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Being in command, the Major placed his own troop and Captain Ketchum's company below the mouth of Horse Creek. This remained headquarters. Two troops of mounted rifles, now Third Cavalry, were a short distance above. One troop remained to garrison Fort Laramie. The Snakes followed us on the march down, and camped near us. One thing was plain: if there was any trouble between troops and Indians, it would not be between troops and Snakes,⁸⁵ and the Snakes in numbers and efficiency were largely in excess of all the troops, so that in case of trouble they were our best dependence. Strategically the arrangement was excellent. The mounted rifles averaged about sixty men to each troop, "B" Troop about seventy-five and "G" Company, Sixth Infantry, about seventy-five -- 270 soldiers. Considering that there were within fifteen miles of our headquarters more than 60,000 Indians, of whom probably 10,000 were fighting men, ours seemed a slim array of troops. In fact, if there was any disposition on the part of the Sioux, Cheyennes and Arapahoes to destroy us they could have done so in an hour if given a chance to camp around us. But this was not done. Our camp was formed with great care. The Sioux, Cheyennes and Arapahoes were allowed to camp anywhere on the south side of the Platte not occupied by troops above the mouth of Horse Creek and anywhere on the north side of the Platte or on streams coming in from the north. Horse Creek and the south side of the Platte below it was reserved for troops, transportation, parade and treaty grounds, Snake Indians and such other visiting tribes as might come in. Lines of sentinels were placed, inside of which no one might come without permission.

Major Chilton was a man well fitted for a command of this kind. He was bold, unyielding, self-reliant, quick to comprehend an emergency, and so vigilant that he could not be surprised. No people on earth will discover a commander's weakness quicker than Indians; to hesitate or to show fear of results in their presence is fatal. On the other hand a bold front, to keep them at a distance,⁸⁵ treating them well as long as they behave themselves, and drawing the