

Captain Messie, therefore, after establishing head-quarters at Thief Camp, commenced the campaign upon Mad River, at the Blue Slide, at which point a small body of the Indians were attacked on the twenty-third day of October, at which eight of the enemy were killed, and seven squaws and children taken prisoners. The remainder, numbering some twenty-five warriors, escaped.

On the return from the scene of battle, the Company were fired upon by the Indians from ambush, and one of the men, John Harpst, received a severe wound in the shoulder from a rifle-ball. We found that the Indians were well armed with rifles, and bows and arrows, and were occupying the most inaccessible points which could be found, rendering an approach by day entirely impracticable, without giving them an opportunity of escaping, and an approach by night extremely difficult, and dangerous to life and limb. But Captain Messie, being an old and experienced mountaineer and Indian hunter, supported by as brave a set of officers and men as could be found in any country, determined that these wily savages should be taught, at least, that their haunts of concealment could be found, and that no print of a foot upon the ground should go unobserved. The plan of moving upon and attacking their ranchos by night was the only one which promised much success, and although hazardous, was readily and cheerfully adopted by the officers and men, and pursued until every river, creek, and gulch, in this large section of country, was scouted over and cleared of Indians, for the time being. As fast as different sections of this country were rid of hostile Indians, a detachment was left at a selected point, with orders to scout continually, so as to cover and observe the return of the enemy to the sections cleared.

It may seem, and is, almost incredible, that a company of ninety men could clear a section of country of this extent—a country diversified by a series of lofty mountains, covered by almost perpetual snows—precipitous gorges, rugged cañons, dense forests, and thickets of underbrush, seemingly impenetrable to the white man, and in fact to the savages themselves, (except by their own secret passes,)—mountain streams, swollen by the incessant rains, to a torrent, over which they would cross for refuge when closely pursued, but over which it was extremely hazardous for us to follow with arms and munitions of war.

I say, then, that it is almost incredible that so small a force could surmount these almost impregnable barriers of defence to a wary enemy, and hold a complete surveillance over their every movement—but such is the fact. By the constancy and vigilance of the pursuit, these Indians were driven finally into a fastness in the “red-wood” mountains, where the foot of white man never trod before, and which, in all probability, would never have been discovered but for the unerring eye of our experienced mountaineers, some of whom could readily descry the imprint of an Indian foot upon the leaves lying upon the ground. This place had doubtless been previously selected and prepared as a final rendezvous in case of an emergency. Here they had built thirty commodious “red-wood” houses, where they had stored large quantities of provisions and ammunition; and here they had evidently determined to make a stand, and fight us, if by any means their retreat should be discovered. And when this place of their concealment was discovered and attacked, on the twenty-first, twenty-second, and twenty-third days of January, by detachments under command of Capt. Messie, Lieut. Winslett, and private McNeill, they did fight with determined bravery—in which attacks, five of our men, viz., Houk, Work, Overlander, McCafferty, and Gunn, received severe, but not mortal, gun-shot wounds, and from thirty-five to forty