

Missouri Democrat
October 19, 1867

Peace Commission on the March

Arrival at Harker—Salute and Serenade—March to Camp—Glorious Times—Characteristics of the Gentiles—Business—A Letter—The March—Another Letter—Very Interesting—Arrival at Larned

Fort Larned, Oct. 13, 1867

Reception at Fort Harker

You have already received in a former letter of mine the gracious reception we met at Harker. Did I tell you of the thundering salute that greeted our awaking in the morning? Have I already informed you how they serenaded us up to a late hour? How the ladies at Harker—bless them—did their utmost for our comfort. If so then I will not repeat the tale.

Off Westward

About 2 P.M. the train of ten ambulances, containing the Commissioners and the press gang—a battery of catlin guns of the 4th artillery, and thirty wagons, containing stores, roll off westward, escorted by three companies of the 7th cavalry, commanded by Major Allen.

The Personal

In the ambulances are Generals Terry, Harney, J.R. Hardie, Senator Henderson, Commissioner Taylor, Colonel Tappan, Governor Crawford, ex-Lieutenant Governor Root, Senator Ross, A.S.H. White, Secretary Commission; John D. Howland, *Harper's Weekly*; Bulkley, New York *Herald*; S.F. Hall, Chicago *Tribune*; Geo. Center Brown, Cincinnati *Commercial*; H.I. Budd, Cincinnati *Gazette*; Wm. Fayel, St. Louis *Republican*; George Willis, phonographer; Reynolds, editor *Kansas State Journal*, correspondent Chicago *Times*, one from the Chicago *Republican*, one from the Leavenworth *Bulletin*, and you own inimitable "Stanley." A march of one mile, across the Smoky river, and we camp. We have gained a start.

Compliment to "Regulars"

The reason that we have such an escort may be seen by reading the subjoined letter:

Medicine Lodge Creek, Oct. 5, 1867

SIR: I have the honor to inform you, that as far as I am concerned, I feel perfectly safe among these Indians without soldiers, yet, if the honorable commissioners feel otherwise, it might be better to have an escort with them, and in this event I would suggest that you bring regulars, and in number not exceeding two hundred. I make this suggestion for the reason that the strictest military discipline will have to be enforced while these soldiers are among the Indians. This discipline is not often found outside the regular army. It would be wiser to come without any soldiers, than to come with a few; hence I name two hundred as a sufficient number for an escort, and few enough not to alarm the Indians. I will meet you at Fort Larned, and will have some of the chiefs of each tribe with them. Do not leave that post until I get there.
Your obedient servant,

THOS. MURRAY

Superintendent of Indian Affairs.

HON. N.G. TAYLOR, Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

A Picture

Just one mile away to the northward across the river, stands Fort Harker, looking this evening like a city with its row of tents dwindling down to the size of head stones laid with regularity by an experienced sexton. A tall, strong flagstaff towers above all the buildings, and even from here the beautiful American flag can be seen waving and flapping protectingly from its peak. A low ridge intervening between the fort and our camp prevents us from seeing the garrison moving about, but along the road which ascends the hill come trooping some cavalry advancing towards us. They halt at the river and allow their horses to drink, and then retire with the same steady gait and discipline as they advanced. Well, our camp is situated on the brow of the hill looking lovingly across the river, and into the old fort, now dilapidated, and only distinguishable from where we stand by two solitary adobe chimneys which last winter saw a group of exiled soldiers begging them for the friendly warmth of their homely hearths. At the west end of our camp are the tents of three companies of the 7th cavalry under the command of Major Allen. The wagons of their regiment are clustered near loaded with green, red and blue blankets, gaudy printed calico, blue cloth, work-house hats, beads and silver medals for the friendly chiefs that we intend to visit. Then comes the artillery, two catlin guns belonging to batter B. 4th artillery commanded by Capt. Parsons. The tents of the artillerists flank the north side of the battery and therefore were parallel with the other tents. Eastward are ranged the ambulances, ten in number. These, while on the march, contain the commissioners and the members of the press. The whole camp is flanked at the eastern end by the tents of the commissioners. Those exposed to the everlasting shrieking wind sway like drunken beings, their flaps like human arms beating to the fierce whistling gusts which threaten momentarily to give way before its power. Like the impetuous Provençal Mistraon or the Levanter this American simoom comes down upon this exposed spot without a warning, sometimes leveling every forward object to the ground. It is the first thing the residents at Fort Harker will complain of.

The Commissioners in Council

Fronting their tent in a social circle, even while the wind is making such a terrible racket, the commissioners, now composed of Henderson, Taylor, Harney, Tappan, Terry and J.B. Hardie, discuss the long mooted and most detested Indian question. Like philosophers, like astute

geometricians do these gentlemen look the question in the face patiently and kindly. Though their efforts fall in perfecting a peace between the white and red men, no person catching a glance at this extemporaneous council would attach blame to them. This knotty enigma, which grew more knotty and warty day by day, is gradually being unraveled, and now bare lines, straight facts easy to be satisfied are all that is left. Just look with me between the wheels of the wagon, at the circle, examine each feature and tell me what you see.

Harney

We will first take Harney, who is now bending forward, seated on his camp-stool, his broad face marked with the traces of busy years; his kindly blue eye beams brighter now, as he is engaged in an animated discussion; he lifts a forefinger to emphasize a point. When he stands erect he towers above all like Saul the chosen of Israel. It does not require a remarkable degree of acuteness to see that underneath that calm, smiling, venerable exterior of Harney, there lies a wonderful power of vitality and passion not quite dead. Really, a goodly man, a tried soldier and a gentleman.

The Senator

Opposite Harney, you will see another Missourian of Pike County, John B. Henderson, known here as Senator Henderson. He is the business man of the commission. He is forever endeavoring to sift evidence concerning the Indians we intend to visit. One of forcible utterance in speech, possessed of a dogged perseverance to obtain light upon a dubious subject; never forgetful of Western interests; a cool head, courteous in deportment, patient, affable to all, ever eager to oblige and always thoughtful of the wants of others. Any points that are necessary for publication, we all feel an inclination to ask Senator Henderson about.

Sanborn

On the Senator's right sits Sanborn, a general who has served with some distinction on many a hard field. A garrulous, good natured and jovial gentleman, fond of good living and good company, an air of bonhomie all about him. Pleasant to converse with, free of access, and pretty thoroughly posted on Indian matters. Those are the prominent points of Sanborn. The general has been selected on account of his tact in business to superintend the movements of the commission.

Tappan

On the Senator's left sits Col. Tappan, of Colorado, an agreeable companion, always smiling, but a gentle man of few words. He is also very well acquainted with Indian affairs.

President Taylor

And there is Commissioner N.G. Taylor, the president of the commission, a man of large brain, full of philanthropic ideas relative to the poor Indian. He is undoubtedly earnest in his opinions. Formerly a Methodist minister, he has turned his attention to secular matters devoting his life to an improvement of the social status of the American aboriginal.

Terry

And lastly there is Terry, the gallant and genial; his praises and his good deeds have been recorded by nobler pens than mine, and therefore I will not essay the task. The country remembers him.

Sherman

is mysteriously absent. A telegram recalled him to Washington.

Symposium

But the council is ended now, and they all adjourn for supper. The press-gang follow and enter the tent. The cook, Ernest Michael, formerly employed at the Southern Hotel, has spread himself out. Why, here are excellent viands, food fit for the gods—delicious ham, unctuous sardines, assorted pickles, loaf sugar and ranche butter, Switzer cheese and light bread, tea and coffee, cakes and pies, excellent cooked and temptingly provided. Crimini! Cri! Here is a feast spread out in the most *recherché* manner in the most heaven-forsaken spot of Kansas. Annoyances vanish; smiles reign instead. Jokes and repartees are freely exchanged through the exhilarating influence of hot Bohea and strong *Java* coffee. I say Java because it was so good, even excelling in my opinion the best Mocha I ever drank in an Egyptian kahn. Who would not sell a farm and become a reporter?

A Night

But such a night as we passed the first on the march. Till almost dawn, we, the press gang, enlivened the long night hours with songs and glees. Jack Howland—the skillful, amusing, entertaining, good hearted, brave Jack Howland, the artist of Harper's *Weekly* told funny stories, and chamberlain, our worthy caterer, sang funnier songs. Witty, hilarious eccentric, but gentlemanly. Brown of the Cincinnati *Commercial* exerted himself to the utmost to make everybody agreeable. Jovial Budd, of the Cincinnati *Gazette*, strained himself in cudgeling his brains to propound a conundrum *en passant*. I may remark that Budd can write a letter; a good letter; an entertaining one; not ponderous nor tiresome. He never drives his readers crazy with theorizing, nor does he inflict a stale pun. Fayel enjoyed himself like a philosopher of Samos. Fayel, the correspondent of the *Republican*, has a fund of dry humor underneath his waistcoat, and some common sense, a qualification rarely met with in a literary Gitano camp. Bulkley, of the *Herald*, almost fell into convulsions with laughing at everybody's eccentricities. Bulkley is the best fellow out of Jericho, always polite, never sulky. Good souls, all of them, but I am getting prosy, and must turn my attention to business:

To Larned

We started next morning, the 9th inst., on our march to Larned. Sanborn is on horse, moving about, directing the movements, and having heard the order march, the train is in motion.

We present quite an imposing appearance, and with the formidable number of newspaper correspondents, the expedition to the Indian sachems becomes important.

The following letter you will find very interesting as it contains in detail some valuable information:

Col. Murphy's Report

Medicine Lodge Creek. Oct. 5, 1867

SIR: Having been selected by the Hon. Peace commission to proceed to the Indian country and put myself in communication with the Indians of the Plains, Cheyennes, Arapahoes and Apaches, with a view of congregating them at some point near, at south of Fort Larned, there to await the arrival of the commissioners at full moon in October, and, if possible, have the Indians, now on the warpath, come in and cease fighting, I have the honor to report that I have now completed this duty, and for a more full report of my operations in endeavoring to carry out your wishes, I respectfully refer you to my correspondence with you on this subject, and for your future information I now state, that I have at this time assembled at this place the following number of Indians:

Arapahoes, number of lodges	171
Apaches	85
Cheyennes	25
Kiowas	150
Making in all	431

Little Big Mouth of the Arapahoes, who has 21 lodges, is far away south and will not be here with his lodges, but is represented. The Cheyennes sent in word last night that they were moving their whole village, numbering some 200 lodges, and would be here in a few days. The Comanches who, I am informed, number 100 lodges, are in camp about thirty miles below here, and would be present now, but that they have made some arrangements with Colonel Leavenworth, and were waiting to see him. They sent me word to that effect yesterday, and also, that they would be here in two days.

We count now on the ground 431 lodges. Those coming in and who will be represented, 421 lodges; making in all 852. Averaging each lodge at six persons we have over five thousand Indians.

In the performance of this service both myself and those with me have taken considerable risk so far as our persons and lives are concerned. We were compelled to go into their country in order to gather the Indians together, or go home and abandon the whole project. And in order to make our mission a success were obliged to come without soldiers. These Indians have been so often deceived by whites and sought by soldiers, that they are very suspicious of the former, and cannot see why people calling themselves friends of the Indians, cannot come among them without bringing their enemies—the soldiers, with them. So far our mission has been a perfect success, and I hope the honorable Commission will crown our efforts by making with the Indians such a treaty as will insure peace in the future to the Indians, and security to the frontiersman pioneer.

I had considerable difficulty in getting communication to the camps of the hostile Cheyennes. I sent first Mr. Isaac N. Butterfield, who knew many of them, with a half bred Cheyenne. The half breed lost his way, and Mr. Butterfield was shot at in the camps of the Arapahoes, by a returning band of hostile Cheyennes. His horse, saddle, bridle and pistol were taken from him. The other messenger sent out, for one reason and another, failed to reach them, and until Roman Nose and White Beard, with ten of the warriors made a dash into our camp, I was unable to talk with them. Since that talk the Cheyennes have been gathering in their war parties, and as they say are "shoving" for peace. Everything now looks well. Respectfully.

Thos. Murphy

October 5, 1867

Off for Medicine Lodge Creek

The country through which we are traveling has been so elaborately described in my letters entitled "On the War-Path" that it is useless for me to dilate upon its beauties. If we come across new scenery or interesting objects your readers shall have the benefit of knowing all about it.

We arrived at Fort Larned on the 12th inst., and we now strike for Medicine Lodge Creek, 80 miles southwest from this spot.