

NEBRASKA STATE
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

INDIAN RAID IN 1878--UNDER CHEYENNE CHIEF-DULL KNIFE

by A. A. Kieth

It was in September 1878 that I had come into the then flourishing town of Elsworth Kansas it was then the terminus of the Texas Trail herds that would be shipped from there to Kansas City other thousands passed on to the northern ranges by different routes. Elsworth was then a wild sort of place invested by some of the worst characters on the western frontier but most of the Texas Trail hands that had hired for this place wanted to go back after the cattle had been disposed of. But at this time there was a Mr. Blackman had bought two thousand steers that had to be delivered at Kearney Nebraska so he found it hard to pick up a trail crew of the right kind of men. I hired to him as horse wrangler he had eight other men and a negro cook. A long lank black fellow but some cook always had his mouth open and always singing Tom had a pair of mules and a covered wagon but no tent we started of to the northwest so as to get west of the settlements but Blackman thought we could cross the heads of the Prairie Dog; Sappa; and Beaver creeks and not go so far west so we swung into the head of the Prairie Dog creek and was going down a long divide towards the creek. Tom was ahead with the mess wagon and I was close to him with the horse cavey when Tom stopped and I rode up to him he had stopped his singing for the time we looked down on one of as nice a scene as I had ever seen the stream

was skirted with timber. A string of farms along the stream that part of it sure pine but there was more to it something seemed out of place there were bands of horses scattered here and there with camps here and there along the creek the campfires sending up long columns of smoke: that was what had first drawn our attention to the scene. Then Blackman rode up to us and asked why we did not camp when Tom pointed to the valley and the camp Blackman was an old Texan and his jaws snapped like a steel trap when he said Injins them runaway Cheyennes and them on the warpath to: another minute we had seen a string of indians start in our direction but they were going up the draws on both sides of us that was enough and Blackman said to Tom unhitch the team but Tom was pulling the harness off the mules and was just mounting the dun mule when Blackman said Tom that mule aint broke to ride when Tom said mister maybe he aint but he sure will be mighty quick and then I noticed Tom he had turned almost white and his eyes bulged out and he could hardly talk but he was the whitest nigger that I have ever seen but he shure stayed with that mule. We three rode back till we met the herd the indians were crowding us hoping to cut us off and get the horses covey but when we joined the other eight men they drew off to one side but when four men rode out toward them they fired at them and tried to ride between them and the rest of us and then the other bunch came up from the other side and stampeeded the herd and a small bunch had captured the wagon our outfit only carried six guns in all forty four or forty-five revolvers so we were not a very warlike out-

fit and had the indians known that they might have had more scalps the next day.

By this time it was near sundown and we could hear the crack of rifles down towards the camp and knew that the indians would have plenty of beef for supper. When we got back we found about eighty steers that they had killed that night so the only thing for us to do was to ride south to the railroad some thirty miles but when we rode into buffalo station towards morning we found the town in state of excitement I had never seen before the Cheyennes had broken away from the reservation and on their way north but no one knew where they were untill we came in and told what had happened to us. When we had ran into them they had done no killing up to that time but the next morning the masacre began in earnest but our little brush with them and the killing of the beef cattle gave the settlers close there a chance to escape but they burned everything that would burn on the Prairie dog Sappa and Beaver creeks I do not remember how many men were killed but I remember the case of young Abbot he had gone out after his horse when the indians caught up to him and shot him his father heard the shots and taking his gun went out to see what was up when the indians showed up in the timber along the creek they called to him to stop and talk but he ran towards the dugout with bullets hitting all around him but in the dugout he dug a hole through a window that had been filled up with sod an opened fire on the bunch he killed two horses; and one indian had his hip broken so he was left for dead but he hid and was not found for some time

but later on some men were looking over the scene and found that some one was cutting the flesh off from the dead horses and then they began to search the timber and found an indian with his hip broken but some one shot him and then scalped him he had a long braid of cole black hair as thick as ones wrist and three feet long. I do not know what became of it but just a few years ago an old friend in Beaver City asked me what I had done with that indian scalp that I got on the Beaver another case I remember was the two girls sisters I will not mention their names for they are both living yet they were captured and outraged in the most brutal maner and kept with the indians for two or three days then stripped naked and turned loose they were found by a cowboy and taken to the nearest settlement.

There had been a large band of cowboys formed to follow the indians they were held up by the soldiers and soldiers are not mutch good to chase indians if they try to do it with wagons but if the cowboys had went alone the indians would never have got to the Platte river but before they reached the Platte River they split up in small bands and all disapered: there was one bunch of eight or nine that was waylaid by a bunch of cowboys and were all killed. On the divide north of the Beaver we found an old man that had been left behind he was old and almost blind and toothless must have been a hundred years old they were carrying him in a travois and it had broken down one of the poles had broken and he had been left to die and the boys were discusing what to do with him when some one said to remember young Abbot and then some one grabbed the end of the

travois pole and the old warrior drew the blanket over his face and the cowboy hit him with the club and killed him this was close to the place where a few years before a lieutenant and four men were killed by the Indians they had been surrounded by indians and had killed their horses for breast works and had all been killed and mutilated stripped naked and then pined to the ground with arrows that was all the indians that we over took on the trip. They made their way up north and were captured somewhere in Wyoming or Dakota that winter they were being held prisoners at Ft. Robinson Nebraska that was a very cold winter and all the warriors broke out and got away but were rounded up in the bad lands and they fought until the last one was killed.

They were the Northern Cheyennes known as Dull-knives band Dullknife was killed in the winter of 1886-7 on the Red fork of Powder River and his whole camp equipage was burned that time they were captured and taken to Oklahoma then was when they raided Kansas on their way back to Wyoming after all the warriors were killed at Ft. Robinson the women and children were taken back to Oklahoma but after a few years they all drifted back to the north and located on the Rose Bud in Montana where they have stayed about as peaceable as a Cheyenne could they agreed to behave themselves if the government would let them stay they were the finest as well as the most virtius (and the fiercest in war) indians/there is if you see a half breed Cheyenne you will know they bear a white mans name and that honestly. There are no illegitimate children among the Northern Cheyennes.

The Cheyennes were kept in the guard house at Fort Robinson, Nebraska that winter of 1888 the warriors all broke out and got into the bad lands but were overtaken by the soldiers and they fought untill the last one was killed one of the soldiers is still living in Rawlins Wyo. told me of the fight he said that when they were captured and gave up their guns they concealed the best of them by taking them apart and the squaws hid them under their cloths he told me that the first time they struck the indians was where the N.W.R.R. crosses the creek at the edge of the Fort and they left fourteen dead indians on the bank of the creek. He told me that every time that the soldiers had a brush with them that there was one or two soldiers shot square in the mouth there was one indian that was a sure dead shot. There was a gambler in Buffalo station heard me tell Blackman that I wanted to follow the cowboys after the Cheyennes but I had no horse when he said come here and he gave me an order for his horse with the remark that he is a good one and if I never see you or old Soll again good bye I kept Soll for a long time but I never saw the gambler again.

Quien Saba