message from Colonel Elliott, saying that the Indians had been conjuring all night, and that the Mackinac and Sagina Indians were going to leave the Camp. This being the case, I made no doubt but a retreat had been agreed upon, and intended by the whole, and gave directions for the Cattle and Baggage to proceed. In less than half an hour afterwards I received another message from Colonel Elliott saying that the Indians were determined to fight, and requested I would move on the Troops—I immediately ordered them to march, and was at their camp in a few minutes. Colonel Elliott then came up to me, and begged I would halt the men for a few minutes as the Indians were not yet ready—I then observed them moving off bag and baggage in bands of six and seven at a time, in every direction. I mentioned what I had seen to Colonel Elliott, who told me they were going to hide their things, and would return immediately—The Chief of the Mackina Indians then came up and took his leave, saying that the Indians were divided amongst themselves, and that he would take home his young men, adding that those who had horses might remain, as they could easily run away in case of defeat—He then Marched off with the principal part of his Band, which consisted of 200 young men—I then observed to three or four of the Interpreters that were standing by me, “I thought the camp began to be very thin”—At that instant a young Huron said that by the time we got to the fighting ground we should not have half the number that were then present—This gave me a pretty clear idea of what I might expect—I was however determined to see, and we all marched off for the ground that it was intended we should fight on, which was the East bank of the North or little Miami River, branching off from the other about three miles above Fort Defiance—Soon after our arrival at the place, Colonel

Elliott and I went to look at the ground and on our return a Prisoner was brought in by one of the Indians, who said, that he had strayed from the Army about four days before, and that he had not eat any thing during that time—We then examined him respecting the Army and he informed us that it was commanded by General Harrison as far as Fort Wayne when he was obliged to return to the Wabash in consequence of some of their Towns having been burnt by the Indians, and that as soon as he had quieted them, he was to return to the command of the Army, and bring with him the force he took to the Wabash. That during his absence the army was commanded by General Winchester, he further said that the army was three thousand strong, consisting of the following Regiments Viz—Wells' Regulars, Lewis', Allens' and Scott's Volunteers from Kentucky Simmerole's Cavalry 250 strong, and 150 mounted Riflemen, with one six pounder and 70 waggons—that they were short of provisions, but that they expected another army of the same strength to meet them at Fort Defiance which was to bring provisions for both armies, and four pieces of cannon, and that both Armies were to have met at Fort Defiance on the 26th inst: and that it was generally thought it was intended on their meeting, they should proceed to Detroit—During this conversation I recollected what I had been told respecting the number of Indians I should have, and as nearly as I could judge there were not more than from 320 to 330 present—I mentioned this to Colonel Elliott and told him I considered it would be madness with such a handful of men to think of opposing an army of such a force; besides it was running the risk of being completely locked in, without the smallest chance of success, or even escaping—He then told me that two of the Indian Conjurors had dreamt that they should be successful that day, and that they were determined to fight—I then told him to acquaint the Indians, that I could not see the smallest prospect of success, but on the contrary, should I engage, the whole of the Troops under my Command must inevitably fall. I was determined not to throw away the lives of so many men, and for no purpose. He then went to Round Head and informed him of my determination—Round Head then came to me with an Interpreter and urged the necessity of trying their success in compliance with the dream of the conjurors, and that at all events we might drive back their advanced guard—I agreed that that might be done but what would be the advantage, when while we were engaged with these few men, we run the risk of being cut off from our baggage and provisions, and at the same time allowed the Enemy to get so near that to retreat with my Troops would have been morally impossible—He repeated that as to being surrounded and cut off we could easily prevent that by retreating through the woods, I told him, that might answer for

his people very well, but would not for mine, and that if he would collect the Warriors and young men of his Nation, I would wait for them at the Camp we left in the morning, and we might then retreat in a body. To this he agreed, and we commenced our Retreat accordingly. Lieutenant Trough-ton who will deliver this Letter, will give you every information respecting our Retreat to this place, as we overtook him the first day, and he has been with us ever since—He will also account to you for some Stores which he was obliged to destroy in order to get down our guns—Some Indians who had been sent up the Glaise river on the 27th to examine into the truth of the report the Prisoner we took made respecting an army being on its way down by that river returned without having seen anything of the army, but they discovered fresh footsteps and heard bugles sounding very distinctly, and from that they imagined the Enemy were encamped not more than two miles from the Fort—Previous to this they had heard two cannon shots in the same direction but at some distance further off—Colonel Elliott this day assured me that he would send out parties with white men to reconnoitre, and watch the movements of the army from whom we should receive information according as anything material should occur—Before I conclude, permit me to assure you that every praise is due to the officers of my little army for their exertions in endeavoring to forward the expedition and for their Zeal and cheerful compliance with all orders on every occasion.

The men also behaved remarkably well, and I have no doubt that could they have been brought into action with any hopes of success, their conduct would have been equally good.

(Signed)

A. C. MUIR Major
and Captn 41st Regt.
Commanding

Colonel Procter
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Commanding
Detroit.