

their many troubles—the frauds and thievery perpetrated by the Indian agents and the many injustices done them generally by the Whites. Then they withdrew to a cane-brake nearby and held a private conference for an hour or more.

When their caucus had adjourned it was noon, so we all had a bite to eat. After lunch we reassembled. Geronimo announced that they were willing to cede all of the Southwest except their Reservation, but that to expect them to give up *everything*, and to a nation of *intruders*, was *too much*; they would move back on the little land they needed, or they would fight until the last one of them was dead. "Take us to the Reservation—or *FIGHT!*" was his ultimatum as he looked me in the eye.

I couldn't take him to the Reservation; I couldn't fight; neither could I run, nor yet feel comfortable.

#### IV

But Natchez, who had done little talking, here intervened to say that, whether they continued the war or not, my party would be safe as long as we started no trouble. We had come as friends, he said, and would be allowed to depart in peace.

His words greatly reassured me, as well as gave me the opportunity to tell them that the rest of their people on the Reservation, between three and four hundred, the mother and daughter of Natchez among them, were being removed to Florida; and therefore if they went back to the Reservation it would mean living among their enemies, the other Apaches. This piece of news was an unexpected blow. Geronimo asked me sternly if it were true or if it were only a ruse to get them into the clutches of the White Man. I convinced him that it was true. This put an entirely new face on the matter; they went back to the cane-brake for another confidential session.

For an hour they talked together, then reassembled. Geronimo announced that, although they would continue the war, they wished to discuss the matter further, and if they could find a beef for a barbecue they would talk all night. But a search of the neighborhood revealed no beef, and, as they did not see how they could hold a night conference

without the barbecue, I was greatly relieved that I did not have to talk all night as well as all day.

After much smoking and general conversation, Geronimo harked back to the main subject. They knew General Crook, he said, and might surrender to him, but they did not know General Miles. "What is his age, his size, the color of his hair and eyes; is his voice harsh or agreeable; does he talk much or little, say less or more than he means? Does he look you in the eyes or not? Has he many friends? Do people believe what he says? Do officers and soldiers like him? Has he had experience with other Indians?" These, and many other keen and searching questions did he ask; and finally, "Is he cruel or kind-hearted?"

His questions required a full description of the General in every respect. They all listened intently to my answers. After a pause, Geronimo said, "He must be a good man, since the Great Father sent him from Washington, and he has sent you to us."

Towards sunset I suggested that I return to my camp, where Lawton had arrived that day and had remained at my request. But Geronimo asked me to wait to listen to a request they wanted to make. After some preliminaries, he said, "we want your advice. Consider yourself not a White Man but one of us; remember all that has been said today and tell us what we should do."

As earnestly and emphatically as possible I replied, "Trust General Miles and surrender to him."

They stood around looking very solemn. Then Geronimo said they would hold a council that night, and he would let me know the result the first thing in the morning. But again before I got away, they reopened the subject of getting better terms; and they wanted me to go alone, or with one of them, across country to the nearest American post, to get in touch with General Miles and ask him to modify his terms. They promised that a number of their warriors would guard me from harm on the journey, though I might never see them, and they would all wait nearby to hear what decision I brought them from the General. But I replied that it would be a useless journey; that General Miles had already made up his mind and nothing I could say would make him change it.