

The farming operations carried on at this post during the past year were, on the whole, not successful. Having been in command here during two seasons, the summer of 1876 and the past one, I think I may say that the Cypress Hills are not adapted for farming. The great drawback seems to be the prevalence of heavy summer frosts. This year the yield of potatoes was not equal to the seed, though the roots yielded a fair return.

I may here mention that the winter, so far, has been very severe. On the 23rd inst., the thermometer fell to 42 degrees below zero; during the week ending the 20th inst., the cold averaged 25° below zero. On the morning of the 20th, a man by the name of Scott, a deserter from the American army, was found by one of our men badly frozen, a few miles from this post. He had lost his way on the road from the Big Lake; he was brought to the hospital where he received every care and attention until his death, which took place on the morning of the 28th inst.

I would respectfully remark that, if not absolutely necessary to maintain the post in the present position, it would be well to remove it to some other place, and if an eligible site can be procured out of the Cypress Hills altogether it would be better, as in my opinion the climate both in summer and winter is not conducive to either the health or comfort of men or horses. The climate is so variable that in winter the sudden springing up of a storm renders travelling exceedingly dangerous. As an instance, on the evening of the 24th, a detachment returning from a camp of starving Indians, where they had been with provisions, were caught in a terrible storm that seemed to spring up in a moment. They became separated from the guide, who was only about 100 feet from them at the time, they were unable to see anything or recognize the country, although but a couple of miles from the fort. The sergeant in charge wisely concluded to camp where they were until the storm abated. He reported to me on his return that he feared some of the men would have frozen to death had a couple of scouts not been sent out from the fort in search of them, when the guide who first arrived at the fort reported the matter to me. Such storms in this section are of a very common occurrence.

I have also the honor to inform you that the force at this fort, considering the great amount of detachment, escort and other duty during the summer, and continually being done, is as regards their drill and knowledge of general duties, efficient. It will be understood that it is quite impossible to take raw recruits and in a few months while, at the same time, doing all and every other duties they may be called upon to do, bring them to a state of perfection. The recruits have not had the instruction in equitation that I should have wished, had their other duties not been so heavy. In my opinion, it would tend greatly to the efficiency of the force if a depot for the training and instruction of recruits was established where they would remain for a stated time, solely for that purpose, before being allowed to do general duty. Such an establishment would, I consider, now that the term of service is five years, be much more feasible than when three years was the term.

In conclusion, I have also the honor to forward, herewith, a magisterial return of all cases for the present year. I may mention that there are always a great many disputes and difficulties settled to the satisfaction of justice without going through the legal process, and consequently of which no record is kept.

I would suggest the propriety of each year presenting to men badges for good shooting, to be worn as in the British services such a distinction would undoubtedly be highly prized by the men, and would be to them an incentive to excel.

I have the honor to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

L. N. F. CROZIER,

*Supt. Commanding.*

Forwarded,

JAMES MACLEOD,

Commissioner.