

HISTORICAL SKETCHES.

CHAPTER III.

THOMISY AND THE KIWAS.

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"Do you know me?" asked a fierce looking Kiowa warrior, riding up to Thomisy, who had just mounted his poney in order to accompany the tribe in its removal from Pecan Creek to the North Fork of Red River. "Yes" replied Thomisy, "You Big Bow I know you. No see you for long time."

This Big Bow was a notorious Kiowa raider, who had but just returned from a raiding expedition into Colorado. Big Bow and his brother raider White Horse had been for years the terror of the frontiers of the surrounding States, Kansas, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. The last of their terrible deeds of which reliable information can be obtained, took place in Texas some months before.

One beautiful summer morning, a settler by the name of Lee was sitting at the door of his house reading; his wife and other members of his family were busily engaged about their early morning avocations, when the crack of a rifle is heard, and the old man falls dead upon the floor: the good wife flying to the open door is met by a similar missile, and shares the fate of her husband, the children, three in number, betake themselves to a cornfield near at hand, for concealment, are discovered and carried into a cruel captivity. The two eldest were daughters of sixteen and twelve years; the youngest a son about eight.

The Kiowa tribe, among whom these children were held as captives, are of northern origin, and migrated to this southern country in comparatively recent times. In their southern migrations, they had successfully withstood the opposition of the several tribes among whom they passed, and brought to this country several Crow Indians as captives, these were eventually adopted and incorporated into the tribe.

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Under their old Chiefs, they had been engaged in warfare with the surrounding tribes, more particularly with the Utes of Colorado, to whom the Pipe of Peace had never been sent. With this exception, they were at this time on terms of friendship with all the surrounding tribes; their warlike nature under the leadership of the notorious Satanta had been more recently exercised toward the white race, and many a pale faced settler had bit the dust, or writhed beneath the tomahawk or scalping knife of the implacable Kiowa warrior. Satanta, who had become a leading spirit among them, and conducted a number of predatory incursions in Texas, was at length arrested and turned over to the authorities of that State and was serving a life sentence in its penitentiary.

Since his arrest the bitter enmity of the tribe had been manifested against the citizens of that State in a system of murder and pillage upon its settlements.

In these incursions Big Bow and White Horse had taken a conspicuous part.

A number of Comanche women and children had recently been captured, and were held as prisoners at Ft. Concho, Texas, and a feeling of hostility existed toward the inhabitants of that State, not only on the part of the Kiowas and Comanches, but among the Cheyennes, Arapahoes and Apaches. The people of Texas suffered terribly from these predatory inroads. Not only were horses and mules stolen in large numbers, but men and women were killed and children carried into a hopeless captivity. This state of antipathy was further aggravated by frequent incursions upon their pony herds by desperadoes having their headquarters in that State.

While the outward atmosphere was thus dark and turbulent, a milder, a more pacific influence was working in the heart of Kicking Bird, a young chief who, from the success of his military achievements was rising into power and wielded no inconsiderable authority over a large portion of his tribe.

With this young chief Thomisy lived on terms of the most brotherly intimacy; and was soon gratified in finding his own sentiments echoed in the voice of Kicking Bird in their national councils.

This chief not only used his voice in council, but carried out in practice the pacific course he advocated by turning over stolen horses and mules to the Agent; he also purchased and restored the Lee children from their cruel captivity.

While this influence was beginning to be felt in the tribe, a commissioner was sent from Washington authorized to make "one more offer" of a pacific character to these Indians, upon their compliance with which, all the prisoners held by the Government, including Satanta and his accomplice, Big Tree, were to be released. The terms of the agreement, which it is not necessary to repeat in this article, but which were rendered doubly impressive and sacred in the estimation of the Indians, by holding up the right hands of both parties before the Great Spirit, in a mutual pledge of a faithful compliance with them, were faithfully complied with by the Kiowas; and with the exception of a few young men, who were not sufficiently discouraged by their chiefs, the Comanches ceased to raid in Texas and complied with the other conditions of the agreement.

Many stolen horses and mules were recovered, and some fifteen or twenty captive children were delivered to the Agent, and by him sent home to their friends.

The Government returned the Comanche women and children, under an escort of soldiers; and the two Kiowa chiefs, were turned over by the Governor of Texas, and they were awaiting a suitable escort of soldiers which Gen. Auger—Commander of the Military Department of Texas—was about to send as recruits to Ft. Sill on the Kiowa and Comanche Reservation. This information had been given by the Agent to the Indians.

"When will they be here?" was asked.

"Just as soon as the soldiers can be furnished to escort them through Texas;" was the Agent's reply.