

APACHE MISRULE

(Concluded)

By JOHN P. CLUM

A Bungling Indian Agent Sets the Military Arm in Motion

The official record shows that all of the twenty-two companies of reinforcements were on detached service in connection with "field operations against hostile Apaches in the Department of Arizona." In the circumstances we have narrated *three troops of cavalry were ordered out from Camp Thomas to make a demonstration in force with an offensive objective at the sub-agency upon the San Carlos reservation as a feature of the "field operations against hostile Apaches in the Department of Arizona."*

While this considerable body of troops are approaching the reservation from the east, let us, in imagination, visit the sub-agency and endeavor to visualize the scenes being enacted there. *At once we wonder why the troops are coming*, as the scenes about the sub-agency give us the impression that we have arrived *in the midst of a gala day festivities*. And so we have, for Ezra Hoag is very busy distributing the weekly rations of flour, beef, etc., to the bands of White Mountain and Chiricahua Apaches whose camps are located in that vicinity—and every "ration day" is very much of a gala day among these Indians. There is a vast throng of busy, interested, orderly and contented Indians. Why are so many troops coming to threaten, alarm and arrest them?

This sub-agency was constructed by my direction in the summer of 1875. I placed Ezra Hoag in charge at that point at that time, and he had been in charge there continuously ever since. *He was the sole employe at that point*—and I doubt if he ever *owned a gun*. All of the Indians liked Ezra Hoag. He was just and sympathetic,

and the Indians—including “the wild Chiricahuas”—were his friends, and he was their friend. *They had spent years in this friendly fashion*, and the Indians found that Ezra Hoag was always interested in everything that concerned their welfare, and progress, and that he was rendering them a friendly and willing service as he labored with the distribution of their weekly supply of provisions, *and these simple people responded to this spirit of kindness and reciprocated with their respect, friendship and confidence.*

We can readily understand, therefore, why every “ration day” that was presided over by Ezra Hoag was a gala day to the multitude of Apaches who gathered about the sub-agency, and that on those occasions there was spontaneous obedience and orderly behavior while the care-free throng indulged in gossip and jests, feasting and laughter, dancing and song. *Their suspicion and alarm because of the rapid marches and concentration of so many troops about the agency had been allayed by the very recent and very positive assurance of the agent that they would not be molested in any way*, so they had put aside their fears and entered upon the gala-day spirit of the occasion.

“Then the military move was made on the sub-agency.” Then, suddenly, without apparent necessity or cause, and without the slightest warning, the gala day festivities were rudely interrupted as the three troops of cavalry came galloping down from Camp Thomas and halted in battle array at the sub-agency. *Their arrival was a hostile gesture. They were there for an offensive purpose—in force*, and, if necessary they would use that force to attain their objective. And it might require the active support of *the entire force* to accomplish their purpose—otherwise, *why bring three companies of mounted soldiers fully equipped for battle?* Agent Tiffany had assured them a few days before that they need have no fear as they would not be molested in any way. *Were they to believe the agent, or what they saw confronting them?* Im-

mediately all of their former suspicions and fears rushed back upon them. The feeling of alarm grew and spread, and, a few hours later, "the wild Chiricahuas fled toward Mexico."

George and Bonito, the alleged "suspects," sent word to Major Biddle that if he would withdraw his troops they would accompany Clerk Hoag to Camp Thomas and again surrender to General Willcox as soon as the issue of beef was completed, but Major Biddle spurned this offer of peaceful surrender and "moved his troops nearer to the camps of the Indians." I have been told recently—on good authority—that Major Biddle actually deployed his troopers in skirmish line, and I do not doubt that this is true.

The result of this display of force and *threat of battle* was the flight of the "wild Chiricahuas," but Major Biddle *failed to apprehend either of the two "suspects"* he had been ordered to arrest. The *stupidity and wantonness* of this move of the military arm at the sub-agency on September 30, 1881, is emphasized by the fact that *none of the scores of White Mountain "suspects"* who were then "prisoners of war," and who were marched down to Fort Grant for trial, *were found guilty of any wrong.*

And General Carter erred mildly when he said the wild Chiricahuas left "a trail of blood and pillage to mark their hurried flight." The single purpose of those Indians at that time was to arrive at their stronghold in the mountains of Mexico with the least delay possible, and their flight was too "hurried" to permit them to indulge in any raiding detours. But the wild Chiricahuas did leave trails of blood and pillage on subsequent raids as the sorry consequences of the movements of the military arm and the rapid marches and the gradual concentration of the troops at and near the agencies, and these consequences, if truthfully recorded, would constitute some interesting pages in the several regimental histories.

It was because I knew Ezra Hoag's sterling character

that I placed him in charge of the sub-agency in 1875. The disturbance among the White Mountain Indians in the summer of 1881 resulted in certain conditions at the sub-agency, the satisfactory adjustment of which demanded the application of sound common sense and superior judgment on the part of Mr. Hoag, and Agent Tiffany says that he was "very efficient and judicious in all this trouble." No other man knew the Chiricahuas as well as Ezra Hoag did at that time, and no man was less liable to state an untruth regarding them than he. For these reasons, as I have stated heretofore, I firmly believe he told the simple truth when he said "the Indians were literally scared away by this movement of the troops." Furthermore, the official record of conditions and events occurring at and about the sub-agency at the time fully sustains Mr. Hoag's assertion.

Included among the fugitives was Nah-chee—the son of Cochise. He had been loyal and peaceable on the reservation for so many years that he could no longer be classed as a "wild" Chiricahua. It is obvious, therefore, that when Nah-chee violated the solemn promise he gave his dying father in 1874 that he would keep the peace pledged with General Howard in 1872, and cast his lot with the hostiles *there must have been a sufficient reason—a super-inciting cause.*

This casual review of the record brings us face to face with the fact that *the flagrant mis-rule* of the Apaches, due to the incapacity and stupidity of Agent Tiffany and the malevolent maneuvers of the military arm within the boundaries of the San Carlos reservation between August 30 and September 30, 1881, *broke the seven years of peace on that reservation and precipitated an outbreak, some of the disastrous consequences of which have been recorded in the so-called campaigns against Geronimo. But the heavier penalties of this mis-rule were visited upon the great mass of well-disposed Apaches who were compelled to endure for a weary period of twenty years—from Aug-*

ust, 1881, until January, 1901—the oppressive presence upon the reservation of such troops as the military arm deemed “*an exhibition of force sufficient to overawe and keep them in subjection.*”

The sad drama reported by General Willcox under date of Tucson, October 12, 1881, contains a paragraph that is almost humorous. He says: “The California reinforcements have been of great service, and were sent down promptly and as called for, and well equipped for the field. Part of them are now in pursuit of the Chiricahuas on the border. The outbreak of these Indians on the night of September 30 has been duly reported, and *the causes of their sudden change are unknown.* It is supposed to be the fear of being disarmed. If this is true, the outbreak was likely to come at any moment, and could not have come at a better time. This because we had adequate force at hand, and it has been used to such advantage that the smallest possible damage has been suffered. *This tribe is now in full flight and utterly defeated.*”

This is another choice sample of press agent material for consumption abroad. The truth is that the fleeing “wild Chiricahuas” were not intercepted by the troops and did not hesitate until they were safely within their old familiar stronghold in the Sierra Madre mountains of Mexico. It is also quite true that “an adequate force was at hand” in Arizona, and equally true that “the smallest possible damage was suffered” *by the hostiles*, for the reason that, barring a skirmish with their rear guard in which a sargeant was killed and three soldiers wounded, the troops never had even a glimpse of the fleeing Indians. I happened to be one of a party of citizens that followed the trail of the “wild Chiricahuas” across the international line into Mexico. *There were no troops ahead of us, nor any in sight behind us, and we did not see any Indians.*

In the same report General Willcox says “the troops were moved to the Cibicu country” where they drove the White Mountain “hostiles” from their strongholds “into

the folds of the reservation." But we have learned that their "strongholds" were their cornfields—situated in the very heart of the reservation. On October 12 he had a part of his adequate force "in pursuit of the Chiricahuas on the border" with "this tribe in full flight and utterly defeated." Perhaps the general did not know that the flight of the "wild Chiricahuas" had ended at least a week before he penned his press agent's report, and that after they were safely within the rugged Sierra Madres of Mexico they did not give a tinker's damn how many troops he might have in pursuit of them "on the border"—since no arrangements had yet been made allowing pursuing forces to cross the international line.

"This tribe" may have been "utterly defeated" in the military mind of General Willcox at the time he composed his official report on October 12, but the embarrassing feature of the situation was that *the tribe didn't know it*.

"This tribe" had evaded the "adequate force" in Arizona, which consisted of the 6th cavalry and the twenty-two companies of reinforcements, and, therefore, it is extremely difficult for a layman to comprehend the course of reasoning that led General Willcox to imagine that these Indians were "utterly defeated."

When General Crook visited the "wild Chiricahuas" in Mexico in 1883, their general appearance and attitude did not indicate that "this tribe" had ever been "utterly defeated." During 1885 and 1886 General Crook and General Miles employed 3000 regular troops and 400 Indian scouts (besides some Mexican regulars) in the campaigns against a part of these same "wild Chiricahuas," and, although several surrenders were arranged, "*this tribe*" was never "utterly defeated."

The *TOMBSTONE EPITAPH* of September 30, 1881, contained an editorial by me entitled, "Review of the Recent War." This article occupied two and one-half columns and presented many interesting and important

facts. It was published in the morning and the "wild Chiricahuas" fled from the sub-agency that evening. In recent years I have sought in vain for a copy of that editorial. The data it contained would be of special value and interest now.

However, I have before me a copy of the *EPITAPH* of October 20, 1881, containing another editorial by me, indicating my attitude regarding the "Cibicu War," and proving that *I did not hesitate or delay to expose and condemn in most positive terms*—through the columns of my newspaper—the flagrant misrule of the Apaches at the time when the culpable blustering and blundering were in progress, *and when those responsible for the outrageous mal-administration of the affairs of the San Carlos Apache reservation were in the full swing of their official power and activity*. The editorial follows:

YOUR AUTHORITIES, GENTLEMEN?

The "Review of the Recent War," as published in the *EPI-TAPH* of September 30, was not written in vain. It has been extensively copied by the San Francisco press, and now comes a request from the Hon. Secretary of the Interior for our authorities. We shall take pleasure in complying fully with the Secretary's desire. His letter reads as follows:

Department of the Interior,
Washington, October 10, 1881.

My dear sirs:—I have received a copy of the *TOMBSTONE EPITAPH* of September 30, 1881, containing an article headed "Review of the Recent War." I would be greatly obliged if you would send me your authorities for the statements therein made.

Very respectfully yours,
S. J. Kirkwood, Secretary.

Editor Daily *EPITAPH*, Tombstone, Arizona.

We are somewhat at a loss to know just what the Honorable Secretary intends by inquiring as to our authority for the statements made in the review referred to. The greater portion of our comments in the said article were made upon the reports of Agent Tiffany and Generals Willcox and Carr, together with one or two telegraphic specials, all of which formed a part of the review. One or two other facts were stated, of which the writer has personal knowledge.

Our authority for the publication of the article as a whole is found in that grand principle which permits a free press, in a free country, to state to a free people the cold and cruel facts, divested of all superfluous trimmings, when, in the course of human events, such things become necessary.

We are inclined to the opinion that Secretary Kirkwood makes the above inquiry in the hope of obtaining such additional evidence as will enable him more positively to fix the responsibility where it justly belongs. If such is his desire he will find a ready ally in the *EPITAPH*. Three weeks have elapsed since the publication of the "review," and nothing has transpired to disprove any of the statements therein contained, but, on the contrary, subsequent events have more positively convinced us that our premises were correct. Following is a concluding paragraph in the review as published September 30:

"Thirty days have elapsed since the troops marched on to Cibicu, and after a month spent in massing the military forces, marching and countermarching about and among the Indians, arresting the chiefs, alarming the braves and firing over the heads of the squaws, we must admit that we are much surprised to know that the Indians still refuse to leave the agency and join in that outbreak, which it is evident designing officials have been preparing for them for six months past."

Since then the chiefs have been paroled and frightened away. The countermarching produced one important result when Colonel Biddle paraded his command at the sub-agency, made an advance on George's camp, *and succeeded in driving him and the Chiricabuas from the reservation*. Colonel Bernard has marched boldly, bloodlessly and inefficiently to the Sonora line—and thus the "war of extermination" continues.

It will soon be time for us to write an addendum to our "review," which will include numerous additional statements supported by ample authority—and then we shall not be surprised if we receive a letter of inquiry from the Secretary of War.