

THE DEATH OF COCHISE.

A TALK WITH THE APACHE CHIEF ON HIS DEATH-BED.

REPORT FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS—GOOD EFFECT OF THE AGREEMENT WITH COCHISE—THE DYING CHIEF IN CAMP—HIS LAST MOUNT—REASONS FOR REMOVING THE INDIANS TO THE RESERVATION.

From Our Own Correspondent.

WASHINGTON, Tuesday, Oct. 27, 1874.

The following report of the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for New-Mexico, containing an account of an interview with the famous Apache Chief, Cochise, just before his death, will be printed in the volume of the report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs:

OFFICE SUPERINTENDENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS, }
SANTA FE, New-Mexico, June 30, 1874. }

Hon. E. P. Smith, Commissioner of Indian Affairs,

Washington, D. C.

SIR: I have the honor to submit the following report of my visit to the Chiricahua Reservation, and of my interviews with Agent Jeffords and Cochise, under instructions from your office.

After making my last report from Fort McRae, in which I described the proposed Hot Springs Reservation and gave the reasons why I believed the Interosca Apaches should be removed there, I traveled down the Valley of the Rio Grande as far as old Fort Howe, and thence westward by Fort Cummings to Fort Bayard. At this point I saw several persons who recently talked with the man Bullard, who proposed to kill "Chiseta" and "Ponce" White, acting as guide for Gen. O. O. Howard. From these persons I learned that Bullard had entirely changed his mind regarding the effect of the peace mission of Gen. Howard, and now said that the peace effected with Cochise had, contrary to his expectation, been productive of the most beneficial results; that the Tucson road could now be traveled in safety, and that the stock of the country was safe from molestation. I may as well remark at this point that some feeling existed at all points visited; and while at first all the settlers were opposed to any negotiations with Cochise, all preferring that he and his band should be hunted and exterminated by the troops, they are now thoroughly convinced that peace is less expensive, and far more safe. Should Gen. Howard to-day visit the neighborhood, after the peace negotiations with Cochise, he would find a warm welcome, and receive the thanks of the people for having protected their lives and property by his individual exertions, where other officers had failed with many army men at their command.

The officers at Camp Bowie, and citizens generally, concur in the opinion that the presence of Cochise and his Indians upon the Chiricahua Reservation is a protection to the Tucson road, as they aid the troops in keeping the Apaches further north from depredating along that road; and were there no other reasons for their removal, I believe they should be left there. But on this point I shall have more to say a little further on.

After staying two days at Fort Bayard for repairs upon my wagons, I left for Camp Bowie, attended by military escort of seven men, kindly tendered by Gen. T. C. Devon, commanding the troops in Southern New Mexico. This is hardly a proper place to enlarge upon the discomforts of the journey; suffice it to say, that I do not recommend it as a pleasure trip. Upon my arrival at Camp Bowie, I received the hospitable attentions of the gentlemanly commanding officer, Major S. S. Sumner, of the Fifth United States Cavalry, and from him received many suggestions that were of great service in my future efforts. I learned that Cochise was lying very ill in the Dragon Mountains, about forty miles distant, and that it was feared he might die. To hear fear expressed that the greatest and most warlike Apache might die, sounded strange enough, but when I ascertained that the great chief retained in peace the wonderful power and influence he had exercised in war, and that he regarded his promises made to Gen. Howard sacred and not to be violated upon any pretext whatever, I knew that it would be a calamity for the frontier to lose him from the ranks of living men.

On the morning after my arrival at Camp Bowie I started for the Indian Agency, some twelve or fifteen miles distant, over one of the worst mountain trails I have seen, accompanied by Capt. Haskell, of the Twenty-third United States Infantry. I more than appreciated the attention of Capt. Haskell, because infantry soldiers do not often care to volunteer a twenty-five or thirty mile ride on horseback in a day when the thermometer indicates nearly 100 degrees, and the road lies over a rugged mountain trail. Upon reaching the agency I found Agent Jeffords, and saw a few of the Indians, and made an appointment to meet the agent at Camp Bowie that night, that we might start early the following morning for Camp Cochise. At this point I desire to submit a few remarks upon a subject which may be a little outside of the instructions with which I was favored, but which I think it necessary for the good of the service I should notice. I found the agent living, and the supplies stored, in buildings without doors, windows, or floors, and those were erected by the agent and his employes at little if any expense to the Government. My opinion is that these Indians should be removed at the earliest practicable moment to the Hot Springs Reservation. But if you decide otherwise more permanent and comfortable buildings ought to be erected at once. The Government supplies are exposed to danger from the weather and from thieves, and the agent, a commissioned officer of the Government, is compelled to live in a way which seems a disgrace to the Government he serves. Before proceeding to describe my interview with Cochise and his people, I will give two reasons which seem to me to require their removal.

First—The reservation is bounded on the south by the Mexican State of Sonora, and while the Indians refrain from depredating upon our side of the border, they consider themselves privileged to make incursions into the Mexican territory. The Indians say: "Why do you interfere with us for what we do to the Mexicans? If we steal anything from you and take it there they will buy it, and encourage us to continue to bring them stolen property." During the lifetime of Cochise he was able to do much to control his band and prevent these forays, but now he is dead it is feared they will be continued and exaggerated.

Second—The reservation has so little arable land that it would be impossible for the Indians to ever become self-sustaining there, even if they were inclined. I understand it to be the wish of the department to teach the Indians agriculture and other useful arts, so that they may become producers as well as consumers, and for this reason they ought to be removed to a country where they could be encouraged to make the effort.

The morning following my visit to the agency, I started in company with Agent Jeffords, to visit the camp of Cochise. We followed the Tucson road to Sulphur Springs, about twenty-five miles west of Camp Bowie. At this point we met Tozay, the oldest son of Cochise, and since his death the chief of the tribe, and several other Indians, and taking the agent's horse I rode on with them in advance of my party, and arrived at the camp nearly an hour before the agent and my men. The camp was located on the top of a high butte, or foot hill, and commanded a view of the surrounding valley as far as the Chiricahua Mountains on the east, and as far as the eye can reach to the north and south, while immediately in the rear are the great Dragoon Mountains. The place was well chosen for defense, and was Cochise lying down, with his face toward the east, and commanding, from where he lay, an extended view of the approaches to his camp. The instinct of the warrior to guard against surprise evidently still lingered with this dying man. The old chief was suffering intensely, and I at first thought he would not outlive the night. But I found a ready welcome as soon as his son explained who I was, for I had been expected, and when I gave him a photograph of General Howard and myself, taken together, my introduction to his favor was complete. The picture was frequently examined by the old chief during my stay, and always followed by the warmest expression of feeling of affection for the General.

Soon after the arrival of Agent Jeffords and the interpreter, I commenced a conversation. I found that Cochise had the greatest affection for Jeffords, and was delighted to see him. I told Cochise that I regretted seeing him so ill, and that I would not worry him then, but would go away and come again when he was better. But he insisted upon hearing me then, and said he would soon die, and that I had better also talk with the sub-chiefs. They were

accordingly summoned. After talking for an hour I found Cochise so exhausted that I decided to leave him for the time. During that night he was unconscious for several hours. I returned to Camp Bowie, and, after remaining for three days, again went to the Dragoon Mountains, and found Cochise still alive, but apparently failing rapidly. A much longer talk than before ensued, and while he expressed a preference for their location, I became convinced that, should he live, Agent Jeffords would have but little difficulty in securing the removal of the Indians.

During the second visit I found Cochise mounted on his horse in front of his "Wickiup," having been lifted there by his friends, showing his determination and strength of will. I asked him why he did so, and he replied that he wished to be mounted once more before he died. The agent and myself both feared he might die while on his horse, and probably he would have preferred such a death.

Upon the Chiricahua Reservation is another band of Apaches, called alternately Southern "Chiricahuas" and "Pinery" Indians. In this band are many of the Mogalou and other Apaches, many of whom have lived at Canada Allamoso. These Indians can be removed at any time, and many of them would move themselves if permitted to go. Agent Jeffords said he could give me 250 who would return with me at once.

I am convinced that should you decide to remove these Indians, Agent Jeffords could do so. Time may be required, but I would suggest that he first take, or send in charge of some good man, all who are willing or wish to go, and with a little patience and perseverance he could soon have all upon the Hot Springs Reservation. I have seen no man who has so complete control over his Indians as Agent Jeffords, and I am sure that if they were removed he would be the best man to make agent at the Hot Springs. He does not answer all the requirements of an agent. None that I have seen did fill the bill in every particular. Jeffords can and does maintain discipline, and he has the influence to bring Indians to his reservation and keep them there, and if they go away he generally knows where they have gone. If the Apaches can be taught to work, Jeffords is the man who can teach them. Other things may be taught them later, when they have become accustomed to the life upon the reservation.

Expecting daily the death of Cochise, and being desirous to learn what might be the result, I lingered near his camp until June 3, when I left on my return. Having started late in the day the night was passed at Sulphur Springs. On the morning of the 4th a war party was seen approaching, and on their arrival it was found to consist of twenty-seven warriors under the command of Tozay. When asked their purpose we were informed that it had been ascertained that Cochise's illness was due to the fact that an Indian of the Chiricahua band had bewitched him, and they were going for the witch to compel him to cure their chief. The party were thoroughly armed, having among them eight breech-loading guns, and all were well mounted. I asked what would be the fate of the supposed witch if he failed to cure Cochise, and was told they would hang him in a tree and burn him to death. There seemed no way of stopping them at the time, and they went on to the other camp and secured their man, and returned with him firmly tied upon his horse. The agent believed he could save his life at the proper time, and I have no doubt did so.

Four days after my departure, namely, June 8, Cochise died, and his son, Tozay, became chief. The feeling of Tozay is as friendly toward the whites as was his father's, but I fear he has not so much influence over the tribe.

Of my return trip little need be said. It was long, tedious, and fatiguing, and owing to the high water in the Rio Grande, which compelled me to travel over a country without roads for a considerable distance, and all the way over those not much traveled, progress was slow and difficult.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

L. EDWIN DUDLEY,
Superintendent Indian Affairs.