

Head Quarters Post of
Horton April 3 1866.

Editor Army & Navy Journal.

Sir

I notice in your paper of the 10th ult. an article headed "Meritt and Custer" in which it is stated "that Genl. Custer knowing that the trial for desertion was a farce, tried every humane way, to save his army from going to pieces, but failed. He then tried a new way, and flogged several men and shaved their heads. This had the desired effect and brought down the friends of these soldiers upon him &c."

In justice to the Western troops who were serving under General Custer, at the time referred to, I would state that your correspondent, or the corresponding of the New York Times, has been misinformed, with regard to the most material points, in his statement.

So far from General Custer "knowing the trial for desertion to be a farce", he approved, and carried into effect, the sentence of death, for desertion on the person of a private of my Regiment, before his command left Alexandria.

The statement is incorrect again, in saying "that flogging and shaving of heads was resorted to on account of, and to suppress desertions. On the contrary there were but few and rare cases of desertion, until the issuing and publishing of Genl. Custer's ^{Special} Order."

of L. in which after referring to alleged ^{foraging} depredations and unauthorized depredations on the part of the Command. he says.
"Owing to the delays of Court Martials
"and their impracticability, when the
"Command is unsettled, it is hereby
"ordered that any enlisted man of this
"Command, violating the above order or
"committing depredations upon the person
"or property of Citizens will have
"his head shaved and in addition will
"receive twenty five lashes ^{upon his} ~~back~~
"back will laid on This punishment
"will in all cases be administered by the
"Provost Marshal of this Command who is charged
"with the execution of this order, so far as it lies
"in his power."

The desertions, immediately after this Order increased rapidly and all the ill feeling towards Gen. Custer, on the part of the soldiers and Officers of his Command, as well as their friends, had its origin in the issuing of this Order, inflicting inhuman and barbarous punishment, in well known violation of the articles of War. See Page 498. 499. Revised Army Regulations 1863.
I reported with my Regiment to Gen. Custer on the 23rd June 1865. at Alexandria La and remained under his command until the 16th Sept. following.
Very respectfully
Your obedient servant

W. D. D. St. Colonel
12th Regt. Ill. Cav. Vol.