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REPORT OF

Colonel ALVAN C. GILLEM, 1st Cavalry.

MODOC WAR, 1873.

BENICIA BARRACKS, CAL.,

June 1, 1874.

To the

*Assistant Adjutant General,*

*Headquarters Department of the Columbia,*

*(Thro' Headquarters Military Division of the Pacific.)*

SIR:—

I have the honor to submit the following imperfect report of the operations of the troops in the Modoc Country whilst under my command; having no access to the records of the command, it can but be very incomplete.

On the 23d of January, 1873, I received a telegraphic order from the Headquarters of the Military Division of the Pacific, informing me that I had been "assigned to the command of the troops in the Modoc Country, and directing me to proceed without delay to the Headquarters of those troops." Delaying only to get the necessary information concerning the position of the troops in, and en route to the seat of war, I left Benicia Barracks, Cal., January 26th, and arrived at Yreka the 28th. On my arrival at the latter place, I received a telegraphic dispatch from General Canby, giving me the stations and numbers of troops, with other important information. Later the same day, I received another dispatch from General Canby, informing me that a Commission to negotiate with the Indians had been, or would be appointed, and directing me to suspend all active operations, and so post the troops as to protect the settlers. I asked to be informed whether I was to give this information to Captain Jack, and was authorized to use my discretion.

On the 30th I left Yreka and joined the Battalion of the 4th Artillery, under Captain Throckmorton, at 12 M., same day, at the foot of the Cascade Mountains. The snow on the mountain being quite deep and roads bad, we did not reach Van Bremer's until February 4. Leaving the three companies at that place, I went on to Fairchild's, and thence to Dorris', hoping to find some place with wood and water within convenient proximity, but could not find

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them nearer than two miles from each other. On the 7th of February I arrived at the Camp on Lost River, and on the 8th assumed command of the Modoc Expedition, including the District of the Lakes. In compliance with the request of Lieutenant-Colonel Wheaton—private affairs requiring his presence—he was permitted to return to his post at Camp Warner, Oregon. At the same time he requested me to inform him, should hostilities be resumed, to enable him to share in them. Unfortunately, the resumption of hostilities was so sudden, that he did not join until the fighting had ceased.

On the 9th of February I made a detailed report to Headquarters Department of the Columbia, of the condition and position of the troops, and the various routes of supply. I learned that the cost of transportation from Roseburg to Lost River was from 30 to 32 cents per pound, and from Redding to the stations of the troops 16 cents per pound; and therefore recommended that supplies be furnished from San Francisco, via Redding and Yreka, which was done.

On the 15th of February I started to return to Dorris' Ranch, but was met by a courier with a letter from General Canby, informing me that he would be in Linkville that day, and requesting to see me as early as convenient. I met him that evening at Linkville, and from that time until the 11th of April, all movements of the troops were made with the knowledge and approbation of the General. There being but two of the Peace Commissioners (Applegate and Case) present, the meeting was merely informal. On the following day, February 16, General Canby and the Commissioners accompanied me to Dorris' Ranch, that place being nearer the Indian position and more convenient for communication. About the 18th of February, Mr. Meachem arrived, and on the 20th three squaws went into the Indian Camp to arrange for a "talk;" these squaws were instructed by the Commission to say, that the great Military Tyhee, (General Canby) and a man who came from far off, (Mr. Case), desired to see them—the names of Applegate and Meachem were not to be mentioned. This I regard as being a very grave error; it was inevitable that the Indians would soon know who the Commissioners were. On the 24th of February Mr. Fairchild, accompanied by a white man and squaw, went into the Lava Bed, and on the 25th returned, bringing with them a deputation of warriors to "talk," but none of the principal chiefs came, nor was there anything satisfactory accomplished. The Indians upon their arrival inquired for Judge Rosborough and E. Steele, Esq., the

former of whom had, upon the request of General Canby, been added to the Commission. I had earnestly recommended this appointment to General Canby, after ascertaining the high esteem in which the Judge was held by both whites and Indians.

Judge Rosborough and Mr. Steele arrived on February 27, (the latter at the request of General Canby), and that evening there was, at my headquarters, the first full meeting of the Peace Commission. After a great deal of talk, General Canby proposed that Judge Steele should go to the Indian Camp with these terms: "to surrender as prisoners of war, to be sent to a southern reservation, and to be fed or supported until they could support themselves."

On the 28th Judge Steele and party went to the Lava Bed, and on the night of March 1 I received a note from Lieutenant Anderson, Aid-de-Camp to General Canby, announcing that the "Indians had accepted the proposed terms." Eight warriors and Mary (Jack's sister) returned with Judge Steele, as they said, to arrange for the tribe to come in, Jack being, as he claimed, too sick to travel. The same terms were repeated and accepted so far as the Indians present were empowered to act. The proposition to protect them was to include those charged with murdering the "settlers." On the 2d of March Judge Steele returned to the Lava Beds to make arrangements for the removal of the Indians. On the night of the 4th of March I received a note from General Canby informing me of the return of Judge Steele, and that such was the information brought by him as "to render it probable that the Modocs would at once resume hostilities."

Couriers were at once sent to the different camps to put their commanders on the alert.

On the 5th of March I attended a meeting of the Peace Commission which was convened to receive Jack's message, which was simply that the Indians refused the terms offered them and would not come out. After considerable discussion by the Peace Commission, General Canby spoke—he said—"Tell Captain Jack our men have been to see him—have trusted him; that he had refused to come out or treat; that if no message was received from him by to-morrow night it would be considered that they desired war, and we would act accordingly," adding—"I have no more to say."

The Indians appeared much impressed by this message and soon left for the Lava Beds.

After the departure of the Indians I learned, upon what I considered good authority, that a white man from Linkville, (Sam. Blair), who had been loafing about Fairchild's Ranch and com-

municating with the Modocs, had informed them that he had an order in his pocket from the Governor of Oregon (we were in California) to hang the nine Indians engaged in killing the citizens, so soon as they came in. Of course this was false, but as some of the most influential men and best warriors were engaged in these murders, it probably had some influence on the after conduct of the Indians.

Late in the evening of the 6th I was informed by General Canby that Mary with some warriors had come in and requesting my presence. On my arrival the Commission met, and Mary delivered the message of her brother: whether her own or Jack's, it was the best Indian speech I ever heard—requiring an hour for its delivery. It was to the effect that Jack submitted, would come out and go anywhere that he was wanted to, all his people to go with him; he had thrown away his gun and given up his country, but that he had no horse to come in on. He was again informed that if "he or some of his principal men were not in by the evening of the 8th of March, it would be taken for granted he wanted war," and a horse was sent for Jack. On the evening of the 8th two Indians came with a message from Jack stating that the entire tribe would come in on the 10th; that there were several sick and unable to travel, and asking that three wagons be sent to meet them about half way for the women, children and sick.

The wagons were sent as requested, and remained at the appointed place until nearly sun-down, and returned without having heard anything of a single Indian. All was again uncertainty, and it was determined to try a little pressure by way of convincing the Indians that we were in earnest. Accordingly Major Mason, 21st Infantry, was directed to make a reconnoissance down the east side of Tule Lake, and select a position for a new camp as nearly east of the Indian position as practicable. Captain Biddle, commanding Company "K," 1st Cavalry, was directed to leave all his baggage at Clear Lake, and make a reconnoissance to the south of the Lava Bed, and come to the camp at Van Bremer's Ranch; he made the march as directed by the Ticknor's road or trail, which was almost impassable for horses.

About five miles south of the Indian position he came upon a party of squaws herding ponies, and captured thirty-three ponies. The squaws and children were not fired upon. Captain Biddle's company arrived at Van Bremer's Ranch, March 13. On the 14th some squaws came to Headquarters complaining bitterly of the capture of their ponies and three of their children. Biddle's de-



nial of capturing the children availed nothing. The children however returned to the Indian camp, having been hiding in the rocks, and thus hostilities were again deferred. In the meantime Judge Rosborough having business of importance to attend to and perhaps despairing of a favorable issue of the negotiations, and Messrs. Applegate and Case, resigned.

But one Commissioner being left all negotiations were suspended, no Indians coming to or communicating with our camps.

On the 21st of March General Canby and myself made a reconnaissance in the direction of the Lava Bed, but without expectation of seeing the Indians. About 1 P. M. we arrived at the summit of the bluff overlooking the Lava Beds.

Considerable confusion appeared to exist in the vicinity of Jack's caves, about two and a half miles distant. Very soon we were hailed by two Indians wanting to know what we came for, and saying they did not want to fight, and that they wanted to "talk."

Dr. Cabaniss, Acting Assistant Surgeon, and well known to the Indians volunteered to meet them and learn their wants. He found several Indians, among them Captain Jack, who proposed, he, Schonchin and Scar-faced Charley, should meet General Canby and myself—all to be unarmed. We accepted the offer, and descended the bluff to that interview, which General Canby in his dispatch to the Headquarters of the Army, March 22, terms, "unsatisfactory." (The language was not too strong). Instead of Schonchin came the "Curly Headed Doctor," the leader of the party who murdered the settlers; instead of three warriors six came—four armed with revolvers: such was the roughness of the place that we did not detect the treachery until it was too late to avoid the meeting. General Canby asked Jack to talk. Jack said he "was a good man," had "a good heart," wanted "all the soldiers taken away," "wanted to go where he pleased," that "the soldiers had hunted him like a wolf." The General told him that "if he came out with his people he should be fed and clothed; to which Jack replied, that he "wanted to go *nowhere*," and asked "if he had anything for him, why he did *not bring it to him*." When the interview terminated I was convinced Jack had determined not to leave the Lava Beds until forced.

On the 23d Major Mason moved from Lost River, and on the 24th encamped near the east side of the Lava Bed, about six miles east of Jack's position. On the 26th I made a reconnaissance for the purpose of finding a shorter and more practicable route from Van Bremer's to the Lava Beds.

The Rev. Mr. Thomas, one of the newly appointed Commissioners, accompanied me. I found the trail, which had been reported good for wagons, almost impassable for horses. Coming to the summit overlooking the Lava Beds two Indians were discovered, who, upon being called, came up. They informed me that Jack desired peace, but would not come out of the Lava Beds.

I had made all necessary arrangements to move to the foot of the bluff (the edge of the Lava Bed) on the 29th, but a party of Indians came into camp on the 28th and arrangements were made by the Peace Commission to meet *all* the Indian Chiefs the 1st of April, which, of course, prevented my moving. On the evening of the 29th a messenger from Jack informed the Peace Commissioners that Captain Jack would not leave his position to "talk," but that he would be glad to see the Peace Commission, General Canby and myself; that we must not bring more than *ten* soldiers. A message was sent to Jack that we would meet him at the Lava Bed, April 1, but with more than *ten* men. On the 31st of March all the troops of the Expedition (except a guard for public property at Van Bremer's) on the west side of Tule Lake moved out of camp, and on the 1st of April encamped at the foot of the bluff, on the edge of the Lava Bed. and immediately on the border of Tule Lake. We had scarcely reached our camp when two Indians came in and appeared much surprised and dejected at the number of men.

I asked them if Jack would be in that evening and received a decided negative reply. Later the same evening a message was received from Jack to the effect that he would meet the Commission on the next day, April 2.

About 10 P. M. of the 1st of April, I was awakened by one of the Peace Commissioners with information to the effect that our camp was to be attacked before day, and that the line of tents occupied by the Peace Commission, General Canby and myself, was to be the object of their attack. I endeavored to quiet his apprehensions, though not very successfully. The next morning the man given as authority denied *all* knowledge of the affair. This was not the only occurrence of the kind, and is merely mentioned as an act of justice to that great and good man who has been charged with rashness for not giving credit to a similar report. On the morning of April 2 a message was received from Jack that he and some of his warriors were on their way to meet the Peace Commissioners and General Canby. The General and the Peace Commissioners went out and met the Indians. After a conference of *four* hours nothing definite being arrived at the sitting was adjourned to meet

the next day at the same place; but nothing more was heard from the Indians until the 5th, when a message was received from Jack saying he would "talk," but "had made up his mind not to leave the Lava Beds."

On the 6th the troops on the east side of Rhett or Tule Lake advanced to within one and a half miles of the Indian stronghold and in full view of it; no resistance was made.

Nothing further was done in the way of negotiations until April 9, when a message was received stating that Jack "would not come out," that "he was afraid to come out," but "if the troops would go away, he would come out;" but on the next morning a message was received from Jack saying he would "talk" with the Commissioners. In order to be certain however about the disposition of the Indians, the interpreter, Frank Riddle, and his wife, (a squaw), went to Jack's camp and soon returned with information that Jack would not "talk," nor meet the Commission, nor leave his stronghold until the troops were removed. On the morning of the 11th one of the Indians who had come in the previous evening with the interpreter asserted that Riddle had not told "all," and that Jack did desire to "talk." Boston Charley and Bogus Charley (the latter had remained in my camp all night) were sent to the Indians to ascertain Jack's intentions; they soon came back saying, Jack "would meet General Canby, myself and the three Commissioners at the Council Tent"—about three quarters of a mile in front of my camp. After duly considering the subject it was determined to accept the proposition. I was too ill to accompany the party, and before leaving the interpreter brought the Commissioners to my bedside; General Canby was already in the tent. The interpreter asked me to bear witness that he had warned them that there was danger in going out. At six minutes after eleven o'clock, A. M., April 11, the party left camp. The signal officer was directed to keep a strict watch on the Council Tent, and to inform me of everything that occurred.

After the Indians, who went out with the Commission, were beyond view, the troops were quietly warned to be near their tents. At half past one o'clock, P. M., April 11, the signal officer brought me information that Major Mason's camp, on the eastern side of the Lake, had been attacked, and two officers probably captured. This afterwards proved to be incorrect; two Indians had appeared in front of Major Mason's camp with a white flag. Lieutenant William L. Sherwood, 21st Infantry, Officer of the Day, accompanied by Lieutenant W. H. Boyle of the same regiment, went out to re-

ceive it. Shots were heard, and upon advancing the troops found the officers several hundred yards in front of the pickets. Lieutenant Sherwood was mortally wounded, and died on the 14th. Knowing now that treachery was intended I sent for Acting Assistant Surgeon Cabaniss who volunteered to take a note to General Canby. (I could not send a verbal message as the MODOES could not understand English). I had written but a few words when shots were heard. The men at once seized their arms and advanced, Major Biddle having in the meantime joined me from the signal station with information of the death of General Canby and the Commissioners. The troops moved as rapidly as the nature of the lava permitted. I found the bodies of General Canby and the Rev. Dr. Thomas, about seventy yards from the tent; Mr. Meachem was near by, severely wounded: these three were stripped of their clothing. Mr. Dyar, one of the Commissioners, escaped unhurt; neither Riddle, interpreter, nor his wife, (a squaw), who was also an interpreter, were attacked. The troops moved about half a mile in advance of the Council Tent but saw no Indians. The officer at the signal station informed me that they disappeared among the rocks as soon as they had finished their murderous treachery.

It was now three o'clock, P. M., and to have followed the Indians into the Lava Beds would have been folly. The troops returned to camp and vigorously set about preparations for the attack which would have been made on the 13th, but for the non-arrival of the Warm Spring Indians under Donald McKay, and who had a high reputation as fighters and scouts.

They arrived on the night of the 13th—sixty strong—and reported to Major Mason, 21st Infantry, commanding on the east side of the Lake. On the 14th of April Major Mason was ordered to advance that night under cover of the darkness, as near to the Indian position as he could do, without bringing on an engagement. His command consisted of Companies "B" and "G," 1st Cavalry: commanded, Company "G," by Captain Bernard, (until reported sick, April 16), and afterwards by 2d Lieutenant J. G. Kyle; Company "B" was commanded by its Captain—James Jackson. The Infantry Companies were "C," "I" and "B," 21st Infantry, commanded by Captain Burton, and 1st Lieutenants E. R. Theller and J. M. Ross. A detachment of Company "A," 4th Artillery, under command of 2d Lieutenant E. S. Chapin, 4th Artillery, manning a section of mountain howitzers; and the Warm Spring Indians under Donald McKay. The command on the west side of the Lava Beds, under Major Green, 1st Cavalry, were Companies

“F” and “K,” 1st Cavalry, (dismounted), commanded by Captain David Perry, 1st Cavalry. Companies “E,” “K” and “M,” 4th Artillery, commanded, in the order above named, by 2d Lieutenants Peter Leary, Jr. and George M. Harris, and Captain C. B. Throckmorton. Companies “G” and “E,” 12th Infantry; the former commanded by 1st Lieutenant C. P. Eagan, the latter by 1st Lieutenant Thomas F. Wright. This Battalion was commanded by Captain M. P. Miller, 4th Artillery. To Company “A,” 4th Artillery, Captain Evan Thomas, was assigned the duty of taking charge of the four Coehorn mortars. At 2 o’clock, A. M., April 15, Captain David Perry’s command of dismounted cavalry advanced under cover of the darkness about one and a half mile. At 8 o’clock, A. M., Major Green moved with the remainder of his command, except a detachment of “H” Company, 1st Cavalry, under command of Captain Trimble, left to guard the camp, and Thomas’ Company, 4th Artillery, in charge of the Coehorn mortars, which were packed and ready to advance so soon as a proper position should be secured for them. Though the distance was short, the lava was so difficult to get over that at least an hour and a half was required to march that distance.

At the point at which Captain Perry had taken his position a peninsula makes out about a mile northward into Tule Lake; its base line running east and joining the lake about three-fourths of a mile distant from the point occupied by Perry’s command. The right of the Indian stronghold on the west side joined the lake at the east end of this base line. The peninsula was comparatively level, but being north of the line mentioned was not in the field of operations. When it joined the command of Captain Perry the Battalion under Captain Miller was deployed as skirmishers, and Perry’s held in reserve. The ground over which his command advanced is very correctly described by Captain Miller in his report; he says—“The surface of the ground along the first quarter of a mile being rough, the remainder being partly rough to within about the third of a mile of the stronghold—that a low smooth sage brush valley which narrowed rapidly in the direction from the lake, south into the Lava Beds, and ending among high and rough lava hills.” It was while forming the skirmish line that the Indians first fired on the troops, the shots coming from some lava cliffs on the extreme right, which was constantly exposed to this fire from about eight Indians behind the rocks at safe distance. The line was formed and moved forward. The lava was so cut up by chasms running in every direction that it was very difficult for an officer to make

himself heard by his men. A slow but steady advance was kept up—a part of the men remaining concealed and firing to protect those advancing—until late in the evening, when the exterior heights of the stronghold were occupied.

In the meantime (at 4 P. M.) Captain Miller's command having in its advance inclined slightly to the south east, there was space sufficient on his left for Captain Perry's dismounted cavalry, which moved forward in a most gallant manner, captured and held a position in the rocky edges of the Indian stronghold: the right joining Captain Miller's Battalion, the left resting on the Lake, thus securing water for the entire line, and also a position for the Coehorn mortars that had in the mean time arrived. Fire was at once opened from them, and I believe with good effect; after dark a shell was thrown into the Indian cliffs at intervals of fifteen minutes. The troops on the west side of the Lava Beds now held a line in the edge of the Indian stronghold from the Lake south. They had fought for every foot of ground gained, over the roughest field I ever have seen; the chasms running in every direction; the lava cutting like glass, and exposed at every step to the fire of the concealed foe. The line was closed and the troops bivouacked on the ground they had so gallantly won; their success had cost some brave men, the loss being three enlisted men killed, 1st Lieutenant Charles P. Eagan, 12th Infantry, wounded, gallantly leading his Company, and nine enlisted men wounded.

There was considerable firing along the line by the Indians during the night, especially on the extreme right. Such were the operations of the troops on the west side of the Lava Beds, April 15.

The following is an extract from the report of Major E. C. Mason, commanding the troops on the east side of the Lava Beds during the attack on the Indians, April 15, 16 and 17; it is dated June 10, 1873, twenty days after I had been relieved from the command of the Modoc Expedition. As heretofore stated in this report, Major Mason was ordered on the 14th of April to advance the night of that day as near as practicable, without bringing on an engagement. In this report he says: "The movement commenced at midnight, and before daylight the troops were all in position on the east side of the Modoc stronghold, the right resting on the Lake and within four hundred yards of the ridge on which the Modocs had their position; the left of the line was in the air (rear)? about half a mile from the Lake. Before daylight (April 15) the men had so covered themselves by building breastworks that it was impossible for the enemy to discover our *exact locality*. Soon after daylight Lieutenant

Chapin placed the section of howitzers in position and opened fire with shells and spherical cases. During the day the enemy abandoned their outer line of defenses. I did not however follow them, as it was not part of *my plan* to expose *my men* unnecessarily." Such were the services of Major Mason's command of three companies of Infantry, two of dismounted Cavalry and sixty Warm Spring Indians, making a total of six companies, after more than once being ordered to attack the Indians; nor did I have any idea that the orders had not been obeyed, until it was too late to remedy the neglect. The Major states in the extract above quoted that his command on the morning of April 15 was within 400 yards of the ridge upon which the Modocs had their position.

I have examined the ground occupied and am convinced that the distance was nearer seven hundred than four hundred yards, and I believe that if the howitzers had opened on the Indian position from that distance that the Modocs would have soon discovered their "exact locality" and probably have fired upon them instead of "abandoning their outer line of defenses," as stated in Major Mason's report. I however attribute this falling back of the Indians to the vigorous attack from the troops on the west side, under Major Green, and believe that if my orders had been executed by Major Mason the Indian position would have been surrounded, the women and children and perhaps some of the men captured. But he adhered to his plan and remained in the "position where it was impossible for the enemy to discover our (his command) exact locality." I know the troops who served under Mason too well to doubt for a moment they would have gallantly advanced and attacked the Indians, had they been ordered to do so by their immediate commander; this would have prevented the concentration against Major Green's command. That he had the order cannot be doubted; he gives a telegram from me of which the following are extracts: "Post McKay's company on your left with orders to work in towards our right; caution the Indians to wear their uniforms to avoid mistakes; hold every inch of ground you gain." (Dated April 14, 1873, (signed) Alvan C. Gillem.) Major Mason also says: "At midnight on the 15th of April the troops advanced to take up their second position. Captain Burton advanced the Infantry about three hundred yards;" this, as they were but four hundred yards the day before, would have brought them within one hundred yards of the Indian stronghold, and nearer than I found them the following morning, April 17.

Major Mason says "his troops on the morning of the 16th were

in possession of the Mesa which commanded the 'Medicine Rock' and the *whole eastern and south-eastern side* of the Modoc stronghold." If this statement is correct it is impossible to account for the escape of the Modocs; the line of attack being the two sides of a triangle with the apex at the north, and I know from personal observation that the line of Colonel Green's troops held the west side of this triangle, with his right at least as far south as Major Mason's left.

On the morning of the 16th all the troops on both the east and west sides of the Indian position were ordered forward.

Major Green's command moved slowly, but in good order. the march being over ground more favorable than that passed over the previous day, the large blocks of lava affording some cover to the advancing line. When this command had gained a position nearly opposite Jack's strongest point, I ordered Major Green to move forward and connect his right with Major Mason's left; at the same time I ordered Major Mason to attack the Indians, using the following language in my dispatch, which is an extract from his report: "To Major Mason: We will endeavor to end the Modoc war to-day. Try and join Major Green's right. Push the Indians when Green attacks. (Signed) Alvan C. Gillem." Sometime after sending this dispatch and when the troops on the west side of the lava were advancing, and I supposed those on the east were doing the same, I received the following message from Major Mason: "To General Gillem: The Indians are on our right and rear. (Major Mason's report says 'on our *left and rear.*' I have the original dispatch; it reads on our *right and rear.*) We have to fight them but will do all we can to help Green. (Signed) Major Mason." To execute this (the junction with Major Mason's command) Captain Miller, commanding the right of Major Green's troops, says in his report: "I received orders from Major Green to move my command to the right a little, then wheel to the left and try to connect my right with the Warm Spring Indians on the left of Colonel Mason's command operating on the opposite side of the stronghold. To execute this, owing to the impassible ground, I had to separate Battery "E" to the right from the rest for an interval, and having given directions to the other troops to move by the flank to the right and close the interval after the obstacles were passed by Battery "E" \* \* \* I heard the firing of the Warm Spring Indians and endeavored to unite by the shortest line." But owing to the roughness of the ground the troops on the left of Miller's command did not close to the right as rapidly as he expected, and he ordered his own Battery ("E") to close to the left and make a left wheel, but owing to the



nature of the ground or rather rocks and lack of officers, the company became separated and the Captain went with the extreme right. About the time he joined this detached body (17 men) they were fired into from the *rear* by the Modocs and by the Warm Springs on the left of Major Mason's command. Captain Miller says that he "soon from the reports of the muskets learned that the Warm Spring Indians had been driven back." He then closed his line to the left. It was during these operations that, not being satisfied with the action of the troops on the eastern side of the Modocs, Colonel Green visited Major Mason at my request to explain what I desired, viz: a change of his left to join Green's right. Colonel Green agreed with me on the practicability of the movement. Shortly after Colonel Green's departure I received the following dispatch from Major Mason, not given in his report:

"To General Gillem: It is absolutely impossible to connect our left with Green's right; we are separated by a deep chasm held by the Modocs; we cannot cross it without great loss of life. If we join our right with your left and move directly south we can find whether or not the Modocs have fled. Colonel Green is here and sanctions this plan." From this dispatch it appears that, although the Modocs held a deep chasm, there was a doubt as to "whether or not they had fled." I at once replied: "I sanction the movement suggested by Colonel Green and yourself; execute it at once." I ordered this movement in the hope that the troops once engaged would drive the Modocs south where they would come on Captain Miller's command, but it resulted in no material advantage, merely shutting off the Indians from the water.

The troops on the west of the Modoc position having been engaged all day, and gained a position in the immediate vicinity of the Modocs, bivouacked for the night. Those on the east side occupied about the same position as the night previous, the right having joined Major Green's left without opposition. On the return of Major Green I asked him if he did not still believe the movement to join his right to Major Mason's left was practicable if Major Mason would make a vigorous attack; he answered in the affirmative, but stated the attack was so strenuously opposed by Major Mason and Captain Bernard, 1st Cavalry, (the two senior officers on that side), that he thought it advisable under the circumstances to agree to their plan. I have no doubt on the subject, and the attack would have been made, but it was now too late. Major Mason says in his report "on the 17th the troops were gradually pushed forward and the line closed in on the right. About 12

o'clock this movement developed the fact that the Indians were evacuating the stronghold. A general advance of the line was ordered by General Gillem, the two lines meeting and following for some distance the retreating enemy. Lieutenant Chapin advanced his howitzers with the line and kept up a rapid fire not only on the parties who were seen retreating but also on those who held positions in the rocks." The statement that the *two lines* (Major Mason's right and Major Green's left) joined, is incorrect. I ordered the movement; stationed myself on Major Green's extreme left in order to conduct it. Green's troops moved promptly. Seeing nothing of Major Mason's command I got upon the highest rock available, and ordered repeatedly "Forward!" "Forward!" I saw a few men rise from behind the rock but they did not advance. Lieutenant James Rockwell, 1st Cavalry, my Adjutant, and whom I had sent to urge forward this command, informed me that he heard my order for a "forward;" he was in rear of Major Mason's line. I continued the march with Major Green's left, and the first troops who joined me was Company "G," 1st Cavalry, commanded by Lieutenant J. G. Kyle, and which was the *fourth* company from Major Mason's right.

The line advanced as rapidly as the nature of the rocks would admit; it was during this advance that the Indians opened a sharp fire on us, wounding (not seriously) Private Nolan, Company "G," 1st Cavalry, which was the only casualty in Major Mason's command during the three days fighting, except Warm Spring "Bob" slightly wounded in the leg. On the 16th, in Colonel Green's command, there were six killed and twelve wounded. Colonel Green's right advancing rapidly, the Indians no doubt fearing to be surrounded fled. Major Mason states that Lieutenant Chapin advanced his howitzers with the line. I advanced "with the line" but saw nothing of the howitzers, and any who did "advance with the line" knows that it would have been impossible for the Artillery to have moved as rapidly over the rocks and chasms as the line moved. If any Indians were *seen* retreating I did not see them and I was in as good position to do so, I think, as Major Mason. I have a letter from the officer who commanded the advance company, who says he "did not see any retreating Indians; do not believe any person else did"—April 20. The firing had scarcely ceased when the Cavalry and Warm Spring Indians were ordered to make the circuit of the Lava Beds and ascertain whether the Indians had gone to the mountains. Two companies marched from each camp—those under Captain Perry made the entire circuit of the Lava Bed, returning to the camp on the west side of the lava on the 22d, by the

margin of Rhett Lake. In the mean time the Indians had been discovered in the southern part of the Lava Bed, and on the 21st fired into an escort of fifty men, killing one enlisted man and wounding another. I was at the signal station closely observing the affair, and I am convinced the Indians did not exceed five or six, though it has been asserted there were many more; they were no doubt after water, and could be distinctly seen filling their vessels after the escort had left. On the 22d the Cavalry returned to camp, having failed to find any trail of the Indians. On the 23d a party of Warm Spring Indians were sent to find the position of the Modocs; they returned on the night of the 24th and reported having found them in the southern part of the Lava Bed and thought there were about forty of them; no doubt a very correct estimate. On the 25th Major John Green, commanding camp south of Tule Lake, was directed to send out a party to reconnoitre, and if possible ascertain the position of the Indians and whether a pack train could cross that portion of the lava. I regret that in the report to the Acting Assistant Adjutant General, District of the Lakes, dated June 22, Major Green has felt it necessary to state (apparently for his vindication) that this scout was sent out after "consultation with Colonel Alvan C. Gillem, commanding the Modoc Expedition, and with his full approval." I did fully approve of the scout; no detachment would have been sent into the lava without my "approval." Major Green, an officer of experience in Indian fighting, and who was in the immediate command of the camp, of course had charge of the details and gave instructions to Captain Thomas, commander of the detachment. This party consisted of Companies "A" and "K," 4th Artillery, and Company "E," 12th Infantry. The officers were Captain Evan Thomas, commanding, 1st Lieutenants A. Howe and A. Cranston, and 2d Lieutenant Harris of the 4th Artillery, and 1st Lieutenant T. F. Wright, 12th Infantry. "About seventy" (meaning enlisted men) Major Green says in his report; from the best information I could obtain I think there were *sixty-eight* soldiers. I ordered Donald McKay to go himself with fourteen Warm Spring Indians; he took but *twelve*, making with himself and the soldiers eighty-one (81) fighting men. Captain Thomas was directed to move cautiously, not to bring on an engagement, but if compelled to fight to do so only on the defensive. The command left camp at 7 A. M. in excellent spirits. The point to which Captain Thomas was ordered to proceed was in full view of the camp, though the intervening lava obscured the detachment before it was a hundred yards beyond the pickets; several signals

were received that no Indians had been found. About 1 o'clock a message was received from Captain Thomas (by signal) "We have found the Indians—they are behind the bluff," (to which he had been ordered to go.) I went to the signal station; nothing could be seen; an occasional shot was heard. I was anxious of course concerning the result of the firing, but Lieutenant Adams, the signal officer, informed me that all was right; that he had counted *fifteen* (15) men passing a fissure in the rocks, and he thought the entire command on its way returning. About 2 P. M. several stragglers came in to camp and stated Captain Thomas had had a severe fight and they had been cut off from the command. No two gave the same account of the fight; in fact they were too much frightened to give any information. Notwithstanding that I was convinced that Captain Thomas' command outnumbered the Modoc Warriors almost two to one, I at once directed Major Green, 1st Cavalry, to take "all the available men in camp and proceed to the assistance of Captain Thomas." At the same time the companies under Captain Miller, 4th Artillery, were ordered from the camp in the Lava Bed to join Major Green. I was astonished to learn that Major Mason had sent his command as it were into battle without a medical officer, though there were three (Sterling, Cabaniss and Skinner) attached to his command; he was telegraphed to send one, but it was too late. During the afternoon and night stragglers continued to come in, generally unarmed: all had been "cut off" during the fight and all had different stories. As will be seen by the report of Major Green, his command was joined by that from Major Mason's camp "about dark." He continued his march until darkness and the lava compelled him to halt. At midnight five men came into his camp; two of these men being unhurt he tried to use them as guides, but as might have been surmised by those acquainted with the locality, they became confused and of "no use." The command halted until daylight. Acting Assistant Surgeon B. Semig informs me that during the night the noise of "piling rocks" was heard, and that he and those with him thought it was the Indians preparing for the next morning—that he did not think soldiers could work so silently; but his suspense was ended at daylight by the appearance of a sergeant of the 1st Cavalry. Major Green remained on the battle ground during the day, caring for the wounded, collecting the dead and preparing for his return on which he set out about dark, and arrived at camp at 7 A. M. on the 28th, about 14 *hours* to go over not to exceed 4 miles—probably not more than three miles. Major Green informed me that but for the light at

the signal station in camp it would have been impossible for the party to have moved. Of the details of this fight it is difficult to learn anything definite. It is only known that the gallant Thomas and the officers with him died as brave men and true soldiers. Many of the enlisted men remained with their officers and shared their fate; but justice to these gallant officers and men compels me to say, that had all the enlisted men done their duty and obeyed their commanders no disaster could have occurred. Dr. B. Semig, Acting Assistant Surgeon, U. S. Army, who accompanied the party, in a very intelligent and concise account of the affair, says when he "joined the command about half a mile from the camp they were marching as follows: Company "E," 12th Infantry, deployed as skirmishers, but extending over a comparatively small amount of ground; following close to the skirmish line and in column of twos. Companies "K" and "A," 4th Artillery, followed by a rear guard of a non-commissioned officer and three men. Major Thomas, Lieutenant Wright, and Ticknor (guide) marched in rear of the skirmish line, and Lieutenants Harris and Howe at the right (head, as they were marching in column of twos) of their companies, and Lieutenant Cranston and myself (Dr. Semig) in rear of the column." He says that he "noticed the skirmish line did not extend so as to cover the most prominent ridges on our right and left and that the main column was getting closer and closer on to the skirmish line, until the space between the two was hardly perceptible; the whole command marching more in the shape of a  $\frac{\text{Skir's}}{\text{Main Col}}$  than a skirmish line and main column." The Doctor says he "called Lieutenant Cranston's attention to the fact that there were no flankers out, and that the Lieutenant detailed parties for each flank, but that these parties passed at the foot of the ridges nearest the column and kept drawing away from the ridges and nearer the column—this after they had been repeatedly ordered by Lieutenant Cranston to go *on* the ridges, until 1st Sergeant Rohmer, Company "A," 4th Artillery, went out on the right flank and did certainly, all by himself, perform the duties of flanker much more thoroughly than the men detailed for the purpose." About 12 M. the command reached the foot of the sand hill, the terminus of the march: here the command halted and took luncheon; Captain Thomas, Lieutenant Harris and two signal men prepared to ascend the hill. Lieutenant Wright ordered two men from the left of the skirmish line to advance towards some high lava rocks rising to the east of the sand hill. These two men had gone about half the distance to the rocks when two shots came from the very rocks the men were trying to

gain; this was the first indication that Indians were near. The firing now commenced from all the lava ridges around the command and from 400 to 1000 yards distant; the troops being on low and comparatively open ground. At this time the greater portion of the command became panic stricken and all organization ceased. Dr. Semig says "the excitement was intense; numbers of soldiers ran in every direction for shelter shouting 'we are entirely surrounded,' and not paying the least attention to the commands of their officers." All the officers and a great portion of the men pressed forward toward the sand hill where Captain Thomas was. Captain Thomas then ordered Lieutenant Wright with Company "E," 12th Infantry, to advance with his company and take a ridge which was to the left of the sand hill and "commanded the surroundings" and was about 600 to 800 yards distant. Lieutenant Cranston, 4th Artillery, then volunteered to take some men and dislodge the Indians from the rocks north of the sand hill and so protect the left. I learned at the time, from those who saw him start, that he took *five* men with him; that these men behaved like soldiers and died like heroes, the position of their bodies, as afterwards found, surrounding that of the gallant Cranston, clearly proves. Captain Thomas with Lieutenants Howe and Harris, Dr. Semig, and the guide with the main column, which had melted down to twenty five or thirty men, followed the direction taken by Lieutenant Wright with his company. Meeting two slightly wounded men the Doctor stopped to dress their wounds. Mr. Ticknor, the guide, separated from the column and went north towards camp. The Dr. then followed the command until he overtook them "halted in a hollow" with some small rocks and sage brushes, not over fifty yards from the ridge which Wrights command had been ordered to take. Major Thomas supposing the ridge to be held by his troops "shouted out for Colonel Wright and as a reply received several shots." At this time there seems to have been a proposition made to charge the ridge but it was disapproved and the command "sheltered themselves as best they could behind rocks, sage brushes, little rises in the ground, etc." It was here the brave Thomas with all the officers who remained with him were killed or mortally wounded. The little band of enlisted men, "at least twenty," (says Dr. Semig) who had followed their commanders to this point stood by them to the last, being almost without exception either killed or severely wounded. After leaving Dr. Semig, Mr. Ticknor, the guide, did go north or toward the camp and came upon the command of Lieutenant Wright, but that command be-

coming disorganized and scattered Ticknor started for camp, but soon came on the Warm Spring Indians who were endeavoring to join Captain Thomas' command and had arrived about the time the firing began, but had been unable to join as they were fired at by the troops the moment they showed themselves. Donald McKay who had charge of them stated to me that he used every device to make himself and men known—shouting to them, and by raising their U. S. military hats with all their dressing, bugles, feathers, etc. Finally a bugler of one of the Artillery companies came upon them and McKay captured him and made him, as he expressed it, blow all the calls from reveille to tattoo; next a sergeant was "captured," and McKay endeavored to use him to communicate with the command, but nothing could induce him to return, and both the sergeant and bugler "got away;" they arrived safely in camp. The sergeant gave such a very definite account of what had occurred to Captain Thomas' command that I ordered him to return as guide with the troops going to the relief of Thomas, but he showed such utter demoralization that I feared to trust him. The Warm Spring Indians did not succeed in joining the troops until the arrival of Major Green. Under fire from *both* sides these *thirteen* Warm Spring Indians held their ground during the day without the loss or even wounding of a man. I have been thus particular in giving the details furnished by Dr. Semig, McKay and others, as they confirm the impression I entertained and reported at the time to the Commanding General, Military Division of the Pacific, that "soon after firing began a large part of the command became panic struck and soon all organization ceased." At the time Captain Thomas took his position in the hollow, and before any of the officers with him had been wounded, his command had melted away to twenty men, and up to that time but few men had been wounded. These brave men shared the fate of their officers—the majority of them being killed; the remainder almost to a man wounded. Those who accompanied Crauston shared his fate. Of Company "E," 12th Infantry, I have been able to learn nothing reliable after it was detached as above stated: fourteen of the enlisted men were killed or wounded, several of them around their commander, proving they had died nobly, doing their whole duty; but justice to the other companies requires it to be stated that the company was well represented among the first stragglers arriving in camp. From this statement of what, after the most careful inquiries, I believe to be as correct a statement of this affair as it is possible to obtain, I think it apparent that soon after the firing the

greater portion of the command became panic stricken "running in every direction and not paying the slightest attention to the commands of their officers;" that all organization ceased and many men fled from the field. That no disaster could have occurred had discipline and order been observed I have no doubt. The force with Captain Thomas including Warm Spring Indians was about eighty men, and probably twice the number that Jack could bring against them. The loss of Captain Thomas' command was four officers—Captain Evan Thomas, 4th Artillery, commanding the reconnaissance, 1st Lieutenant A. P. Howe, 4th Artillery, 1st Lieutenant Arthur Cranston, 4th Artillery, and 1st Lieutenant T. F. Wright, 12th Infantry, and eighteen enlisted men *killed*. Wounded: 2d Lieutenant G. M. Harris, 4th Artillery, (mortally), Acting Assistant Surgeon B. Semig (severely), and seventeen enlisted men; making a total of forty-one killed and wounded. Of the personal action of the officers it is of course impossible for me to speak; it is only known they died nobly, doing their duty—executing the orders of their gallant commander. Had all the enlisted men been true to their colors all would have been well. Two men seem to require special mention; their conduct was the subject of commendation by those who fled from the fight as well as those who remained true to their duty. These gallant men were 1st Sergeant Robert Romer, Company "A," 4th Artillery, and 1st Sergeant Malachi Clinton, Company "E," 12th Infantry; they not only did their duty as brave soldiers, but endeavored to force others to do likewise. The former was killed with his commander, Captain Thomas; the latter mortally wounded with Lieutenant Wright. After a day's rest Donald McKay with his friendly Indians made a reconnaissance, returning to camp on (I think) the 3d of May and reporting that the Modocs had abandoned the Lava Beds. About the date (I cannot specify the day) the Commander of the Department of the Columbia arrived in camp, and though I was not relieved from the command of the "Modoc Expedition," the actual command was exercised by the Department Commander's orders; verbal or written orders were usually given or sent direct to those for whom they were intended, as will be seen in the report of Captain Hasbrouck, 4th Artillery. His expedition consisting of his own Battery ("B," 4th Artillery) and Companies "B" and "G," 1st Cavalry, and the Warm Spring Indians under Donald McKay, left Peninsular Camp under verbal orders of the Department Commander, May 9, 1873; encamped that night at Sorass Lake, but found it dry. On the succeeding morning the camp occupied by "B" and "G" Companies, 1st Cavalry, and the



Warm Spring Indians, was attacked about daylight by the Modocs. In this affair the troops lost twelve killed and wounded including one Warm Spring Indian killed and two wounded; the loss of the Indians (Modocs) was one killed. I mention this fact to illustrate the disadvantage at which the troops invariably fought. The Indians secreted in the crevices and chasms of the lava always obtained the first shot at the exposed advancing soldiers. I know it has been suggested that "the soldier had the same shelter that protected the Indian;" so he had, but if he had availed himself of it and remained concealed in the rocks, the Modoc War would have never ended. The soldier had to advance and in doing so expose himself to the view and fire of the hidden savage; the disadvantage under which he labored is easily seen. Captain Hasbrouck was compelled to return to Tule Lake for water the day of his fight, but, having turned in his horses, this energetic officer marched on the 12th (May) to the large sand butte and found the Modocs in position just to the west of it; the 13th and 14th were spent reconnoitering and arranging with Major Mason for an attack on the 15th, but on the afternoon of the 14th a scout brought information that the Indians had fled. On May 16 the horses of Captain Hasbrouck's command reached him, and on the 17th he followed the trail which took a westerly course on what is known as Ticknor's road and that night encamped at Van Bremer's Ranch. On the 18th Captain Hasbrouck's command was to march to the ford of Butte Creek, but while on the march an Indian trail was discovered leading up to the hills towards Fairchild's Ranch; Captain Jackson with Company "G," 1st Cavalry (commanded by Lieutenant Kyle) was sent in pursuit: firing being heard, "B" Company, 1st Cavalry, and the Warm Spring Indians were ordered forward to re-enforce Jackson. The Indians were pursued to near Fairchild's, where they scattered and sought shelter among the rocks and brushes. Captain Hasbrouck reports two warriors and three squaws killed. A number of squaws were captured; they asserted that the Modocs were on their way to Fairchild's Ranch to surrender; that they were tired of fighting. This, I believe, was true; as the Indians were the Hot Creek band, and the fight occurred within sight of their old home. On the 19th of May I received instructions from the Department Commander to make certain changes in the organization and position of the troops serving in the Modoc Expedition. Among other things I was to select a camp near Van Bremer's station for the Infantry. On the 20th, after having given the necessary orders and instructions for the movements of the troops, I marched to, and en-

camped in the vicinity of, Fairchild's Ranch; the same evening, at the request of the Department Commander, I was present at the interview when he gave the squaws the messages to be delivered to the Indians desiring to come in and surrender. On the 21st of May I proceeded to examine the country in the vicinity of Van Bremer's Ranch with a view to establishing the camp under my instructions of May 19. Having selected a position I was about returning to camp when an orderly handed me the communication of which the following is a copy:

"HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF THE COLUMBIA,  
IN THE FIELD, *May 21, 1873.*

*Colonel A. C. Gillem, 1st Cavalry,*  
*Commanding Modoc Expedition.*

COLONEL:—

The Department Commander directs that you issue the necessary orders to give effect to the following:

The Modocs having been during the recent operations beaten and driven from their strongholds and having dispersed into small scattered bands, the pursuit and capture of the fugitives is now to be the immediate work of the troops. This duty will especially devolve upon the mounted troops who will be called on to operate in small detachments, moving rapidly, vigorously, and frequently independently of each other. The operations of the foot troops must be made to conform to the new condition of things. The conduct of affairs therefore can more conveniently be carried on under the immediate orders of the Department Commander, while on the spot, than under those of a special commander of the Expedition. Colonel Alvan C. Gillem, 1st Cavalry, is therefore relieved from duty with this command and will proceed to the Headquarters of his Regiment at Benicia Barracks, California, with a view to his assuming command of, and preparing for the field, the five Troops of the 1st Cavalry, now en-route from Arizona.

I am, Colonel,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

E. V. SUMNER,

*Captain 1st Cavalry."*

The provisions of this communication seemed somewhat contradictory—the first sentence directing me to give certain orders and the closing sentence relieving me from duty with the "Modoc Expedition" and ordering me to duty in another Department. I left

the command May 22; returned to Benicia Barracks and resumed command of my Regiment and Post. I was in command of the Modoc Expedition about four months.

Until the murder of General Canby, April 11, there were no active military operations; after hostilities actually began, the fighting, skirmishing and reconnoitering, was almost constant until I was relieved from command. When officers and men generally performed their duties so gallantly and cheerfully it might seem invidious to specially mention any; but I think it will be conceded by all who witnessed the conduct of Major John Green, 1st Cavalry, in the actions of the 15th, 16th and 17th of April, that he was distinguished for his cool judgment combined with gallantry bordering on rashness. First Lieutenant Charles P. Eagan, 12th Infantry, was severely wounded on the 15th of April, bravely leading a charge of his company. Captain David Perry, commanding the 1st Cavalry Battalion, (dismounted) on the left of Major Green's right, and Captain M. P. Miller, commanding the Battalion of the 4th Artillery and 12th Infantry, both served under my personal observation and deserve special commendation. The latter commanded the extreme right of the line advancing eastward, the most important part of the attack, and handled his men with skill, energy and gallantry. Assistant Surgeon Henry McElderry, chief medical officer of the Expedition, after the death of the lamented McMillan, performed all the duties devolving upon him in the most satisfactory manner. In the actions of the 15th, 16th and 17th April he was on the field giving his personal care to the wounded, under fire. Two gentlemen, though not commissioned in the Army, deserve particular mention; I allude to Acting Assistant Surgeons T. Cabaniss and B. Semig. The conduct of the former excited universal comment among those who witnessed his conduct prior to the fatal morning on which General Canby was murdered; he never hesitated to meet the Modocs or enter their stronghold. On that morning he volunteered to carry a message to General Canby informing him of the treacherous shooting of Lieutenant Sherwood on the east of the Modoc position, but the General's party was attacked before the services of the Doctor could be of any avail. In the battle of the 15th, 16th and 17th the Doctor's services were conspicuous; he advanced with the line and took charge of the wounded as they fell. The incident mentioned by Captain Miller of the Doctor taking the letter himself after its bearers had refused to follow him, and thus shaming them into a performance of their duty, was an act characteristic of the man.

Acting Assistant Surgeon B. Semig accompanied the command of Captain Thomas; remained with him to the last and was found near the Captain's body. Dr. Semig in this fight lost a foot, and was seriously wounded in the right shoulder, producing partial paralysis; he is a young man of ability and stands high in his profession, from the practice of which he will be in the future to a great extent incapacitated by wounds received in battle. I earnestly invite the attention of the proper authorities to his services, disability, and, what I think are his just claims, to provisions for his support. Lieutenant James Rockwell, Adjutant 1st Cavalry, acted as Assistant Adjutant General of the Modoc Expedition during my command; he performed his administrative duties with care and accuracy; in action he conveyed my orders with promptness and gallantry, and in my opinion deserves that his services be recognized by the War Department.

Since the termination of the Modoc War I wrote to Dr. McElderry to learn the number of Modoc warriors engaged during that war and how many of them were killed; to which he replied as follows, viz: "Your note of inquiry in regard to the number of Indians killed from the 11th of April to the end of the Modoc War is at hand. The Modocs themselves while at this post (Fort Klamath) said that they had only lost five warriors during that time, viz: three killed during the three days fight (2 by the explosion of a shell and 1 by a rifle ball), one killed at Sorass Lake, and one at the time of the Thomas Massacre. They stated that several old squaws were killed during the three days fight. There were forty warriors at this post belonging to the tribe. This corresponds to the count of Dorris and Fairchild, both of whom you remember always contended that this was the actual number of fighting warriors belonging to the Modoc tribe."

I fully corroborated the statement of Dorris and Fairchild as to the number of Modoc warriors engaged during the war.

This report has been delayed by the great difficulty in procuring the data necessary for its accuracy and also by my ill health.

I am, Sir,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

ALVAN C. GILLEM,

*Colonel 1st Cavalry,*

*Commander of the late Modoc Expedition, including District of the Lakes.*























































































































































