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Horn range and, away beyond, the faint outline of the mountains beyond the Yellowstone. Away to the northeast the Wolf river range was distinctly visible; immediately before us lay the valley of Peno creek, now called Prairie Dog creek, and beyond the Tongue river valley and many other tributary streams. It was as pretty a picture as I had ever seen. The morning was clear and bright, not a breath of air stirring. The old major, sitting upon his horse with his eyes shaded with his hands, had been telling me for an hour or more about his Indian life, his forty years' experience on the plains, telling me how to trail Indians and distinguish their tracks from those of different tribes -- a subject that I had discussed with him nearly every day. In fact the major and myself were close friends. His family lived at Westport, Missouri. His daughter, Miss Jenny, had married a personal friend of mine, Lieut. Wiseman, and during the winter of 1863 I had contributed to help Mrs. Bridger and the rest of the family, all of which the major had been acquainted with, which induced him to treat me as an old time friend. As I lowered my glass the major said "Do you see those 'ere columns of smoke over yonder?" I replied, "Where, major?" to which he answered "Over by that saddle," meaning a depression in the hills not unlike the shape of a saddle, pointing at the same time to a point fully fifty miles away. I again raised my glass to my eyes and took a long, earnest look, and for the life of me could not see any columns of smoke even with a strong field glass. The major was looking without any artificial help. The atmosphere appeared to be slightly hazy in the long distance, like smoke, but there were no distinct columns of smoke in sight. Yet, knowing the peculiarities of my frontier friend, I agreed with him that there were columns of smoke, and suggested that we had better get off our animals and let them feed until the general came up. This we did, and as soon as the general with his staff arrived, I called his attention to Major Bridger's discovery. The general raised his field glass and scanned the horizon closely, but after a long look he remarked that there were no columns of smoke to be seen. The major quietly mounted his horse and rode on. I asked the general to look again, that the major was very confident that he could see columns of smoke, which, of course, indicated an Indian village. The general made another examination and again asserted that there were no columns of smoke. However, to satisfy curiosity, and to give our guides no chance to claim that they had shown us an Indian village and we would not attack it, he suggested to Capt. Frank North, who was riding with the staff, that he go with seven of his Indians in the direction indicated, to reconnoitre, and to report to us on Peno creek or Tongue river, down which were to march. I galloped on and overtook the major, and as I came up to him, overheard him remark about "these damn paper collar soldiers" telling him there were no columns of smoke. The old man was very indignant at our doubting his ability to outsee us, with the aid of field glasses even. The joke was too good to keep and I had to report it to the general. In fact, I don't believe the major saw any columns of smoke, although it afterward transpired that there was an Indian village in the immediate locality designated. Bridger understood well enough that that was a favorite locality for Indians to camp, and that at most any time there could be found a village there; hence his declaration that he saw columns of smoke.

Our march down Peno creek was uneventful, the road being very good, much better than we had before found. The stream takes its name from a French trapper by the name of Peno, who had been trapping for beaver. A band of buffalo close by tempted him to take a shot, which he did, slightly wounding a large bull. The bull took after him and Peno fled for his life. Just as he reached the steep bank of the creek some fifteen or twenty feet above the stream, Mr. Bull caromed on his rear and knocked Peno clear over the bank, head foremost into the creek, the bull tumbling in after him. Fortunately the fall was more disastrous to the bull than to the man, who was able to make his escape.

*St. Louis
1863*