

Indian Expedition.

[Editorial Correspondence.]

Progress of the Commissioners -- Attack from the Indians -- Murder of Mr. Ward.

IN CAMP ON LITTLE MARIPOSA RIVER,

Sunday, March 2d, 1851.

We struck our encampment on the Merced, on the 28th ult. and yesterday came on our route about fifteen miles, encamping upon Bear Creek, a small and insignificant stream, running through a pretty and fertile little valley, in which we found excellent grazing. A house of accommodation is kept near by for the benefit of the traveling community, and the emolument of the proprietors. This morning we took an early start, and came on to this point, about eight miles from Bear Creek. For the last two days our road has been through a rough, mountainous country, a succession of ascents and descents all the way. Some of the valleys are covered by a bright green sward, and brilliant with wild flowers; but mostly the country is barren and uninteresting to the eye from its unvarying monotony.

Upon our arrival here we were apprised of an attack made upon a party of travelers last night within about six miles, and I was soon able to procure the particulars from those who were made the victims of the animosity of the Indians. The attacked party consisted of Mr. M. M. Montgomery, James Falsey, John N. Warner, and Geo. Ward, partners; who had come only the previous day from Greaser Gulch diggings, 6 miles from Burns'. They had with them two wagons, loaded with provisions, drawn by three yoke of oxen, six mules, two horses and a jackass. They were joined by three Frenchmen during yesterday, and all were bound to Fine-gold Gulch diggings, which are now attracting considerable attention. They are situated fifty miles from this place, near the head waters of the Chowchilla. They encamped near a dry creek, but fifteen or twenty yards from the banks, the bend of the creek making a sort of elbow. They picketed out their animals, chained their oxen, and after getting supper the majority of them turned in for the night. Near or about midnight, while one of the party, Mr. George Ward, was in the act of putting on his jacket, having arisen for that purpose, a gun was discharged from the edge of the creek bank, the ball from which passed through his body, entering near the right hip joint and passing out near the spinal column. This was the signal for a general attack; several guns were fired and a flight of arrows from the creek. Very naturally the party were panic stricken, and the night being excessively dark the resistance of those who retained their self-possession was feeble. Mr. Ward received a second shot, informed his companions that he was mortally wounded and sunk upon his bed. Two of the Frenchmen fled, they scarcely know where, and remained until morning. After firing about one hundred arrows and a dozen or more guns, the Indians commenced throwing stones and yelling, in order to stampede the mules, which they succeeded in doing, and immediately took possession

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In company with Col. Barbour and Capt. Keyes, I visited the scene of the affray. On the road we met Major Lane and Mr. Gibbs, with several wagons and a number of head of cattle. Major L. has been in this country for a considerable time, located in the Mariposa region. The Indian disturbances have induced him to get nearer the settlements with his family. He was encamped last night within about four miles of the place of attack, but heard nothing of it, and was surprised at the scene which met his eye. Finding the body of a man unburied, he dug a grave, with the assistance of his comrades, and buried it. Mr. Gibbs, who accompanied Major L., is from Washington, on the San Joaquin, and is in search of his partner, Mr. W. B. Casserty, who was run off from Washington by the Indians, on Tuesday last, and has not since been heard of. He had gone down the river to turn back some of his stock, and also to find a bowie knife which he had dropped. When about two miles below Washington, which, by the way, is 150 miles above the mouth of the San Joaquin, a party of Indians made out from the plains and ran him off. Mr. Gibbs and others, as soon as they were aware of the fact, started in pursuit, and followed the trail about sixteen miles, without overtaking them. They found that the Indians had stopped once and made sandals from an old saddle-covering, and that some of them had put on shoes. Mr. Gibbs thinks that if his partner kept away from them until night he may have escaped with his life.

But to return to the scene of the last night's affray. A worse spot for an encampment could not well have been selected, as the Indians had the creek bank for a shelter and could attack them with impunity from two or three directions. The wagon, under which three of the men laid, exhibited very conclusive evidence that there had been a child's play enacted. The cover was completely

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been no child's play enacted. The cover was completely
riddled with arrows and bullets, and the flint heads of
arrows were buried deep in the wagon body, while the
ground was covered with large stones, the size of a
man's fist, that had been hurled by the Indians during
their attack, which was kept up for about two hours. I
had been told that the arrows used by the Indians were
not formidable and that they would not penetrate a thick
coat; ocular demonstration to-day satisfied me to the
contrary, as I saw an inch board nearly perforated. From
the signs it is probable there were a dozen of the Indians,
perhaps more; and had there been anything like concert
of action among the attacked party they could have an-
nihilated them. The fact that as soon as the Indians ob-
tained the mules and horses, they left, without destroy-
ing the oxen or stealing a single thing from the wagons,
is proof sufficient that they were apprehensive of a rally
or feared the resistance of the troops, from their close
proximity. There are many persons traveling this road
now, and I fear that further difficulties will occur. Much
excitement was produced in camp to-day by this last
event, and I think if John Indian had been encountered
he would have been relieved from the necessity of
making any treaty in this world.

The Commissioners intend remaining in this place for
a week longer, when they will proceed up this stream to
Fremont's old camp, eight or ten miles above here, to
meet the sachems and warriors. Savage is encamped a
mile or two from the stream, with a portion of his com-
mand. His men are patiently awaiting the action of the
Commissioners. It would not surprise me at all if they
were permitted to chastise the Chowchillas, should they
fail to come in—which they most undoubtedly will—in
which case I fear this command will be retained merely
as a corps-du-reserve. I hope this may not be the case
and that Uncle Sam's regulars may have an opportunity
of reaping the honor, if any is to be obtained, of whip-
ping the mountain foe. They have nearly all smelt pow-
der and would not have the slightest dislike to giving
them the benefit of their experience. A pack train is to
leave to-morrow for Graysonville, to bring up provisions
for the command, and an express rider will accompany it,
for whom I shall send this letter. All in camp are well;
Dr. Wozencroft has recovered from his recent attack of
illness. I shall write by every opportunity. J. E. D.