

*Missouri Democrat*  
October 21, 1867

*The Peace Commission*

*The March From Larned to Medicine Creek*

*Changes at Larned—Visit to the Fort—“Big Indians”—Effect of Fire-Water—Wyncoop and His Narrow Escape—Crossing the Arkansas—Grand Reinforcement—Multitudes of Buffaloes—Harper’s Special Artist—General Augur—The Reservation Question—Arrival of the Great Encampment of Southern Indians—Reception—Silly Bumpers—Satanta’s Outburst—Medicine Making—The Tribes and Chiefs—Preliminary Council*

*Improvements at Larned*

On the 12<sup>th</sup> we arrived at Larned. A complete change has been effected since Hancock’s army swept by in pursuit of “Roman Nose” and “Tall Bull’s” legions. The shabby, dilapidated vermin-breeding adobe and wooden houses have been torn down, and new and stately buildings of hewn sandstone are in their stead. The comfort of the troops has been taken into consideration by the architect and builder. The fort is now garrisoned by six companies of infantry and one company of cavalry. Major Kidd is the commandant.

*Visit to the Fort*

Generals Harney and Sanborn paid a visit to the fort, accompanied by the correspondents. Like many other institutions this place has also a whole squad of “bummers,” who seemingly do nothing but imbibe a wretched infusion of rye and smoke “Virginity” and “Bird’s Eye” tobacco. These gentlemen (?) gathered around the new arrivals, and did their “level best” to stare them out of countenance. But, being public characters, they stood it pretty well.

*“Big Ingins”*

While we were in the private room of the sutler, discussing the merits of some of Hohnecke’s beer, a number of Indians walked in, led by the redoubtable Satanta himself, followed by Little Raven, head sachem of the Arapahoes; Sitemgear, or Stumbling Bear, a Kiowa chief, and two noble Apache chiefs.

*Satanta, or White Bear,*

seemed beside himself with joy on recognizing your correspondent, and gave him a gigantic bear’s hug. He was introduced to the other members of the press who looked upon him with

some awe, heaving heard so much of his ferocity and boldness. By his defiant and independent bearing, he attracted all eyes. A solid chest, a large head, with busy, glittering orbs; fine ears, not too large; long, wavy shining black hair; straight, broad nose, with expanded nostrils; heavy jawbones, large mouth, square chin, and short, muscular neck. He is little above the ordinary height. His person is compact throughout. Agile and strong, he would certainly be a most formidable enemy to encounter alone on the prairie, especially with the words of “Wild Bill” ringing in the ears, “that man has killed more white men than any other Indian on the plains, and he boasts of it.”

*Little Raven*

is a fat, good-natured, peaceable looking cacique; one who doubtless loves to smoke his pipe peacefully in his lodge, surrounded by his dusky concubines; one who would prefer to be at peace because it required exertion to go to war. There was one

*Apache Chief,*

a tall, wiry fellow, and, if I may trust to my knowledge of physiognomy, a cunning unprincipled Indian.

*A Little Fire-Water*

was given to them, which opened their hearts, like a knife opening a bivalve. Recklessness mounted every feature, and all reserve was swept away. For the nonce White Bear, ever ready with his tomahawk, allowed his enmity of the pale-face to sleep, and laughed like a child.

Three of the reporters were introduced to

*Major Wynkoop,*

the agent for the Cheyenne and Sioux. The major is a genial soul and a polished gentleman He is a skillful concoctor of drinkable beverages, and in his company we whiled away a social hour.

*A Narrow Escape*

The major narrowly escaped with his life two or three days ago at the camps of the Indians now on Medicine Lodge Creek. Roman Nose, with ten warriors, rode up to the lodge in which Wynkoop was then staying. Wynkoop heard that Roman Nose, a Sioux sachem, had threatened his life, and was even then hurrying to his lodge for that purpose. Though there were three or four thousand warriors then at the camp, kindly disposed towards the “Tall Chief,” Wynkoop, still it was evident that Roman Nose, with his fierce eloquence, could command aid, and carry his point. Behind the lodge was a racing horse, which he quickly mounted, and putting spurs to him, left the village at the very moment Roman Nose had a revolver drawn on him. The animosity of this chief towards Wynkoop originated from a suspicion that he entertained that Major Wynkoop—then agent—was the very person who informed Hancock of the whereabouts of his people’s lodges, thus causing their entire destruction.

It is thought best to relieve the major from his agency, as he has lost the confidence of Sioux and Cheyennes, for whom he was agent, and the Peace commissioners have held several sessions in discussion of the plan.

### *The Arkansas*

After we had glanced over the fort we started for camp, and for the first time, crossed the celebrated Arkansas River, three miles south of Fort Larned. At this point the river was very shallow, at no place over two feet in depth. The southern banks of the river were covered with luxuriant grass, into which the pedestrian sunk up to the midriff. The mules, on being released from the harness, plunged into it, and reveled in the rich pasture, constantly braying their intense delight, and rearing their heels at each greedy fellow who would insist upon a too near neighborhood.

### *Happy Reinforcement*

Here our train was increased by sixty wagons, containing stores and presents. The number of wagons and ambulances with the expedition is now one hundred and sixty-five. Six mules to each wagon, and two hundred cavalry horses, makes the number of animals twelve hundred and fifty. The number of men on this trip, including the camp followers and scavengers, is six hundred. Thus when on the march we present quite a formidable appearance.

In our company are now Col. Cravenworth, Major Wynkoop, Superintendent Murphy, Col. Rankin, Capt. John W. Smith, interpreter, with a host of camp followers, who pretend to have special commissions, but who really follow out of mere curiosity, and to live on the bountiful rations doled out by the Commission. They all live rather sumptuously, with no expense to themselves. It is rather an imposition on good nature.

### *Ten Thousand Buffaloes*

On our first day's march south from the Arkansas River, we saw about ten thousand buffaloes. In herds of about a thousand they grazed, with sentinals and videttes marching isolated far away from the herds watching our advance suspiciously and snorting their alarm to the main body.

At night we fared on buffalo. Jack Howland, Harper's artist, mounted on a bray nag, brought down a fine buffalo expressly for the Bohemians' mess.

### *The Artist for Harper's*

Jack is a fine fellow, and is rapidly becoming acclimated in the West. He has traveled for that enterprising paper, *Harper's Weekly*, from Montana to Chihuahua, from San Francisco through Arizona, New Mexico to Texas. The Rio Colorado, Rio Grande Del Norte, Rio Pecos and the Rio Gila he has traversed from their mouths to their rise in the Rocky Mountains. The Mexican language is as familiar to him as the English; and it was with a feeling akin to gratitude to "our special artist" that we ate the rare delicious steaks cut from the hump of the slain buffalo. That night was a pleasant one, long to be remembered, for we invited to the feast several supernumerary strangers who were around, and passed the night chanting and story telling.

### *Prairie on Fire*

The next day we came to a place where the prairie was on fire. Stretching before us in a long, and seemingly impenetrable column, was a gloomy funeral pall of smoke, raising its voluminous front up to the very heavens. But through the smoke, through the fire we traveled, lost for a short time to each other, and our advent from the cloud was hailed by gratified expressions.

### *General Augur*

caught up with us at night. He was ordered by the president to join the Indian Commission Vice General Sherman, the latter having received a telegram to return to Washington. The press has already conceived an opinion as to the reasons of his recall, and all doubts upon this subject have been satisfied by this time.

### *The Proposed Reservation*

This country, through which we travel south of the Arkansas, has been selected by the commissioners for the Indian reservation. There is a serious difficulty arising against this course. The state of Kansas stretches away over one hundred miles to the southward of Medicine Lodge creek, and this portion south of the Arkansas is about as fertile a country as the state can boast of. The representation of the state, now with the commissioners, object to this division of their state, and therefore that proposition will fall to the ground. The reservation must be selected somewhere in the neighborhood of the salt plain, and no collision between the authorities can take place.

### *Great Indian Encampment*

Monday morning about ten o'clock we came in sight of the great encampment of the Southern Indians. A natural basin, through which meandered Medicine Lodge creek, with its banks extensively wooded, was the place selected for their winter camp. The basin, hedged in commanding elevations, was intersected by small undulating hills, deep ravines, pyramidal mounds. On the extreme right was the Arapahoe camp, consisting of 171 lodges. Next to these, and close to the creek, almost buried in a dense grove of fine timber, was the camp of the Camanches, numbering 100 lodges; adjoining which was the Kiowa camp, 150 lodges. At the western extremity of the basin were the camps of the Apaches, numbering 85 lodges, and the Cheyennes, 250 lodges.

Thousands of ponies covered the adjacent hills, while in the valley grazed the cattle, making the whole resemble a cluster of villages. All these camps were pitched so as to form a circle, in the center of which sported the boys and girls, and little papooses in a complete state of nudity.

### *Reception*

Thousands of warriors, braves, young bucks, papooses, damsels and squaws, from the different villages, hurried up to satisfy their curiosity, viewing the commissioners. The escorts were all left to come on after us in an hour or so. This was a wise plan, as so many treacherous deeds have been done whenever the troops have come up, that the Indians have come to regard the whites as snakes. By this seeming confidence, this apparent trust in their good faith, we found all the Indians were expectant and willing to see us. During the march, though, several little things occurred which many feared would disturb the general serenity. The graceless, vagabondish followers, who insisted on joining the expedition at Fort Larned, on the pretence that they were relatives to some commissioners or that they knew some Indian agents who were going there, or that they had special commissions for some business not down on the list of commissions issued, shot down buffaloes simply that they might boast that they killed one. This multitude of bummers not only entailed expense upon the government at the rate of a good round sum per diem, but by their indiscriminate shooting and reckless use of firearms fostered ill will between the Indians and whites at a time when so much tact and diplomacy were needed to reconcile both parties. Satanta, never backward of speech to assert his rights, burst forth at last, and said:

“Have the white men become children, that they should kill meat and not eat? When the red men kill, they do so that they might live.”

This speech produced the desired result. Two or three of them were put under arrest, and the major commanding the battalion was also arrested for not preventing the shooting. Satanta is no doublefaced Janus that can talk with a forked tongue.

### *Making Medicine*

When we arrived at the camp, the Indians were engaged in the important ceremony of “making medicine.” Shields of tanned buffalo hides were slung on poles, facing the sun, to propitiate it. The unsophisticated aboriginals believe that the sun will aid them by turning their shields towards it while it shines, and covering them by night from the dew. The medicine man, whom they revere so much, whom they regard as prophet, priest and king, is absent, engaged in devout incantations. In a previous letter I have fully described his powers and his authority, and all other Indian ceremonies, that it is hardly necessary to repeat it.

### *The Tribes and Chiefs*

There are five thousand Indians present, and the chiefs representing them are named as follows:

#### *Camanches*

Parry-wah-samer, or Young Bear, head Chief of the Camanches; Tip-pah-pen-nov-aly, or Painted Lips; Ponen-e-weh-tone you, or Iron Mountain; Para-er-ehve, or Wise Shiled; Za-nah-weah, or Without Wealth—100 lodges.

#### *Kiowas*

Satanta, or White Bear, head sachem; Black Eagle, Sitemgear, Stumbling Bear, Satank, or Sitting Bear, Ton-a-enko (Kicking Bird), Sitting Man—150 lodges.

*Arapahoes*

Little Raven, head sachem; Spotted Wolf, Stome, Yellow Bear, Powder Face, Ice—171 lodges.

*Apaches*

Wolf Sleeve, head sachem; Poor Bear, Iron Shirt, Crow—85 lodges.

*Cheyennes*

Black Kettle, head sachem of the Cheyenne Nation; Big Jake, Bull Bear, chief of the Dog Soldiers, Tall Bull, Heap of Birds, Slim Face, Black White Man. Grey Head—250 lodges. Medicine Arrow, their peace chief, is absent, and Bull Bear has been substituted for Black Kettle.

*Preliminary Council*

We are camped within half a mile of the Indian villages. After a cursory glance at the neighborhood, a preliminary council was held at noon in front of our tents with the Arapahoe and Cheyenne chiefs. At this council there were several gray heads, and men afflicted with various distempers.

When all were seated, Commissioner Taylor asked, were all the Cheyennes present. He was answered, "No. Most of the Cheyennes are on the south bank of the Cimmaron, with Medicine Arrow."

The commissioner then said, "Tell these men here present that the Great Father has heard there is trouble, and he has sent us to look for ourselves and see what the matter is, and to make peace if possible; that we have a good many military men with us to protect us as we are traveling through a wild country. We have heard that there is trouble north and we must be there by the new moon, so it is important that we should be as expeditious as possible down here, that we may keep our word up there. We have made peace with the Ogalallas and Brules, and we hope to make a full and lasting peace with you. How soon can your people be here?"

[At this point the departure of the courier makes it necessary to break off short. Will resume in my next.]