

# The Battle at Sand Creek

Written by Morse H. Coffin in a series of articles to the Colorado Sun, 1879

## AFFAIR AT BUFFALO SPRINGS

Editor Colorado Sun:

Dear Sir: With your permission I will tell your readers what I know about the Indian war in Colorado in 1864; and in so doing shall tell the truth as I know it, and believe as I believe it, and with no false coloring to tickle the fancy or imagination of any; and as an evidence of this shall attach to these letters my own proper name.

During the fall of the above named year Capt. Nichols' Company ("D.") Third Colorado Cavalry, was located at Valley Station, a stage and telegraph station between Wisconsin and Moores' well known ranches on the Platte about 150 miles below Denver, for the purpose of assisting to keep open the highway to and from the East, protect ranches, etc. We had been here since Sept. 23d with nothing more exciting than furnishing four to six men to escort each coach, guarding small companies of eastern bound pilgrims and making a trip with fourteen wagons and forty men off northwest, thirty mile to Cedar Bluffs, for wood; and to miners and ranchmen who had left their work to fight Indians, it was getting rather monotonous.

When late on a pleasant Sunday afternoon, Oct. 9th, a bit of news of enlivening nature reached Capt N. from up the stream, and as he communicated with the boys, the camp was all excited in a moment, and every man off duty grabbed saddle and bridle and rushed toward horses, a mile or more away.

The herders saw the movements and came sailing up with the herd in short order. Those who could saddle and mount quickest did so, and as camp was in a fair way to become deserted, the officers stopped any one from leaving. The Captain and Lieut. Dickson go with thirty to thirty-five men, and a quick gait takes us the intervening five or six miles to Wisconsin ranch, at dusk.

Particulars are soon learned, and the captain's plans made. Facts as follows: A solitary warrior had made his appearance in the road near the house, on a pony, and declining to come close for near interview, had gone through many motions and indulged in cheap Indian talk and brag; said "heap Cheyenne, heap Cheyenne," and pointing to south or southeast, to his camp. It is learned there are springs out that way about ten or twelve miles.

First Sergeant Bacon with ten men are left at the ranch as guard, while others return to camp. The captain consults with Mr. Sam Ashcraft who is at the station sick (or rather snake bitten) and then orders me to detail twenty-nine men and notify them to be in readiness to move by half past two o'clock.

After men are notified the commissary sergeant issues three pieces of hard tack to each man who is to go. At this time our camp was nearly destitute of grub and horse feed, but the quartermaster managed to find enough corn on the ground to give the horses for the coming trip a little feed before the morning start.

Our party moved at three o'clock in the morning, with the captain and Lieut. Dickson at our head. We move on a walk, and noiselessly. At the ranch we are joined by our eleven men and one citizen, Mr. Code. We are also accompanied by Grant Ashcraft and "Dunk" (don't know real name) a scout from the First Colorado Cavalry. So with officers we were a total of forty-five men. This trip might be no play, as it was very uncertain how many of the Lo family we should encounter.

We left the ranch at earliest dawn in the East. The guides (citizens and "Dunk") with three other good men in charge of Sergeant Bacon, go some distance in advance of the main company, and in this manner follow the trail, or near to it, to within a half a mile of the springs, where we halt while the advance approach via a shielding bluff to prospect. All see by motions of those who look over, that the game is there. Approach a little nearer, when each fourth man is left with horses, and others move to brow of hill.

The bold warrior's "heap, heap Cheyennes," had dwindled to two lodges and their occupants. I believe the sun was a little way up, but no stir in the enemies' camp. He was surprised; and the old warrior could not have known of the near proximity of so many of Uncle Sam's boys, when he was "blowing" down at the ranch.

I am at a loss to describe what took place from this time. (I have more than three sheets of foolscap written within a day or so after this affair, to cull from.) A shot or so was fired through the lodges, when out ran the men and squaws like so many frightened sheep, and jumped out of sight below the bank, near the springs, and hid in the rushes. About this time quite a volley was fired, and most likely one or two Indians wounded.

And at this time a warrior glides from tent or hiding place, and with gun or bow held in his extended hands dances along sideways and goes through queer (to me) gestures and motions, which no one seemed to understand, but which occurred to me at the time as possibly being incantations, but what I afterwards believed to be entreaties for mercy, and to show he wishes to surrender; and some others thought the same. Few orders were given and few necessary. Their ponies were off to our left, up the hollow, a half mile from camp, and a few of the boys and one or two citizens, go for them as they are making off. The captain told three or four of us to get our horses and go around below and see none escaped that way.

One man had taken a position on a high bluff to watch, and now two more went. When the flat, covered with rushes mostly, (perhaps several acres) was pretty well surrounded, the main party, who had been sitting and lying down, near the crest of the ridge, and watching proceedings, which had been going on leisurely, came down on a run, all closed in, and the work was quickly done.

But a little as to just how. Ashcraft, Sergeant Bacon, Savory, and Dickens, who had crossed above to the opposite side (from our main Party) of the ravine, now came rushing across to the lodges about the same time and finished a couple of Indians who were by the edge of a pool of water, and who were likely wounded at first volley. Here all now centered, and hence followed the trails of those who crawled away in the rushes, Directly a warrior was seen some distance away, moving in a stooping posture, dodging up and down, and yelling as he did so.

Many went for this fellow, and I fired my first and only shot at him. As many rushed towards him (generally presumed to be the chief, Big Wolf himself) he fired at Dickens; whose escape may be owing to this fact:

Bacon saw the Indian aiming in a direction near to him and turned to see who was there, and called out sharply to Bill, who dodged a little and was missed. But I must return a little. While the old warrior was out dancing, etc., Capt. N. took a shot at him, and some thought hit him, anyway the dance was quickly ended, likely to be resumed in the happy hunting grounds.

And now Lieut. Dickson thought it his turn for a shot, and asked the captain to hold his horse, while he did so. The lieutenant gradually worked himself away, leaving the captain with two horses on his hands, which some of the boys thought a good joke on the captain. As soon as the two Indians were killed, and before he was quite dead, one of them was scalped (I think by "Dunk") and then his throat cut to finish him, though no doubt he was past knowing anything at the time.

I now return to the Indian in the rushes. After he had fired, an irregular volley was directed at him as soon as he showed his head, and as the boys rushed up he tried to shoot an army carbine he had, but the cap was lost from it, as the tube had been filed and beveled off so the small gun cap would go on by being spread. While he tried to fire this gun its stock was splintered in his hands by a shot. This was a large powerful warrior; and from papers on him we learned he was a Cheyenne chief, (Big Wolf) and as near as we could afterwards learn he was a mean one. He had two guns and a good bow and arrows. One gun was a Lancaster rifle, so common among Indians, the other an army carbine, such as were used by the Seventh Iowa Cavalry, some of whom were at Julesburg.

Next were found and killed four squaws, two papooses and one young warrior, say fifteen years old, or two thirds grown. Two of these squaws were rather young, and two middle aged ones had the babies in their arms. One of these was killed with her feet in a pool of water, and bent over her child as if to shield it, and as we came up it opened wide its eyes and looked up at us. I said "boys don't kill it, it is too bad," etc., but one of the guides (glad it was not a soldier) came up and coolly shot it, at the same time making a remark not indicative of pity. I strongly denounced this part of the work, using cusswords.

When the shooting of the squaws began they jumped up and tried to crawl away, at the same time screaming in an agony of terror. This was too much for me, and I talked against it, and a few were with me, and would not do it; though the general sentiment was strongly in opposition to my view of it.

The main work was accomplished, as no more could be found, and after a careful look around we knew the number of slain. There were four men, (one rather young,) four women and two young babies; a total of ten.

There was a lot of luggage for the number of persons, and the boys took what was useful, and what seemed most valuable as trophies, and soon started on the return. I disliked to leave so soon, and on so stating to the captain, he allowed me to return after we had gone some distance and told me to call in the pickets, who were left on the hill. After these two men (Tyrell and Cashman) had looked over the ground until satisfied, we

looked on while "Dunk" scalped the other men not already scalped (John Mitchell had taken that of the big warrior.) Then he and Ashcraft piled up the baggage, about a wagon load, and set fire to it. The herd consisted of ten or eleven ponies and a mule, which were driven to camp.

Among the stuff in this Indian camp was a new pair of lady's shoes (which Sergeant Blake took for his wife's) a pair of lady's shoes about half worn and bloody; some articles of women's fine apparel, and papers and bills of lading belonging to Denver business men. Some claimed there was a scalp of a white woman among the things, but this is incorrect, as I could show; though no one is to blame for the statement, and it was honestly entertained, for I was also misled at this time. It seems proper to state that Tyrell, Cashman and myself substantially agreed in our opposition to this killing of women and children. The boys generally felt in high glee, and on our arrival at Wisconsin ranch one of the men there proposed three cheers for Captain Nichols, which were given with a will, when one of our boys from camp called for three cheers for the men under his command, which were well given, when Capt. N. said "three cheers for our friends at home," also given with vim. I was in no mood for cheering, and took no part.

This is a lengthy account of a small affair, but for its size it made considerable noise, and in my next I wish to say a little more in relation to it, when I will pass on towards the battle of Sand Creek, but giving a few items on the march thither. This day is the fourteenth anniversary of the Sand Creek fight.

The night following our fracas at the Springs "Dunk" and kindred spirits indulged in a scalp celebration, or something of the sort, at Wisconsin Ranch, in which cheap Colorado whisky played a prominent part; while the boys who remained at camp rejoiced greatly, but not after the style of Dunk, Ashcraft, and company.

We were now just about out of everything in the eating line for either man or beast; so a beef was procured at Moore's, but we had no salt save a trifle in the mess to which the officers belonged, and which the cook had hidden just before that commodity was closed out.

The boys were on the lookout, and when on the 12th of October a couple of trains came in view down the road a sergeant and squad with a team are soon in readiness, and call on said trains, and play a better game of "draw" than had been played in our camp for many a day, (which is saying considerable) for they soon returned with a couple of sacks of dried apples a sack of sugar, drawn from the train of Salomon Bros., and ten sacks of flour from the other one, to which was soon added a supply of salt, which was afterward found, as the boys would not take no for an answer, but searched the wagons themselves. These things were receipted for by Com. Commissary, as the officers had conveniently taken themselves out of the way when trains had been announced. Capt. N. disliked this way of drawing supplies, but hungry men will have grub when plenty is passing their door.

Later the same day a train laden with corn for us (twenty wagons) came to camp and stacked it up in our midst. So all our horses as well as ourselves once more have plenty, and all rejoice. All the arms furnished us were a lot of infantry guns, said to have been purchased by Fremont when he took command in Missouri. Therefore every man who could get a revolver or carbine was not slow to do so, and this desire for better arms was much stronger after we got that "drop" on Big Wolf. The boys soon found these

teamsters had some good revolvers they were willing to part with for from \$20 to \$40, according to size and quality. As many were purchased as the other party would sell. And this buying of arms continued as occasion offered until I estimate that at least \$3,000 was paid out by the boys of Company "D" for arms and ammunition for ourselves, as we had to buy our own ammunition for both the carbines revolvers we bought.

Good arms were in demand, and high at that time, and for Smith & Wesson carbines, we all paid \$40, without cartridges, and the same price for navy revolvers.

I now desire to mention a few things in order to make plain the general opinion among the people at that time regarding Indian killing, and thus account is some degree for the scalping indulged in at Sand Creek, and which is now condemned by many good persons. At the time the 3d Colorado regiment was raised, the idea was very general that a war of extermination should be waged; that neither sex nor age should be spared; and women held to these views in common with men, and it is my opinion that as great a per cent of the latter as the former held this view; and one often heard the expression that "nits make lice, make a clean thing of it." Of course there were some exceptions, as I mentioned in my former letter, but that such exceptions were a weak minority must be well known by most residents of Colorado at that time. I propose to show that both officers and soldiers but carried out the general sentiment of the country; and let each bear their share of blame if any attach to what was done; for I wish it understood that Colorado soldiers fourteen years ago were not bloodthirsty and cruel above all men who then lived, though a few of us did not agree with the majority as to some things.

As before stated this affair with Big Wolf made considerable noise for its size, & the press and the people of the country gloried in it as an evidence that the 3d regiment would do something if an opportunity offered. And Capt. Nichols received many compliments for his style of doing his work; and our Colonel (Shoup) sent him a complimentary letter. For although soldiers were strung along the Platte route every few miles, and murdering and stealing common at many points, next to nothing was being done to punish the enemy, and this was the first blood shed by the 3d regiment.

The pilgrims and stage passengers who visited our camp took great interest in looking at the few trophies brought from the Cheyenne camp, and we soon discovered our mistake in burning any of the "traps" instead of going with the wagon and bringing away the whole "outfit"; for with these things destroyed, we could have traded for many a carbine or revolver.

A few days after this the down coach contained a prominent and well known Denver merchant with whom many of the boys were somewhat acquainted; and who immediately about the Indians, commending what we had done, and hoped we would have more of the same sort. He said he had offered \$20 for the scalp of Big Wolf, which he had seen at Junction or somewhere, and when we told him one of our boys had the scalp lock from the crown of B.W.'s head (after which "Dunk" had peeled the whole top-head) he offered \$10 for it, and more, and we believed he would have given \$20, but it was not to be had, as we learned it had been sent to Boulder .

One man who was going way down east to Yankee land was very anxious for something from the Indian camp, but nothing small enough and suitable was to be had. The

captain at last gave the Denver merchant a large beaded bonnet or hood for a new Colt's Navy revolver, which went to one of the boys.

This Denver man charged some of the boys to save a scalp for him in case we took any more of them, and told me if I would bring or save one for him he would give me any pair of boots in his store, (my choice) to which I agreed, and afterwards fulfilled on return from Sand Creek, and got the boots. Some of the stage passengers seemed to regret that Capt. N. and company were not down at Plum Creek or Cottonwood Springs, where we could be of more use. By order of Col. Chivington no travelers were allowed to pass down except in strong companies, and these were usually furnished an escort.

I wish to speak of an expedition of a portion of company "D," which, though it resulted in no bloodshed, forms a striking contrast to the quite common practice farther down the road, of soldiers following fresh trails, or bands of marauders for only a few hours or until night, and then returning to camp.

Oct. 18th three men, including myself, started for Denver with the captured Indian stock, the captain soon following in a coach. In three or four days thereafter a party were sent from camp to the bluffs for wood, and out some twenty miles came across a fresh Indian trail. Word was at once sent to camp with the news. Lieutenants Pennock and Dickson made some hasty preparations during the night, and at 2 o'clock in the morning start with thirty men, leaving camp in charge of quartermaster Blake.

They took such provision most easily carried, enough for a day or two, and with a feed or so of corn in the saddle bags, reaching the trail at early morn.

And for four days, (as near as the boys can remember) with unflagging zeal, was this lead followed, the sign appearing fresher and fresher as they advanced, and, as was believed, a liability to espy the game at any convenient camping place. What little fire was made was used before night, and when too dark to follow trail, camped without fire, to resume the same at dawn.

In general no one was allowed to fire a gun, but their necessities compelled them to kill a deer and antelope, which made them about two meals. Horses fared worse than men, as a portion of the corn was parched and eaten. At the end of the four days the party was trailed in at Gerry's, at the mouth of Crow Creek, and proved to be not a war party, but Swift Bird, a Sioux chief, with quite a party, (some twenty or thirty) mostly young persons, women and children; among them a Sioux squaw who once lived at Boulder with a white man, and well known to some of the boys.

According to reports Gerry's daughter talked to the officers (as the saying is) like a Dutch uncle, and told them they should be ashamed of themselves to kill women and children, ad- "you know better." She seemed to plead for these Indians, as she was permitted to think that may be they were to be killed even now. But guess she gained little advantage, as Lieut. P. was equal to any emergency in line of talk on the subject discussed. The lieutenant required the Indians to come out and show themselves, and through the mediumship of Miss G., questioned the old chief as to where he had been, &c; and his replies that they had come from Fort Laramie and been on a hunt were thought to be thin. Lieut. P. told him that very likely it was his party who fired on the coach a few days before, near Julesburg, as they had evidently come from that direction. The old man was also told that if they had been overtaken out in the bluffs not one would

have escaped. They seemed to realize the danger they had been in, and the boys said, looked sick enough. All plains Indians had months ago been warned by the authorities that all roaming bands would be treated as enemies; and this party took desperate chances. It is well it ended as it did.

Being now so near home Lieut. Dickson, Sergeant Barney and C. Gardner made a short run to see friends and look after business, while the main party headed for Valley Station, via the Platte.

During the absence of this party much anxiety was felt for their safety, as no knowledge was had as to where they were or what they had encountered.

Capt. Nichols heard of their departure while in Denver, and hastened back on the first down coach; and as we boys were on our return trip we anxiously inquired of the driver of the up bound coach for news from Valley Station, and the reply in each case of "no news from the boys," was disheartening, and we had fears that the whole party were taken in, though we knew no small war party would gobble them. Col. Shoup's interest exacted two dispatches per day from the station.

Soon after we boys reached the Junction ranch on our way down, I espied my "bunky" (Pixley) riding down the road, and one glance at his riding countenance told us that the boys were safe.

It seems that Lieut. P., after coming part way with the boys on the return, realizing the anxiety in the camp, and being well mounted, had pushed ahead all his horse could endure until he reached a telegraph station near the Junction, and sent a dispatch to Capt. N., and as it proved, just in time to stop another party about to start in search of them. It was nearly or quite a week from the time the party left camp until they were heard from by the captain; and it was a long week to many.

At the time Company "D" were at Valley Station, a Denver Company ("F") was located at the Junction, and Maj. Samuel Logan, a soldier, had command of both companies.

Our boys cared very little for mere military forms and maneuvers, and as the major was rather strict (as was natural) his visits to our camp were not hailed with much pleasure, though I am not sure but he treated us as well as we deserved, and may be better, for once, after cantering us over the flat for an hour or so, he complimented us for doing so well ; and I have no idea we deserved it. But a visit Col. Shoup paid us was an occasion of real pleasure to both officers and men, for all took to him readily, though many then saw him for the first time.

Our stay at the Station was drawing to a close. Several squads of our boys had been scattered along between Valley Station and Julesburg, at each stage station – six to ten at a place. These were called home, and about Nov. 5th our company moved toward Denver. Any change was to us a relief.

A few notes on the way. As heretofore the case we were well used at American Ranch by Morris and wife, and little did we then know the fate to be theirs; for about a couple of months later one of our number (Oscar Pixley) assisted in taking from the river near the ranch the body of Mr. Morris with (if I remember correctly), sixteen arrows in it, while his wife and children were carried away captives by these Indian murderers.

At Bijou ranch we camped during a fierce snow storm, with very little hay for horses and no wood. save as we gathered it out of the snow, by tramping some distance along the creek. It was rather cold and not pleasant by considerable. Some grumbling was indulged in, and then a curse shied at "this hundred day outfit." But Sergeant Dick Blore, by his drolleries, did his full share towards keeping the boys in humor, and during the evening would every little while call out at the top of his voice, "The Masquerade Ball will commence promptly at 9 o'clock, Tickets to be had at mess No 5." And this while most of us were making desperate endeavors to keep comfortable by burning one side while nearly freezing the other, as we deposited our hardtack and bacon. The boys would laugh in spite of cold, snow and smoke. To sleep a number crowded in the house, but many took it out in the weather, and the latter had some inches of nice white covering in the morning.

The next night we encamped at Living Springs, where we also had a cold time. There must have been ten or twelve inches of snow, roads heavy and weather cold. The main company arrived at dark, or later, half starved and half frozen, (if each were to be believed.) No wood was to be had with which to cook,. The wagons were yet miles in the rear. A hotel, at which stage passengers dined, was kept by Capt. Scott, an old time Gold Bill, Boulder Co. miner, and officers and many of the boys made a rush for a warm supper at his table. (For the benefit of those who may not know, I will state that we at all times made our days march without halting to dine.) It was evident, even if the Captain's grub held out, that it would be well along in the night ere all could get supper who desired it. In this strait, three of us proceeded to prospect the camp of a company of the Colorado First, which was close by, taking it for granted there must be a fellow-feeling between soldiers, though the 100 day men are not much of soldiers, compared to 3 years' veterans. On inquiry we were directed to the house of a Sergeant (These men, being located for winter, had built same snug sod houses) where we were welcomed to a neat room and a warm fire, and where a tidy, good natured housewife soon prepared for us a supper, fit for a Major General, to which I guess we did full justice. Was it any wonder that we envied this soldier his comfort? With his surroundings, we could serve Uncle Samuel till "this cruel war was over," and no grumbling.

We laid over here one day, and a couple of teams were sent off a few miles to the Bijou for wood. Two marches more took us to Denver, where we encamped in the snow, in the southern part of town, and waited several long hours for wood and hay to be brought us. Here we remained about three days to get our horses shod. We were much in need of clothing, and after hard work by Col. Shoup and Capt. Nichols, enough was furnished us to do us very well.

On the afternoon of Nov. 15th we left Denver, our destination being Ft. Lyon, on the Arkansas river. The second day out we came up with Company F, which belonged to the same battalion as ourselves, Capt. N. having charge. One or two companies of the 3d were also on the march from Bijou Basin, some 50 to 80 miles east of Denver, and some of the boys of Co. A, who, being some distance away from their command, fell in with us, were very welcome, for they had good voices and were full of songs.

Long before camping time on this day snow began to fall, which increased as night came on, but we found a good camping place, and ,as it was not particularly cold, got along very well.



During the following day we reached the summit of the divide where snow was at least twenty inches deep, the weather meantime becoming very cold. We camped in timber and had good fires which modified somewhat our otherwise disagreeable surroundings, but it was rather tough on the stock. At this camp we fell in with more soldiers, I think some of the 3d and some of the 1st, if I am not mistaken. Here Capt. Morgan assumed command of the whole "outfit" including the two companies of whom Capt. N. had charge. Capt. N. was disinclined to do or say aught to disturb harmony, so long as all went well, but the manner in which this pretended authority was used, was not relished by either officers or men. The following morning was bitter cold, and camp was aroused at three o'clock, and we were marched out on the first appearance of light in the East. Of course our movements were slow in such depths of snow and with roads to break. It was tedious in the extreme, and our greatest exertions were required to keep from freezing, and many did have their feet frost-bitten. As though this wasn't enough, this man Morgan took advantage of the absence of our officers, (for it would not have been permitted had they been with us,) to order our company to march by fours through this deep snow. Our boys were slow to obey this command of his, being taken by surprise at such an idea at such a time, and made no move to obey until he called out sharply to us again, when the boys reluctantly pulled out and doubled up four abreast. Until this transpired we had been toiling along for a mile or so by twos, as usual, which made a very good track for wagon train. But now our horses were forced to tramp four paths, where two were much better for those following. At a later hour, when our officers came up and were informed of it, they were much incensed, and Lieutenant Pennock interviewed Mr. Morgan, as to his authority for drilling on the march, said battalion. Morgan replied, "by virtue of being the 'ranking officer.'" When the Lieut. informed him that "that battalion will drill no more in this snow, it is enough for the horses to march," and when Morgan was also told that Capt. N. had written authority from Col. Shoup to command the battalion, he replied not a word, but put spurs to his horse instanter. Some guessed whisky was at the bottom of it, but as to this, I know not.

With bright sunshine the weather soon moderated, and as we proceeded down the south slope, we encountered less and less snow until Monument Creek was reached, where there were but about six inches. And now was demonstrated the utter folly of starting so early and having to suffer so much, as we arrived here about 1 p.m., and remained until a decent hour the next morning. During the fore part of the night, a Mexican soldier died. He had ridden during the day's march, and the cold endured was presumed to have had something to do with his death. The next day we found bare ground before we reached camp at Colorado City.

Two marches took us from here to Booneville, on the Arkansas river, where were soon centered most of the 3d Reg't, and I think a few of the 1st. At a farm house, on the Fountain, we left a sick man named Miller, of Co. D., who had taken cold on the divide, also one or two men to attend him.

The first night we camped at Booneville, our company had between one and two dozen blankets taken from our horses. This was, to us, a new game of "draw," and acted as an eye-opener; and hereafter, as long as we were with the regiment, as a rule, our horses were not blanketed. In this game our horses were the sufferers. Soon picket ropes and pins, and now and then an overcoat would disappear mysteriously. But our boys were apt, and quickly took to this new game, at first in self defense, afterwards for pure love of it, and a determination to keep even, if not ahead, in all games played, until we could "stand our hand" with any of them, and possibly discount Co. F.

We remained here two days to get all in readiness for the forward movement; during which time we were trotted out and presumed to show ourselves at our best, while Colonels Chivington and Shoup, with that dashing soldier, Major Downing, took a look at us as they rode along our line at full gallop. I believe they called this a review. The evening before leaving here, a lot of the officers went some miles across the country to the Huerfano to attend a Mexican Fandango at the house of an officer of the Mexican company of the 3d, and, according to reports, had a good time.

We left Booneville on the 24th, the weather being fine and but a few inches of snow the first two days. The first night we camped out in timber on the river bottom, where we found a lot of unstacked hay covered with snow, to which we helped ourselves in a lively run and scramble, in which Col. S. took his chances with the rest of us, each man foraging for his own horse; and what was good of that hay was gathered in just about four minutes.

Colonel Chivington was now with the command, which consisted of 9 companies and parts of companies of the 3d probably some remnants of the 1st, and over 100 wagons. When strung out, we must have made a procession a couple of miles long; and to those of us who were novices in matters of this sort, our "outfit" appeared to be a formidable one, capable of coping successfully with half the Indians on the plains. But I think this opinion was modified somewhat during the next few days.

Two marches more took us to Bent's Fort. This day, Nov. 26th, we made a long march, starting early and moving all day. Once, while making a temporary halt, it was whispered that Indians were not far ahead, and a rumored order to load guns was circulated, but directly countermanded. Yet all was anxiety among the boys.

As is well known by most of your readers Bent's Fort is an old historical landmark, around which centers enough of interest to fill a whole volume. Like similar trading posts in the west it is built of sun dried brick, and used for both a dwelling and fort. I believe at the time of which I write it had fallen somewhat into decay, though in no such condition as our Fort Saint Vrain.

In accordance with request of Col. Shoup, the next morning, soon after the start, Lieut. Pennock took twenty-five men of Company D. and turned off among the trees and brush of the river bottom, led by Col. S. and orderly; also a couple of guides, one of them Dunk, mentioned in my last letter.

Not knowing the design of this move, but seeing Dunk put himself in fighting trim by stripping himself of superfluous clothing and loading his gun, we did the same.

The colonel pushed on down the river at a lively gait, the lieutenant and party following at a little distance, though in full sight, and with the understanding that on a signal from the colonel the party should come to him quickly.

After following down the river for some miles, and until near the mouth of a stream putting in from the southwest, we strike across to a house near the latter stream, and I soon learn this to be the home of the celebrated frontiersman, Col. Bent. It is now plain why this trip was planned, as there are a number of Indians here, who of course would have been quick to give the alarm to their friends on Sand Creek or elsewhere, if not

prevented. This stream is the one now called the Las Animas, though on old maps it is called the Purgatoire, and pronounced by persons there "picketwire" (or weir.)

It is learned from Col. Bent that several Indians are out along the river to gather "kin nick a nick," and a sergeant and squad are sent for them at once, with an old trapper to show them the way, and inform them they are wanted.

The old trapper went ahead, and we soon met them coming in. They hung their heads and looked very sheepish, and on sight of our party seemed to fathom the whole question. They had a small bundle or so of – as we supposed – "kin nick a nick" (who knows how to spell this word?) which they tossed to the squaws as they came in. These fellows were kept close, and a guard placed around the house and yard.

The colonel and guides soon pass on, while the lieutenant and boys are to remain until relieved.

These houses are substantially built of logs, and covered with dirt, each joined to each, completing two sides of a square; the other sides a strong stockade eight or ten feet high, made of strong posts set in the ground, and with strong doors and gates; the whole enclosing a roomy yard. We all pass a pleasant afternoon and evening here. Col. Bent we found to be a pleasant and sociable gentleman, fifty-six years old, as he said, though I would have guessed him to be rather older.

During the afternoon, by invitation, the lieutenant and sergeants took supper at Col. B's table, which we considered something of an honor. The Colonel himself did not sup with us, but seated near, engaged us in agreeable conversation. For meat, we were served with beaver, which was a new dish to some, but well liked I think, by all. The cook was a half breed, (though not a son of Col. B.) and a mortal homely fellow, besides being badly pitted by small pox.

At eve the lieutenant and others had a fine opportunity for conversation with the colonel in his pleasant room, and as I took a few notes at the time it may not be out of place to give the result to the readers of the Sun.

He had then been in this country for nearly thirty-seven years. St. Vrain and himself being in partnership, they built Fort Saint Vrain in 1834 or 1835, and afterward, on separation St. Vrain took the northern fort and himself the southern, which they had built meantime.

As a matter of course Fremont & Kit Carson were mentioned; and he spoke of Fremont being the making of Carson, and of the latter's friendship for F. Also the fact of his assisting Fremont to an outfit three separate times. The fact of his brother (Gov. Bent, of New Mexico) being killed at Tam by the Pueblo Indians in 1846, is of course well known, but it may not be so generally known that Col. B. gathered together 1,800 Kiowa and Comanche Indians, and was on his way to avenge the death of his brother, when he was met by Kit Carson and persuaded to turn back and relinquish the idea.

Col. Bent also knew of gold being in these mountains six or seven years before the fact was generally made known. I believe Col. B. has now been dead several years.

Very little sleeping was indulged in, and Lieut. P. had just lain down, when, at two o'clock in the morning, a lieutenant and squad came to relieve us, when we soon start to overtake the command, which we do, after a twelve miles' ride, just as the last wagons are leaving the camp. Our crowd halt to feed the horses, eat a lunch and to rest; after which we follow leisurely and have a pleasant ride, the day being fine. We arrive at Fort Lyon about the middle of the afternoon, where the command had preceded us an hour or so.

I think the arrival of this force at Lyon was a complete surprise to the garrison, as no mail carriers had been allowed to pass us on the way down, and all necessary precautions taken to conceal the fact of the approach of such a force, both from the Indians and their friends, in case there were any of the latter.

We are now – Nov. 28<sup>th</sup> – on the eve of the battle of Sand Creek; an affair that has, in my opinion, been more lied about and unjustly cursed by a few in the west who thought it their interest so to do; more condemned by honest well meaning but prejudiced men in the East, who, being profoundly ignorant of the particular knowledge, the possession of which would have enabled them to judge fairly of matters of this kind; and more exaggeration and deception (to use no harsher term) indulged in by some of the participants of said battle, than of any event within my knowledge.

I expect to be censured by some for mention I shall make in future letters, of the truth of the latter statement. But if so I can stand it, as it is high time the whole truth was told. There may have been good reasons for suppressing a part of the truth at that time, but if so that time has long since past.

Soon after we arrived in camp near the fort, an order was circulated to prepare three days' rations, and be ready to start at eight o'clock in the evening. We supposed this meant business; and the result was a lively camp. Some cooking was done, fire arms put in the best possible condition, and ammunition handed out.

Maj. Scott J. Anthony was in command at Fort Lyon at this time, and with some companies or parts of companies of the 1st Regiment of Colorado, under his command, accompanied the expedition to Sand Creek. I may have occasion to mention this gentleman again before I close this Sand Creek question.

In one account I have seen of the Sand Creek fight our force was stated at 1,500. This being a gross exaggeration, I am glad to be able to give the number almost to a man, on the authority of Mr. Watson Beach, a well known and reliable person, still living in Boulder County. As the command marched out and started, this man counted 640 men in the ranks, and with officers, scouts, and others not in the ranks, probably swelled the total to 650 to 675. We also had four pieces of artillery.

Company D was in the 2d Battalion, which was commanded by Capt. T. G. Cree, who was well liked by both officers and men.

The Indians were said to be about forty miles northward. The start was made at eight o'clock, but some delay soon ensued, during which time, and much against his will – as well as that of our company generally – Lt. Pennock was selected to return and take charge of the camp and follow the next day with the transportation.

It was likely 9 o'clock when we got well under way. Bob, a half breed son of Col. Bent, was said to be the guide. The night was a clear one, but no moon. Our course was almost exactly under the north star most of the time, but towards morning veered a little to the right or north by the northeast.

During the night we were led through a lake, and whether this was accidental, or, as many supposed, a design of the guide for the purpose of wetting the ammunition of the artillery, I have no means of knowing. The latter is most probable. Save temporary halts of a few minutes each, we marched steadily all night, and to me at least it seemed a long one; and I know many got very tired and sleepy, especially those of us who slept none the previous night.

Some managed to nap in their saddles, but my own experience warrants me in saying it is a poor way to get sleep. But when a halt was made many would dismount and dropping on the ground fall asleep in a minute, to awake the instant the others moved. Thus the night wore away, and the early dawn of the 29th found us still marching, and some miles from the Indian village.

Mr. Editor, I begin to think I have been tedious in this and former letters, but if so I will not now – when at the goal for which I set out on the commencement of these communications – begin to condense except you request it.

### **BATTLE OF SAND CREEK**

Fought Nov. 29, 1864

In the account I shall give of this battle, the reader need expect but a small part of all that occurred on that memorable day, for it was impossible for any one man to observe all that took place on the field, especially if he was a participant in the fight. But I shall endeavor to convey an idea of the manner in which the fight was carried on, and also something of the results. On account of the many contradictions that are afloat, concerning this battle, I shall attend more closely to those facts, as I know them, than to the style of relating them.

About day-break the command was started, on a lively "double-quick," which continued for several miles, until we reached rather deep sand, about one half of a mile from the Indian village, and in full view of it. During this fast ride, (of perhaps an hour,) the Artillery were, if not in the advance, certainly near the head of the column, and, going at the rate we were, they made an awful din and clatter, which must have been heard for several miles away, as the morning was clear, cool and calm. Some remarked at that time, that this was a queer way to surprise the Indians, and we wondered that we were not timed to reach the enemy's camp at dawn, provided we were to attack them.

Just about sunrise, (not yet in sight of the enemy's camp,) we encountered great herds of ponies, both to the right and left of us. It seems, at once, on the discovery, that the company of Mexicans belonging to the 3d, were sent to collect and herd this stock; and I recall distinctly the peculiar effect of the bright sunshine of these moving masses of ponies.

The boys were now thoroughly awake and full of excitement. On we went, rattle-ty-clatter, every little while packages of grub and other valuables being lost from saddles, but no halting or caring for trifles now. The Indians must have been warned of our approach, by the noise made by the artillery and that of nearly 700 galloping horses. It could scarcely be otherwise. And then, before we came in sight of the village, we saw a large herd of horse stock, away on the plain to the north of us several miles distant, and being driven rapidly by mounted Indians.

When we reached the sand, and in full view of the Indian camp, and distant from it about half a mile, the command was halted and ordered to throw off all superfluous luggage, such as blankets, overcoats, grub, &c.

Each man seemed to be making all possible haste, still each moment seemed to be counted by the officers, and Col. Chivington called to the boys to make haste. Also, during this two or three minute halt, Col. Chivington, turning to the command, said: "Boys, I shall not tell you what you are to kill, but remember our slaughtered women and children," or words similar, and I think the above is correct, nearly word for word. It may have been, "Boys, I am not going to," &c. As he said this, his countenance showed deep feeling and agitation, and I think his lips quivered. I noticed both his expression and words, as I was probably not more than 30 to 40 feet from him. Our luggage was quickly cast on the sand, and the boys again in their saddles. The instant all were ready, we were "double-quickened" through the deep sand, to near the edge of the Indian village, which was located on the east bank of the creek. The creek was a bed of dry sand, except here and there pools of water.

Now the command was fronted into line, and with the two Colonels a few rods in advance, and separated a little distance from each other, we proceeded through the village on a walk. I think the town at this time was entirely deserted by the Indians, as not one was to be seen thereabouts, though plenty were not far away, as will appear presently.

About this time, and while the line was advancing through the a man emerged from a lodge, and ran very fast, and, as appeared, in an agony of fright or excitement, towards the officers, and, charging up to Col. C. caught hold of him. This man was John Smith, an United States Interpreter, who was in the camp engaged in trading with the Indians. What took place between him and Col. C. at the time, I am unable to say.

A glance over the field before us, at this time, showed about as follows. From nearly opposite the village, and extending up the creek in a north-north-west direction, for, say a half mile or more, the bed of the creek was dotted more or less thickly with moving humanity. I think a majority of these were women and children, and who seemed to be going slowly away in a sort of listless, and dazed, or abandoned manor, as though they knew not what to do, nor where to go. Some small parties, (mostly warriors,) here and there a single one, were visible on the bluffs and plain, trying to effect their escape. These were generally on foot, but now and then a mounted one was to be seen. But, at a glance, enough was shown of the situation, from the numbers seen along the abrupt banks of the creek, to reveal to a reasonable certainty, the whereabouts of most of the enemy.

While we were passing the village, and before a gun was fired by the soldiers, so far as I can recall, we passed a dead soldier, and his horse, also dead, a little distance from him.

This man was a Mr. Pierce, of the 1st Colorado, who, it was stated at that time, was killed as he was attempting to reach and save a comrade, said to be in the camp with this John Smith. Another statement, made since that time, by one whose opportunity of knowing was good, is to the effect that Pierce's horse ran away with him, carrying him beyond assistance.

Directly our line was changed into column, and a large part of the form started up the right bank of the creek at a lively rate; about this time, the artillery threw a shell which bursted in the air, perhaps a hundred feet or more. Whether this was accidental, or done for the purpose of frightening the Indians, I do not know. After a short dash we halted and dismounted; at least this was the case with our battalion, for events succeeded each other so rapidly now, that no one could look about much to see what the other companies did. I think an order to fire, was given here, at least many did fire, though it was only now and then that an Indian could be seen near us under the bank, but plenty were in sight farther away.

The creek bank at this place was abrupt, and perhaps four to six feet high. I think an order was given to fire, at any rate many did fire; and without orders to do so many of the boys ran up very near the bank, stooping and dodging up and down to avoid arrows, which came plentifully from under the bank, while many called out, "take care boys, look out for arrows." It

was only now and then one of these Indians was to be seen, and it is believed most of the arrows were discharged at guess, by the holders throwing their bows above their heads while their backs were towards us. Some considered that these reckless ones were fool-hardy, and said we would not rush up there unless ordered to do so. And several called the boys to come back. It is a wonder a number were not killed here. The horse of Jim Arbutnot received an arrow, but it was extracted without harm. Just after passing the village the horse of Hi. Lockhart, of company D., stumbled and fell, hurting him considerable, and was not improved by being knocked over a time or two by others in their headlong ride. His horse ran on with the company, and as he tried to follow as best he could, an Indians raised from under the bank and shot at him, which was a close call. Hi managed to return the compliment, but instead of hitting the mark he saw the sand fly one or two hundred yards beyond. The Indian got another shot before Lockhart could reload, (he had an old infantry gun) but he kept an eye on him and dropped flat and escaped again. About this time others came up and killed the Indian. A comrade caught Lockhart's horse, and he soon rejoined the Company.

We were ordered to remount and move forward, and as we did so Capt. Talbot's company were just ahead of us, and my attention was called to the Orderly Sergeant who was talking in a spirited manner to his comrades. A minute or two later he had ridden too near the bank and was shot through the body. At the time I saw him I think he was on his feet staggering towards the company. Capt. Talbot immediately went to his assistance, when he was also shot and badly wounded. Probably both Capt Talbot and his sergeant were not more than seventy-five feet from the moving column when shot, the Indians being out of sight under the bank. The name of this sergeant was Louis Orleans, or something similar, and if I am not mistaken he died about a year ago at Fort Collins, from the effects of the wound here received.

I before mentioned the fact that at first there were many – especially women and children – in the bed of the creek. I am of the opinion that no special attack was made on

these women and others, from the fact that comparatively few were found in that locality after the battle. But when the artillery opened there was a general scattering for both up the creek and to the banks, especially to the west bank, which a mile above the village was ten or fifteen feet high. Under this bank the Indians gathered in large numbers and excavated pits, (many claim these rifle pits were prepared before hand, but this has never been my opinion) which gave them a strong position. But after awhile the artillery dropped shells among them, which was the only way they could be reached except to our disadvantage. There were also good positions for defense for at least one and a half to two miles above the village, and these the enemy made good use of. It was along the banks of the creek, but more especially the west bank, that most of the fighting took place, and where several of our men were killed. I now return to the column along the east bank of the creek. Soon our battalion again halted, and the officers seemed to hesitate a minute to make plans. I appealed to Maj. Cree and Capt. Nichols to allow three or four of us to go off to the right after some Indians seen that way, and also to get some ponies making off to the northeast. This was granted, and I was told to take ten men, which were counted off as we started. Maj. Cree told us to keep together, to ride slow as we went out and not tire our horse. But the idea of riding slow and keeping together was regarded but for a brief time, and directly those best mounted were ahead and more or less scattered, and as for myself having a slow horse and not wishing to run him to death was soon left alone in the rear.

Those ahead of me soon overtook and killed several, and as I came up Cox was scalping an Indian. A little farther on were two squaws the others had left for dead, but one of these was lying face down, and writhing and groaning in great agony. She also made exclamations which sounded like O! O! and in her efforts to breathe the blood was expelled from a wound which must have been through the lungs. After thinking it over for a minute or so, and believing it an act of mercy, I drew my revolver and shot her through the head. The other was a young squaw and showed no sign of life, but as was afterward learned, when Cox came up she was sitting up looking around. He shot her. This one may have at first been unharmed, but feigning dead.

Soon a mounted Indian was seen a mile away and making off at a marvelous gait. Dickens – who had a splendid horse – and one or two others, tried to overtake this fellow, which was useless, so far as this particular one was concerned, but another warrior on foot was started, and who ran as Indians alone are presumed to run, but it was a race for life against great odds. Several shots were fired at him as he ran, without effect. He was seen to snatch first one and then the other moccasin from his feet as he ran. I took a shorter cut and came up on his flank, on seeing which he seemed to realize his situation, though not a word or sign escaped him; but in the most deliberate manner possible he faced about and laid down, but with head raised and eyeing us. I dismounted and fired at him, and his head fell. Boys took several shots to be certain he should not play us. When I came up Hank Farrar had hold of his scalp lock, and called for my pocket knife with which to scalp him. He had a shot through his left eye socket, which was presumed to be mine. He was naked except breech cloth, though he had retained his shield, also bow and arrow in his hand. He was brave, but we showed him no mercy.

Some of the boys went a mile or so farther after a gang of ponies ; and among them was a small mule with saddle and riding rig complete. Lockhart's horse being nearly played out he turned him loose with the herd and mounted the mule. We were now probably six



or seven miles from the village, and so turned that way, driving before us the gang of ponies.

Directly I turned off southwest towards Sand Creek, as we had seen some of our boys go that way an hour or so before. Before reaching the creek I discovered the ambulance and squad of men away south, and so turned that way. Found the occupant of the ambulance to be A. J. Maxwell, of company D, badly, and as we presumed, fatally wounded, being shot right through the chest. The ball passing through one Lung. Several of our men were also escorting the ambulance, and as we moved slowly along we saw a soldier a mile or more away to the northeast, riding very fast towards us and swinging his hat. Three or four of us started an a gallop to meet him and as he continued to swing his hat we spurred our tired horses to their utmost speed, saying, some one must be in great danger. On meeting him it proved to be Corporal Phillips, one of those with the gang of ponies or near them when I parted from them. He was still under some excitement, (and he had a right to be, which will appear when what transpired is related) and informed us that "Mac is dead." He told us briefly how it happened, and showed us his own hat and clothing, chopped with arrows and torn. I will detail this tragedy, in a future letter. After repeated assurance from him that Mac was dead beyond question, and that we could do nothing for him, we turned back, saying it was more important to care for wounded than for the dead. This news made many of us sad and half sick. Some of us now heard for the first that another comrade – H. C. Foster – was killed. Some one had also heard that the Indians had been reinforced, and that we were having a hard fight. This was of course not true, but it depressed us the same as though it were true, as we were not at that time informed to the contrary.

About this time a soldier from another company came from towards the creek for the ambulance to go for a wounded man, saying so many were being wounded more than one should be taken at once.

With our little party on the bluffs was Judge David Ripley, a grey-haired man of 66 years, and a pensioner of the last war with England. In the excitement of the moment he lost his hat, (some claim it was shot off by an arrow, but I am unable to verify it) and so went on bare-headed the rest of the day, galloping over the plain and manifesting as much excitement as the younger ones.

During the morning as Hopkins and Lockhart were riding together, several miles out, an effort was made by a party of the enemy to cut them off. One acting as a decoy to toll them on while the main party kept mostly out of sight; but the boys discerned their object in time to elude them. This seemed to be a favorite ruse of the Indians and was tried several times during this and the following day, who, in a case or two, made it win. Still having a desire to see what was transpiring along the creek I decided to go that way. The man who reported the wounded man directed me about where to find him, and was also particular to tell me to be cautious, as I would be liable to find Indians anywhere in the grass and weeds.

When approaching what might be dangerous ground I thought myself safer on foot, and so dismounted and led my horse, carrying my revolver cocked for instant use. Arriving near the creek I saw at the west bank a little clump of bushes or small cottonwoods, where had accumulated a lot of drift weeds and brush, and just beyond was a ridge which sloped toward the creek. Beyond this ridge I expected to find the wounded man. Was directing my steps straight for the clump of bushes, when I saw a soldier coming

down the slope, also direct for the spot to which I was going but who was considerably nearer to it than I was.

I had gained about one third the distance across the creek bed when suddenly I saw a puff of smoke rise from the clump, heard the crack of a gun and saw an Indian show himself, and at the same instant saw the soldier fall to the ground, then rise, or partially so, scramble and crawl towards the top of the ridge. I instantly turned my attention to the Indian but before I could recover from a little surprise and take a shot with my carbine, he was down and out of sight. About this time a couple of Co. D boys – Elliott and Montgomery – who had just come from the point where McFarland was killed, came along, but not wish to remain. I determined not to leave the place as long as that Indian was alive. Though but one had shown himself there might be several, and I deemed it unsafe to approach too near. So I beat back and forth in the creek, describing a sort of half circle, and trying in vain to get a shot at him.

I next took a position about 100 to 130 yards away and watched. Some of the time I was behind my horse, at other times lying flat behind a sand drift. I took shot after shot at some little dark object which could now and then be seen, but a fair shot I could not get. He was cautious. After I had been here an hour or more a man from some other company of the 3d happened near, and decided to remain with me, and we felt reasonably sure of getting the fellow by taking plenty of time. The man had a Garibaldi musket, with an awful bore, and which made a noise when fired, to correspond with its caliber. Several times we fired together over my horse, who never moved from his tracks the while. We were very sure more than one Indian was in there, as we heard a baby cry. Now the enemy returned our fire, which seemed to be from a rifle of small caliber. Some shots came very close, and we expected nothing better than that the horse would be shot, as one or both of us were behind him most of the time, At last we came to think we were being fooled, and were shooting at a rag or other thing displayed to draw our fire. But we had ammunition enough to practice with, and beside we seemed to gain nothing waiting, as we could get no fair shot. After a while we discovered an Indian some rods beyond the hiding place, on his hands and knees, crawling away through the weeds over a little rise. we were not slow in turning our guns upon him, as the view was good, though the distance considerable. Three to five shots were sent after him before he disappeared and we were very sure he was hit, which was confirmed next day to my satisfaction, by finding a dead warrior in the right spot, shot through the body.

My partner now wished to leave and rejoin his company, to which I made no objection, as just then quite a party of soldiers were sighted away up the creek, a couple of miles, or rather they were presumed to be soldiers, and I believed them to be a portion of my own company. I agreed to watch the enemy sharp, while my friend scud away, (he had no horse) which he did by stooping low until out of range. I think my whole stay at this place was near three hours.

After a little more firing, my gun – a Smith & Wesson carbine – became so foul that an empty shell stuck fast in it, which all my efforts failed to remove, and I also spoiled the little concern wed for that purpose. I hadn't yet learned that by wetting the shells in the mouth immediately before firing they could be easily removed with the thumb and finger. I then used my revolver, but after several shots that was also rendered useless by a piece of gun cap getting down next the lock, so it could not be cocked, nor could I remove the obstruction. While working away, trying to get one of my shooting irons in working condition – some time having elapsed since a shot had been fired – my Indian

raised up in full view and moved about in his little fort. I thought him bold, as he could not know my arms were out of fix.

Instantly recollecting the soldiers – whom I had not seen or even thought of since discovered by us – I turned to see where they were, when off to my right, as I faced my old enemy, and distant about 100 yards, set an Indian on his pony calmly looking at me ; while a little beyond was another riding down towards the other full tilt. Then I knew it was Indians not soldiers we saw up the creek. How many more of them were in sight I tarried not to see ; but thinking that not a good place for me, with both gun and revolver out of fix, I quickly mounted my horse (He stood like a statue all these hours) and ran him in a sort of zigzag course through the deep sand of the creek, bending forward on the saddle as I went. Two or three shots came rather close before getting out of range, but I took no time to turn to see where they came from or to learn if I was followed. After going two or three hundred yards down the creek bed I turned up the west bank where I was agreeably surprised to find a comrade – P. M. Williams – a brave boy, and as cool and self-possessed in the presence of danger as any one I ever saw, either at Sand Creek or elsewhere.

This is how young Williams came to be here, in a dangerous place; afoot and alone as I found him. During the progress of our company up the creek he had, for some reason unknown to me, tied his horse to a bush near the east bank of the creek, and a little below where I found him; and having reached the west bank, had been holding the head of a wounded man of some company of the 3rd, and caring for him for about three hours, and until the arrival of the ambulance. In the mean time I think the man died, but of this I am not certain, as I am ignorant of several items which deserve mention just here, and which I am disappointed at not yet having obtained from the one (now in the east) capable of imparting the desired information.

One or two other wounded or dead soldiers were also taken from this part of the field, one of them the one shot near the clump-of bushes, but whether this man was dead, or among the wounded, I cannot say.

On the departure of the ambulance, Williams remained in the hope of being able to get his horse, which he repeatedly attempted; but whenever he started across in that direction, the fire of a lot of the enemies in rifle pits a little below, would be turned on him, and oblige him to turn back. And as matters became worse and worse, instead of better, the idea of securing his horse was abandoned, until he should succeed in saving himself. At this time all the troops had left this part of the field; in fact, the work of the day was presumed to be about over.

Indians now boldly showed themselves in several directions, not only up the creek from where I just came, but also along the brow of the bluff to the north and north west of us, and within easy rifle range. Williams was armed with a large dragoon revolver only, as he had lent his gun to a comrade, who had lost his own during the head-long ride of the morning. For a time the chances seemed to be rather against our escaping from this place. It was unsafe to remain where we were, and we scarcely dare to move in any direction, as directly between us and the camp we knew were a lot of the enemy in rifle pits, and how many were scattered around no one could tell. About the time when our surroundings looked the worst, we saw a company of soldiers which, from their carrying the regimental flag we knew to be "I" of the 3rd, a mile or more to the south, and on our

side of the creek opposite the village. They seemed to halt and hesitate a little, but soon they moved up toward us. This gladdened us, and we went slowly forward.

The company bore away a little to the right, and attacked the Indians in the rifle pits, under the high bank just below and to the east of us. This was the same crowd who fired on Williams. Here a lively firing was kept up for some time, and when the company drew off, one of their number was tied across his horse, dead. Williams and myself were glad to fall in with them, as they returned to camp via the same route they came, avoiding the immediate bank of the creek. As afterwards proved, there were more Indians in pits between those attacked by company "I" and camp. I think it was about three or four o'clock in the afternoon (likely the latter hour) when company "I" came in, and I know nothing of any fighting after this; though to the positive knowledge of myself and others, there was no special lack of Indians up the creek, and some within sight of our camp.

Some time after this Lieut. Dickson and others saw about fifteen or twenty Indians withdraw from the rifle pits about three fourths of a mile to a mile above camp, and move off; and the Lieutenant called the attention of Col. Shoup to it. But the Colonel either made no reply, or did not think it best to attack them. The fact was that both men and horses were very tired and hungry, and the boys were glad for an opportunity to rest and look around camp, where much of interest was to be seen. But before detailing the latter I will give some particulars connected with the one man wounded and two killed of company D.

Henry C. Foster was killed at the east bank of the creek, early in the day, and just after myself and others left the company to go on the plain. I believe he was shot in the neck, and also in the region of the heart, and probably died almost instantly. He was a good man and good soldier, and one who never shirked duty. He had been on the sick list for some time, and reported himself for duty two days before the fight, though known to be still weak and not in a suitable condition to perform such service as this jaunt required. Later in the day while the company were fighting far up the creek, corporal Maxwell exchanged shots with an Indian who was hidden, or partly so, and when Maxwell partially turned to reload his gun the Indians shot him through the chest; the ball passing through one lung, and just missing the heart. As soon as the Indian made this shot he started to run; but Jack's gun was reloaded by this time, and turning he shot and killed the Indian as he went. This was witnessed by Sergeant Barney and others. Jack then spoke to some one near by, and said he had killed the fellow; and added, "but he has got me too," and when answered, "Oh no, I guess not," replied "Yes, he has, I am shot right through."

After going a few steps he sank or laid down on the sad, the boys attending closely to his wants, until the ambulance arrived, which was at once sent for. Maxwell was a large and powerful man, and consequently a capital mark for an Indian's gun. He was also a splendid shot. His iron constitution enabled him to pull through with life, but with a reasonable certainty of his having cause to remember Sand Creek until the day of his death.

But what was by common consent considered to be the tragedy of the day in which company D were concerned, took place on the open plain to the east of the creek, and at least four miles from the village, and resulted in the death of Robert McFarland, a man well and favorably known by the old settlers of Boulder and vicinity, and who was much missed by his comrades.

Corporal Steve Phillips, McFarland, Lockhart, Ripley, Elliot, and Montgomery, were in the same section of country, and some of them were driving in a small herd of ponies, as I intimated in a former letter, but they were scattered considerably, and sometimes may be but two or three with the stock.

While proceeding thus, Phillips and McF. being near each other, discovered a buffalo robe lying in the grass, and as they approached it one of them expressed his belief that it covered an Indian. When within perhaps twenty or thirty feet of it, McFarland turned his horse and dismounted on the side next to it. Instantly an Indian raised from under it with a yell, and bounding and jumping about so lively that, though both fired their carbines at him, neither hit him, while he let fly the arrows from an immense bow.

Mac dodged behind his horse, and the latter was quickly disabled by receiving a number of arrows. Mac soon received an arrow in his side, when he rushed at the Indian (who I think had approached very near in the meantime, and dealt him a blow with his gun, a Smith and Wesson) which broke the stock in splinters, but did no apparent harm to the Indian. Then they

seem to have clinched, and Lockhart thinks the Indian jammed an arrow in Mac's heart with his hand, which may or may not be a fact, as it not known to a certainty. Lockhart thinks the arrow in the side was not what killed him.

Any way it appears that Mac no sooner closed with the warrior, than he fell back and made some exclamation, like "boys, I'm killed," or "Oh God, boys I'm killed," or similar to this, and died. This had of course occupied but a minute or two of time. Now came Phillips' turn, and he promptly closed with the big warrior, who was a powerful fellow, while Steve was of moderate height, but a broad, stout, vigorous and resolute young man; and the writer hereof knows he was good at a "rough and tumble." Phillips got one of the Indians' arms or hands in limbo, and kept it thus; but the Indian being so much larger or taller, bent down over him, and with his free hand full of arrows was doing his best to kill him, by jabbing the arrows in his head and neck. But Steve was tough, and seems to have protected himself somewhat. In the mean time Judge Ripley and Wm. Elliot hurried up and killed the Indian by one shooting him in the head, and the other in the body at about the same time. All this seems to have transpired very quickly, and was witnessed by Lockhart, who was on his Indian mule about seventy-five yards away, trying in vain to get the contrary animal forward, in order to render assistance, but it would not leave the herd. Although these combatants were very near at the start, and little time given in which to plan or even think, still it is unaccountable that while Mac and Steve both had revolvers, neither seem to have drawn them, or attempted to do so.

During the whole of this encounter, the Indian kept up a yelling or song of some sort; probably his death song or chant, as this would seem to be a very proper occasion for it.

Phillips' hat and coat collar showed hard usage, and were chopped to rags with the arrows. Steve, on being liberated, showed considerable excitement, and hurried the boys away so quickly, that none of them thought to remove from McFarland's body his revolver or other valuables. The revolver he carried belonged to Sergeant Dwight (who was with the transportation), and he also had on a valuable field glass belonging to Lieut. Pennock. These things (as well as anything else he had), fell into the hands of the enemy.

Thus the mistake of myself and others in not visiting his body when first informed of his death, became apparent. Near the close of the day a strong squad in charge of Sergeant Barney brought in his body. They found it stripped of every thing except drawers, his chest chopped open, and his broken gun jammed in the wound. He was not scalped, as his hair was cut short; beside it is, I think, the custom among Indians to take no scalp from those killed by others. But in regard to this the Sand Creek soldiery were not over particular. While this squad were out they were closely watched by Indians, and on the return to camp quite a large party kept for some time just out of range of their guns, while now and then one would circle toward the boys, evidently with the intent to toll some of them away, in order to cut them off. But the boys were not to be caught just then, but held themselves in readiness in case they came close. This Indian who killed McFarland was an uncommon large and powerful one, and several who saw him as he lay dead believed him to be Left Hand, a prominent Arapahoe chief, and who used to be seen by the old settlers of Boulder and St. Vrain during 1860 and 1861. But from information since gained I guess it was not he, as I have since learned from a source apparently reliable, that during the fight Left Hand had a leg broken between ankle and knee, and after stumping it for three days ingloriously died. This may be incorrect, but thus I heard it.

Late in the afternoon, if I am correctly informed, the captain of company "I" (his name I think was Buchanan) sent to Col. Chivington requesting that the artillery be sent to shell the enemy from the pits up the creek; but whether this request was made just before his company made the last assault on the rifle pits, as mentioned in my last letter, or on his return from the charge, knowing more were up there, I cannot say. But the request was not complied with, which was no doubt on account of a scarcity of ammunition for the guns, as it had run low, and earlier in the day, an order had been sent back to Lieut. Pennock in charge of transportation, to forward a supply without delay.

It was after this that a lot of the enemy were seen to leave the pits, as before mentioned. My object in being thus particular is to show that after the fighting of the day was over, and the troops in camp, that there were more of the enemy not far away, and that the colonels knew the fact.

The killing of Jack Smith, a half Indian son of John Smith, the US. interpreter, who was in the village for trading purposes when the battle opened, has given rise to some crooked statements.

It seems young Smith was held in and about his father's lodge as a sort of prisoner, and during the Afternoon, after most of the fighting was over, many of the boys gathered about the place, and quizzed and questioned Smith considerably about these Indians, the battle, etc. They knew he was lying, but they gave him rope, and let him yarn it the more. Among the others were many of the company D boys, some of whom knew Smith took part in the fight, saw him shoot , and even saw him shoot at some of their own number there present. Consequently the feeling was strong against him.

After a while a soldier with a carbine in his hands, which was cocked and pointed toward Smith, stood talking with the latter just outside the lodge door, S. spinning a yarn, as the boys knew; when the gun went off, the ball passing through Smith's chest, and killing him immediately. The soldier pretended it was accidental. The body was pulled into the lodge, where was also a squaw; John Smith's squaw, I believe, though not presumed to

be the mother of young S. Someone of the boys favored scalping him, as though he were a complete Indian; but this was not done.

The shooting caused some stir, and an inclination on the part of some to use the lodge and other things thereabouts pretty rough; but Col. Shoup got on a wagon near by, and talked to the boys, threatening punishment on any one molesting anything in the lodge, and sending the crowd away. The Colonel mentioned the killing as though accidental.

Plenty of our company knew the main facts of this affair, but I give this as given recently by H. J. Lockhart, a man of veracity, and well known in the vicinity of Longmont; and who stood within a few feet of the two when it took place, having stepped up near to hear the talk.

I have never, as I remember, heard an opinion other than that the killing was intentional, and also that he deserved what he got. I have no doubt the officers understood it, though as I recall it from memory, Col. Shoup in his official report of the battle mentioned young S. being taken "violently ill, and died before morning."

John Smith spoke approvingly of his son's death, but whether or not from motives of policy I cannot say. He (Jack) was said to be a bad one.

John Brown, of company D, gobbled young Smith's gun. During the day two of the boys of company D were driving in a small herd of ponies, and following with them was a squaw carrying a child. They encountered Col. Shoup, who told them "take no prisoners", or "we take no prisoner;" or words similar. The squaw seemed to understand the import of the words, and without saying a word turned her back to the boys, who shot them both; as they considered the Colonel's words equal to an order to kill them. I heard of this about the time of its occurrence, but lately heard it again from the lips of one of the parties, a well known and prominent citizen of Longmont, and who then as now considered it a tough transaction.

I give this because it is one of the incidents of the battle, and for the further reason that neither Col. Chivington nor Col. Shoup (not to mention others) have been honest in this matter; but have pretended that the killing of women and children in this battle was entirely unavoidable; could not be helped, as all were in the rifle pits together, etc., etc. And if I mistake not, some time after the battle Col. Shoup wrote a letter which appeared in a Colorado paper, claiming the above to be the case. Now I know a part of this is true, and that many were unavoidably killed; that it was not easy to distinguish the sexes during the fight, and that it would have been impossible to help killing many woman and children; and I also know perfectly well (and nearly every other man who was in the Sand Creek fight must be satisfied of it) that it was the purpose during that battle to kill old and young of both sexes. This is the fact of the case, and it is useless to shirk it, or to pretend it was all accidental.

Soon after the fight opened as old Mr. Autobee (I think it was he), and Pixley, who had secured quite a herd of Indian stock and taken it to the main herd, which was being held or herded by the Mexican company a mile or so south of the village, and three others were nearing the village, they saw that the sand had recently been disturbed, and one suggested that Indians were in there; and on poking around, one jumped up and was shot by the old man; and soon two others were found and killed. They had been completely covered with sand. It is more than likely many escaped by burying

themselves in this way, and cases were related where Indians or squaws would be seen to drop down, and after making the sand fly lively for a minute or two, be out of sight.

Since writing the above account of the killing of Jack Smith, I have received from a friend and ex-Sand Creeker, a version which differs slightly from that given above, and which illustrates the difficulty of learning particulars correctly even from eye-witnesses. Both these men stood very near at the time, and both have good memories of events; nor would I hesitate to vouch for the honest intent of either in a matter of this sort.

This man says Smith was shot by a soldier of the Colorado 1st and that the man who shot him was sitting down in the midst of a crowd of soldiers who had collected per agreement, and a space was left by the boys in standing for the pistol ball to pass through.

During the night's march to Sand Creek, the horse of Jim Dubois of company D gave out, and he was left afoot and alone miles in the rear, not by any means a desirable situation. He was attached to Capt. Johnson's company of the Provost Guard; and after his horse had lagged along for miles, he sent word by a passing soldier to Capt. J., and requesting that a fresh horse be sent him, as he knew there were several extra ones for that purpose. It seems this message never reached the Capt. When Jim had led his horse until he would move no farther, he stripped him and turned him loose. Then taking all his ammunition, and a little grub, he took the trail and exerted himself to the utmost to overtake the command. In this he entirely failed. At daybreak he was still on the open plain with no one else in sight.

Soon after sunrise he heard the boom of the artillery, and firing of guns, and knew the battle had opened. The feelings of one similarly situated can be imagined, but not easily described. He was probably from four to six miles out when he first heard the guns. Soon after this, and when within two or three miles of the battle ground, he saw a large party of Indians a mile or so to the west, and as they approached he was enabled to count them two or three times, and made out seventy-five in number; there being nine horses carrying two Indians each.

This is an abridged and very tame account of Dubois's experiences during the morning, the most interesting particulars of which the writer is not allowed to give on account of the extreme modesty of the one directly concerned; and who, were the full account given, might be charged with sounding his own trumpet, as there were no other witnesses except a lot of red devils on horseback.

Jim was interested in learning something about these Indians, and from information gained was satisfied they left the village just as the command came in view around the point, where we halted to strip for action. And he was told that in many cases there were three Indians on one horse, though he saw but two on any one animal.

So far as I am informed, this was the largest party of the enemy who escaped in a body either immediately before, during, or after the flight.

Du Bois (who knew about it) says "the request for artillery assistance (mentioned above in this letter) was made by company "I" after the general engagement was over, and was for the purpose of shelling some fifty Indians out of the trench about a mile up the creek."



These were the same who afterward escaped.

Readers of this account need not to be told that no pretence is made of detailing movements of the main command, or particulars (save in a case or two) relating to the killed and wounded of other companies than our own and for the simple reason that I know next to nothing of these things. I take it that an Indian battle is not like other battles.

In this battle companies were separated from others of the battalion, squads were detached from their companies and in other cases individuals were pursuing their own way, and fighting the enemy in the manner to them seemed best.

I have reason to believe that a field history of the battle, with particulars of incidents witnessed, would prove vastly more interesting to the general reader than the little the writer hereof has been able to give of the fight itself, and that it would comprise sufficient to fill a fair sized volume. The instances of personal bravery during the day were very numerous, and many examples of such were current at the time, nor were these cases confined to the soldiers done. The enemy proved themselves to be possessed of the most daring courage, especially in emergencies. I believe the Sand Creek fight raised in the minds of many their estimation of Indian courage.

In my next I will give something of the results of the battle in killed and wounded.

Some particulars deserving mention in a former letter were overlooked. The horse of the Indian who killed McFarland was taken during the melee and secured by some of the boys and brought to the two little children of the deceased who by this affair were left orphans. The horse was a very large one and must have required the strength of a powerful man to spring it. Mac's horse probably died but whatever its condition, it, with the saddle and fixtures, fell into the hands of the enemy. The Indians left the body as the boys approached when they went to get it.

Jack Maxwell brought away with him as a valued trophy the scalp of the Indian who shot him which was taken for him by one of the boys. I think it was before noon that the work of demolition of the enemy's village commenced. As many of the teepees as were required for the use of the wounded men were taken for that purpose, and the others together with the many tons of Indian supplies which the village contained were piled and burned. The number of lodges or teepees were as I remember between 130 and 135. Of all the Indian camps I had before seen, this one showed the most wealth. The supplies seemed to be bountiful. A look around even after much was burned was of great interest, at least it was so to me. There must have been tons of dried buffalo meat and large and numerous packages of coffee, sugar, dried cherries, etc. were on every hand. Saddles, bridles and lariats, robes and skins in all stages of tanning process, in fact plenty of all which goes to complete an Indian "outfit."

There were numerous new axes of a small pattern, and which must have been "drawn" very recently. The number of medicine men in camp must have been rather numerous, judging from the many well-filled medicine bags found.

It seemed to be the general opinion among the boys, that if Uncle Sam furnished the commissary supplies for that camp, they were rather better looked after than were his

own boys. But it is quite possible some of the many articles were furnished them by John Smith, in the course of trade.

It really seemed a pity to destroy all of these supplies, so much needed by other miserable creatures of the plains; but then this is war, and these our enemies.

In one lodge was found an aged squaw who had suicided by hanging herself. I believe there were a number of scalps of white people found among the trumpery, also daguerreotypes, children and women's wearing apparel, etc. I am not sure that I saw these things, but have not the least doubt they were there, as it is well known.

At evening when our dead were all gathered and laid in a row I viewed them, and recall to mind my thoughts at the time. There were either eight or nine bodies, am not sure but think the latter number. (I have no copy of the official reports of the battle, though such would, I find, be very useful.) It was rather a hard sight to those of us who were unused to war and its accompanying horrors.

I then fully realized that our battle had been dearly won for the lives of these nine men were of more real value to our country than all the Indians on the plains. Beside our dead we had thirty-eight wounded, to attend whom kept the surgeons and numerous assistants very busy.

The wounded occupied many of the Indian lodges, and to make them more comfortable, many of the buffalo robes found in the vicinity were utilized.

During the morning most of the Indian stock to be had, was gathered and herded, by the Mexicans, on the bluffs south of the village, and about midday, were started for Ft. Lyon. I believe the number was between five and six hundred. Later in the day many others were picked up, but these were kept with the command and mostly used by the boys, in place of their jaded and nearly used up horses.

The two nights the command passed on the battle ground were dismal in the extreme. The camp was in the form of a hollow square. Our first night's experience was as follows: We slept the sleep of tired men, who were thankful for the blessed privilege of laying themselves down and closing their eyes in sleep – refreshing, health-giving, life-renewing sleep. Probably a hundred or two Indian dogs were scattered over the plains and making the night hideous by their dismal wailing cry. It was indeed, "like a night among the wolves."

Sometime in the night the pickets fired their guns and came running in, when the whole camp was aroused. Our portion of the square was first saluted with "Third battalion, turn out," from Major Cree, and the next moment the dear ring of Captain Nichols' voice calling "Company D, turn out," and as the boys raised up, many repeated the call for the benefit of comrades not yet aroused. And then the Major's and the Captain's call to "Fall in third battalion," "Fall in Company D," and the like of this going on throughout the camp, made a confusion not readily described. And the men suddenly awakened and a little confused for an instant, and likely each one thinking, the camp was attacked, and many of those but half awake, calling "where are you falling in," and the reply, "this way, this way." I cannot describe it.

There is no telling the result of a sudden and determined attack of even one hundred Indians at such a time; at any rate I should prefer not to be present when it happened. The result of all this was that a skirmish line, composed of every fourth man, was advanced several rods around camp, when all again returned to their blankets. I believe the pickets were supposed to have fired at Indians, but just what the circumstances were I cannot remember, but there were other evidences showing some of the enemy were around during the night.

There was quite a scene created next forenoon by the killing of a soldier – a Mexican – who was said to be on picket duty, and who left his post and went after a herd of Indian stock some distance away. The whole thing was witnessed by Greenly, Hopkins, Hank, Farrar, Hes. and Frank Smith, and Lockhart, of company D, and was about as follows: When the boys were out several miles from camp they saw six or eight Indians approach over a ridge, but who, on seeing the boys dismount to receive them, turned off at an angle and made at once for the Mexican, placing themselves between the latter and our boys, who pushed their horses to their utmost to save the fellow, but who led away in a direction which made assistance impossible.

The Mexican took several deliberate shots as the enemy approached him, but seemingly without effect, then he dropped or threw away his gun and endeavored to escape. Two of the enemy – one on either side – came up very near, and one of them shot an arrow in the man's neck, which the boys could see as he ran. Then one of the Indians took several shots with a revolver, but with no apparent effect, when the other knocked him from his horse with a hatchet, or similar weapon, and killed him. The boys were in time to prevent his being scalped, and also to wound if not kill one of the Indians, who had to be assisted away. The Indians secured the horse and saddle.

Sometime during the day a soldier of some company of the 3d rode out on the plain alone, and not being seen or heard of afterward was no doubt cut off and killed; but so far as I know there was no special effort made to find his body .

In the afternoon Sergeant Mory, Williams and myself obtained leave to take a look over the battle ground. As we went up the creek quite a company of the officers, and John Smith, were returning from a similar visit, one object thereof being, as reported, the identification of the bodies of several chiefs, by Smith.

Besides looking, we also counted the dead, or rather I counted while the others assisted in finding the bodies. We did not go far enough up the creek to see all the dead in that direction, not even as far up as where Maxwell was killed, and where the boys reported five of the enemy killed; while far above this Sergeant Blore with ten or a dozen men had killed three or four Indians. I believe the latter party were farther up the creek than any other soldiers during the day of the battle, and so I feel reasonably certain that we have an account of nearly all the dead up that way.

In one place, way up the creek, in a space of about twenty or thirty feet square lay – if I am not mistaken – twenty-three dead warriors, not a woman or child among or near them.

One of these – said to be a chief – was sprinkled all over from head to foot with some sort of yellow powder, and some of the boys who saw the bodies the day before said the powdering had been done since that time.

The heart was cut out of me of the bodies and stuck on a bush near by. This was believed to be in retaliation of the mutilation of McFarland's body, whose heart was at first believed to have been cut out, but later the surgeons found it all right. At the clump of bushes where I had watched the enemy so long, we found no warrior, but only a dead squaw and child. The warrior which I believed we killed while crawling away from the place, was already scalped, so I was saved that trouble.

Along the east bank of the creek where some of the first fighting took place, but few dead were found, Some were scattered along the bed of the creek on the sand, while most were along the west bank and in the rifle pits, though here were no such numbers as one not counting would naturally have expected to find. One or two medicine men must have been shot in the pits, as the contents of medicine bags were scattered about very freely.

For myself I confess to having experienced something of pity for the dead of this class – said to be held in high esteem among all Indians tribes – but whether or not they are, as among people more civilized, noncombatants, I am uninformed. The body of White Antelope, a prominent Cheyenne chief, lay in the bed of the creek opposite the village, and was among the first Indians killed. My own opinion on viewing him was that he must have been rather a superior Indian, certainly above the average in moral and intellectual endowments.

The number of dead we made out to be either 116 or 118, of all sorts – warriors, squaws and children – as we counted neither separately, and it was my opinion – and as I remember, that also of my companions, think we agreed as to it – that about two-thirds of all were warriors, and one-third women and children. To make the number of 116 or 118 we included the dead I knew to be on the bluff, the one who killed McFarland, and five near where Maxwell was shot.

From information recently obtained I must add three or four killed far up the creek by Blore's squad, and the three killed below the village by old man Autobee, Pixley and the other two soldiers. This makes a total which I am satisfied were killed of the enemy, of 122 to 125. Now I am not to be misunderstood in this matter, for I am not claiming the were no more in numbers killed of the enemy than above indicated, but my object is to come as near concerning this question as possible, by stating where these dead were.

I am well satisfied some more were killed, but just where or how many I have been unable to learn, and for the reason I have not seen the parties who knew. At the time of the battle it was currently reported (and I believe it) that a company of the 1st charged on some Indians in some valley or ravine to the west of the creek, with sabers, but the enemy either made it too hot for them or they could not get their horses near enough to them to use sabers, and so drew off – after making a charge or two – and took it afoot. No doubt some, probably many, were killed here, but no one I have communicated with lately on this subject has known anything in particular about it, though nearly all had heard of it. No doubt most any officer or even soldier of the 1st Colorado could give information concerning this locality under consideration. (Am informed by Williams that the number in this place were 22)

But making a liberal allowance for the number killed in this unknown locality, I have nothing tangible on which to base a belief that over 175 of the enemy were killed in this battle, nor can I say I believe there were the latter number. There may have been 200 or

even 450, as some say they counted of warriors alone. I don't say they did not, for I don't know, but I would like to know where they were. I am not ignorant of the fact that the number killed at Sand Creek are generally estimated at from 400 to 600, but I think myself justified in rejecting any such estimate. Nor am I ignorant of the fact that two men have – as stated in Chivington's "Synopsis of the Sand Creek Investigation," sworn to the fact "that they counted 450 warriors on the field; and one of these men is a leading citizen of our state, and one for whom – in common with the people of Colorado – in general, the writer entertains high regard.

The other man who so testified (or apparently so) had a commission in a Colorado regiment, and with whom the writer has had some acquaintance, and who seemed to be a very good man. I expect to be antagonized in this matter. I will conclude this Sand Creek subject next week.

A few words more about the number killed. It is just possible my estimate is too low, as the enemy may have carried away a hundred or more dead bodies during the night for aught I know; as I have no doubt there were plenty of live ones hanging around, to have accomplished this by working industriously. But then how did these other men count so many? as I believe we all looked over the field the same day, that is, the day after the fight. It would not have been safe for any small party to transverse the battle ground after the close of battle, and before dark, and I am safe in saying no party did this.

But if four or five hundred were killed this battle, I would be very glad indeed to learn the fact, and the error here made; for if my glory attaches to war, there is more, resulting from having participated in a big than a small fight. I lately heard, in an indirect way, that thirty of the enemy were killed off somewhere early in the day, by a party of eighteen men; and it is my opinion it is about correct, though I have been unable to learn anything reliable concerning it. It is quite likely this is the same affair in which some of the 1st reg. were engaged, mentioned in my last letter; though I may be wrong in this.

Now about the white flag so much talked about by the opponents of the opponents of the fight.

I am not unmindful of the fact that the testimony of one or two hundred men even, who did not see such a flag displayed at the Sand Creek village, is no positive proof that none was exhibited, but it does tend to make it improbable except the fact be proven by reliable witnesses.

I am not aware that a white flag at Sand Creek was ever heard of, until the one-sided investigations of those old coveys (the "Committee on the Conduct of the War") took place in Colorado in the summer of 1865, nor do I now know on whose evidence it rests, though most likely on that of the truthful (?) and impartial (?) John Smith. I will add, that I have never seen or heard of anything, either in conversations with comrades or otherwise, at the time of the battle, or since, which even made it appear to me probable that any white or truce flag was exhibited by any one at the above-named battle.

Now as to the scalping part of the story. One witness who looked over the ground, and, says he "counted four hundred and fifty warriors," says he has seen the White Lipan or Comanche Indians, scalp their own dead to avoid having them scalped by the whites, "which may account for some of the Indians being scalped at Sand Creek." Well, that is mild, surely. I cannot say the latter was not the case in some instances at Sand Creek,

but it appears to me too improbable, after what I know, to even merit consideration. On looking over the field I did not see a solitary warrior not scalped, or which I did not believe was. By scalped, I mean simply a portion of the scalp or hair taken off, not the whole of it. I noticed about the scalping particular; for to tell the truth, I was prepared to remove any Indians top knot found intact. I know this is not to the credit of myself and others who did it: but it is the truth, and I am disposed to shoulder my share of it. At that time it was deemed all right and proper, and I may as well add that on the return trip to Denver those trophies were rated at an average value of ten dollars each among the boys. I do not say all were scalped, but I do say that I have heard of but one not scalped (one warrior), and that is the Indian who killed McFarland; his was not taken. There may have been many more, but if so the writer did not see or hear of it.

I believe but one of our dead was scalped and evidently the one who did that, was in such haste to get away, that he dropped it, as it was found close by. The fact was, our men were nearly all killed where the enemy could not safely get to them, or where they had no time to spare for it.

I think very little of the generalship displayed in the planning of the attack, if indeed there was any plan about it. The battle might and should have been so planned as to have prevented so many escaping entirely, and also to have kept them from reaching the high abrupt banks up the creek. In fact, it has always been my belief that many more Indians should have been killed, with the loss our side sustained; or else the number we did kill should have been accomplished with much less loss than we met with.

I know some of the women and children could have been saved, and it is clear to my mind that many might have been, had it been the desire of the commander; but this was no part of the plan. This thing was no more in favor with me at this time, than a month or two earlier, at Buffalo Springs.

Many of the Indians killed had lariats, or something with which to catch and ride a pony; and had not their stock beep south of the village, where the troops gobbled them up in a start, no doubt many more would have escaped. John Smith stated that a squaw first heard the clatter of the approach, but it was believed to be either their own stock or wild game; so no general alarm ensued until the soldiers came in sight.

Another account was through squaws who straggled in at Col. Bent's, which was to the effect that an Indian heard the din, and putting his ear to the ground for an instant, jumped up, and ejaculating "Soldiers!" there was an instant scattering.

I will correct a slight error made in my last letter in regard to one of the men killed the day after the battle. The man was John Wells, of Capt. Baxter's company; and instead of going out alone, three went together, but this man started in before the others, or at least separated from them, and was killed. One of the two companions of Wells, William Davenport, is now living at Pueblo. These facts were gathered by a friend, from Abraham Cronk, who was a member of Capt. Baxter's company.

The night of the 30th the transportation arrived from Fort Lyon, which for several reasons gave joy to all. The train now numbered 115 wagons.

It seems as soon as the troops started for Sand Creek, Lieut. Pennock proceeded at once to prepare for the start next morning, by loading many of the wagons (maybe thirty

or forty of them), with forage, provisions, and ammunition at the Fort; this and other preparations kept them busy about all night. At their first camp the lieutenant received the order from the battle field for ammunition, when, selecting two of the best four horse teams, loaded them lightly, and started them ahead safely.

Our second night's experience on the battle ground, was a literal repetition of the first, the whole camp being aroused; except on this occasion we had in addition to the music of the dogs, that of a couple of hundred mules.

On the morning of Dec. 1st the whole command started on the back track, and went about fifteen miles toward Fort Lyon, where we camped for the night. The next morning our dead and wounded were taken on to the Fort, in charge of Major Anthony, while the main force continued down Sand Creek to its junction with the Arkansas, about fifteen or twenty miles below Lyon.

The morning we left the old camp at the battle ground, out a mile or so, we saw one or two squaws, and two or three children huddled in the grass by the side of the trail. They appeared sad and lonely enough to excite pity in all but the hard-hearted. Jim Du Bois says "they were left by the road side with some considerable rations." "The intention was to have taken them to Fort Lyon, but after it was decided to pursue Little Raven's band, it was deemed better to leave them where they would be more likely to meet with assistance from their own race, than to be dropped somewhere else to starve." "When I passed them the squaws were entreating the teamsters to be taken back on the wagons." This party was soon afterward killed by those who brought up the rear, and who behind for the purpose of destroying everything which might be of service to the enemy.

I will now in a general way have my say in regard to this Sand Creek affair, though for the lack of some necessary documents, and inability to spare the required time (not to mention an additional reason), am unable to do justice to the subject.

This battle is usually (especially in the east) referred to as the "Sand Creek Massacre," or "Chivington's Massacre;" and as such has it gone forth to the world, and as such is it likely to be handed down to posterity. I think this is unjust. It merits no such infamous brand. If this was a massacre, and not a battle, in the ordinary sense of the word, then am I at a loss to know just what constitutes a battle, and I wish to be absent from all battles. Many who were in this fight had seen service; and been in battles elsewhere; and these called this a battle, and very much of a one too.

For this affair the commander of the expedition has been censured, lied about, and cursed generally beyond all reason. I am no special admirer of Col. Chivington, nor can I justify all that was done at Sand Creek; but I have a strong desire to see justice done him, as well as all others who have been and are under the ban of condemnation on account of the mistaken idea abroad in regard to the battle. In this connection I must record my contempt for the work of the "Committee on the Conduct of the War" in relation to this fight.

This committee consisted of Ben Wade, Doolittle, and I believe Foster. I suppose they were honest, but they were evidently imposed upon, and their so-called investigations and report have furnished authority for most of the untruths, misconceptions, and unjust

censurings, connected with this affair, and which has moulded popular sentiment in the east regarding Sand Creek.

While Col. Chivington seems to have had many enemies who took this opportunity of venting their spite, the grand origin of the trouble appears to have been John Smith, Indian interpreter, and Major Colley, Indian agent.

As will be remembered, John Smith was in the Indian village at Sand Creek engaged in trading with the Indians at the time the fight commenced. From the testimony of Major Talbot it appears that Smith & Colley were partners in this trading business, and that they lost in consequence of the fight 105 buffalo robes, two white ponies, and other goods to the value of \$6,000, as estimated by them. Smith said he would realize \$25,000 by his losses. They – Smith & Colley – also said they would go in person to Washington and represent the Sand Creek fight as a massacre, and they would do anything to damn Col. Chivington or Major Downing.

These men seem to have effectually accomplished their purpose of damning Chivington and Sand Creek, and this was accomplished mainly through the standing given their statements by the said Committee.

There is much valuable testimony relating to this subject – probably not known by the general public – in a small pamphlet called a "Synopsis of the Sand Creek Investigation," compiled by Col. Chivington in justification of his attack. This also includes orders by Major General Curtis to himself (Chivington) as commander of the district of Colorado. I had intended quoting at some length from this testimony, but cannot do so, as on account of more urgent duties, I must close with this letter what I have to say on this subject. I will, however, send the above mentioned document to the Editor of the Sun for his perusal; also a report of a council of Indian chiefs with the military and territorial authorities at Denver in September, 1864, together with a scathing review by Ex-Gov. Evans, of such portion of the report of the above named committee as relates to himself.

I will further state that while I have always believed the attack on the Sand Creek village was warranted by the facts – the Indians as a whole being decidedly hostile – it is also more than probable that several of the chiefs there killed were themselves peacefully disposed and did not merit their fate. I am strongly inclined to believe that the escape of the little command of Major Wyncoop's, which went to Smoky Hill, was owing to the efforts of one or two chiefs who were afterwards killed at San Creek. Also Left Hand and White Antelope may not have deserved death. But some of these chiefs were unable to control to any great extent the warlike spirit of their several bands, at least this seems to have been the case.

Of all others, Major Anthony – who was in command at Fort Lyon at the time – was the person to know whether or not the Indians at Sand Creek were friendly, and there is plenty of proof that he did state plainly and emphatically to Col. Chivington and others, on the day preceding the fight, that they were hostile, and that he should have attacked them himself before the arrival of Chivington, if he had had force enough at his disposal.

Another thing; it seems that Major A. remains of the same opinion in regard to this as entertained at the time of the fight, though for years he has had the credit (or rather discredit) of having changed front, and which later I had supposed to be the case, until a



recent letter from him – in reply to one of inquiry from myself – makes all plain. It seems injustice has been done Major A. on account of the report of that notorious committee.

The Major says: "Had my whole statement been published instead of only garbled and mutilated extracts from it, no one would have said that my separate reports did not harmonize."

The Indians attacked at Sand Creek are by many confounded with others – Arapahoes, under Little Raven – who were disarmed and fed by Major A., at or near Fort Lyon, for some time, during the summer of 1864.

I quote from his recent letter: "I have no objection to your using my name as authority for the statement that the Indians who were disarmed and fed by me at Fort Lyon formed no part of the band which Chivington's command fought at Sand Creek."

I have not asked for or received authority to quote any other portion of Major Anthony's letter, but will venture to do so in the belief that he will excuse the liberty taken, as it is pertinent to the question.

"The Indians that I had the honor of aiding Chivington in chastising were a portion of the same band that made the attack on Fort Larned; murdered the teamsters and destroyed the train opposite Fort Zarah; burned the train and killed the ten men in sight of the two Mexicans at Cimarron Crossing, cutting them up by pieces in sight of each other, taking out their hearts and vitals, chopping them in pieces, which were placed in a pile, the heads of the men then being cut off and placed in a circle about their fire, while the headless trunks – after being disfigured in the manner that nothing but the devilish ingenuity of a plains Indian could devise – were kicked about the prairie by the innocent (?) squaws and harmless (?) papooses. They were a portion of the same band, too, that attacked almost every train or stage coach that attempted to pass up the Arkansas Valley during the summer of 1864; and who gave me, with a small detachment from Gen. Blunt's command, such a thorough whipping at Pawnee Fork only a few weeks before the Sand Creek fight. 'War Bonnet,' one of the leaders in the running fight having been sent to his Happy Hunting Ground from Sand Creek."

In closing I will say that there are many Sand Creek boys in Boulder County, and I have had many consultations with old comrades regarding facts recorded in these letters, and am indebted, to several of them for aid in obtaining solid truth.

This completes what I have to say on this subject. What I have written has been less a pleasure than what seemed to me a duty, in as much as others, possessed of more leisure, and the necessary facts, have neglected to tell the truth in the interest of justice.

If these letters shall contribute to any extent to a correct understanding of the subject treated, the object of the writer will have been attained.

M. H. Coffin,

Upper St. Vrain, Mar. 9, 1879.