

CHAPTER X.

SOME HISTORIC CAMPAIGNS.

GENERAL HANCOCK'S EXPEDITION—GENERAL CARR'S CAMPAIGNS—COLONEL FORSYTH'S DESPERATE FIGHT ON THE ARICKAREE—ROMAN NOSE—DARING DEEDS OF STILWELL AND TRUDEAU—CUSTER STRIKES BLACK KETTLE'S VILLAGE—DEATH OF MAJOR ELLIOTT—THE PLAINS—FORT HAYS—HUNTING—FORT HARKER—FORT LEAVENWORTH—THE MODOC WAR—DEATH OF GENERAL CANBY—GENERAL SHERMAN'S TRIB-UTE TO CANBY.

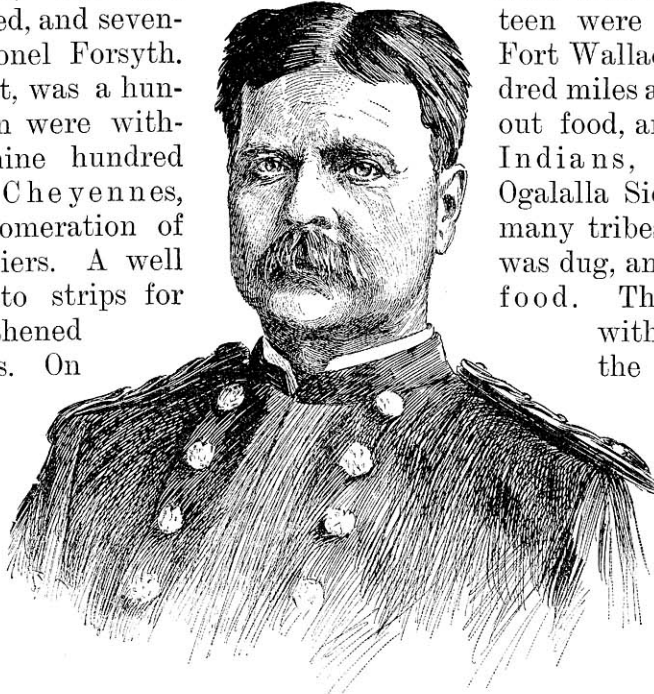


HE situation in respect to Indian affairs grew steadily worse until another formidable expedition, commanded by General Hancock, was in 1868 sent against the Indians. This expedition traversed the plains country of Kansas and the northern part of the Indian Territory, without, however, being able to bring the savages to a general engagement.

The campaign of General Carr in the same year, 1868-9, resulted in his bringing his command into contact with the hostile Indians in no less than nine different affairs. His most brilliant achievement was a forced march across the plains against a combination of hostiles known as the "Dog Soldiers," made up of different tribes, principally Sioux and Cheyennes, who were devastating the settlements along the western frontier. He surprised their Camp at Summit Springs, Colorado, on the south fork of the Platte, on Sunday, July 12, 1869, killing sixty-eight warriors, taking seventeen prisoners, and recapturing a white woman, Mrs. Weigel, whose husband had been killed a few weeks before at the time she was carried into captivity.

During this year occurred one of the most remarkable affairs with Indians in American history. Its scene was a small stream, the Arickaree, in northern Kansas. Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel George A. Forsyth was in command of a small body of fifty citizens enlisted as scouts, and had camped beside the stream, which contained very little water, on September 17. There was a small island in the middle of the stream, and on this Forsyth took position when he was attacked. The men were placed

in a circle and lying down, and each instantly began digging a rifle-pit for himself. About nine o'clock a charge was made on the little band by about three hundred warriors. They were repulsed, and retreated. Roman Nose, the leader of the hostiles, was killed in this charge, and the plain was strewn with dead Indians. About two o'clock another charge was made, and was again repulsed. A feeble, and final one was made about four o'clock. Then it began to rain. Every horse and mule was killed by the enemy's fire, Lieutenant Beecher, second in command, and five men were killed or mortally wounded, and seven including Colonel Forsyth, military post, was a hundred and his men were with- by about nine hundred Northern Cheyennes, queer conglomeration of as Dog Soldiers. A well were cut into strips for was strengthened dead animals. On meat could eaten, and ing became But on this the Indians disappear, ninth day of they had The fron- this time weak to



COLONEL GEORGE A. FORSYTH.

were thus found when succor came. Why so small a body of civilians should have been permitted to go into a country known to be occupied by a large body of hostile Indians, instead of sending out a large body of regular troops to engage them, is not clear. In fact, Colonel Forsyth, in his very interesting and graphic account of that engagement, recently published, in summing up the results of the first day's fiercely-contested fight, and the serious loss to his command in officers and men, and also referring to the terrible wounds from which he was himself suffering,

men were killed or mortally wounded, in Fort Wallace, the nearest dred miles away. Forsyth out food, and surrounded Indians, including Ogalalla Sioux, and that many tribes then known was dug, and dead horses food. The breastwork with saddles and the fifth day the no longer be the suffer- intense. day by noon began to and by the the siege all gone. tiersmen by were too move, and

says: "It was all I could do to pull myself together and set about getting out of the dangerous position into which I had led my command."

This officer has now been five years on the retired list of the army, and is living in Washington. I have no doubt that his disability was primarily the result of the serious wounds he received in this engagement.

It was a most heroic and desperate defense, showing the cool courage of the frontiersmen, their skill and accuracy in the use of their weapons, and their steady fortitude when face to face with an enemy in overwhelming numbers—more than twelve to one. Nothing could be finer than the fortitude of the commanding officer, Colonel Forsyth, who, though twice wounded and with a broken leg, continued to direct and command during the nine days that the siege lasted. Another illustration of heroic courage was that of the men creeping out of the entrenchments, taking the risk of being captured and tortured, yet successfully getting through the large body of Indians that surrounded the little command. The old frontiersmen "Pet" Trudeau and "Jack" Stilwell, the latter not much more than a boy, were the first to make the attempt, and their success was complete. It was one of the most notable feats in the records of border warfare.

At midnight of September the 17th they left General Forsyth's command in company, started south, and after crawling through the lines immediately surrounding the island, with their blankets on and wearing moccasins they had made from their boot tops, they passed out over a bald hill, thinking it better to make the attempt in that direction than to try to crawl out by some of the ravines, which they had every reason to believe were full of Indians. It afterward transpired in conversation between Stilwell and some of these same Indians, that they made a lucky stroke in not attempting to make their escape either by the water-course or the ravines adjacent. They were headed off and interrupted so often by seeing Indians that they only succeeded that night in making three miles, which brought them almost to the top of the divide between the Arickaree and South Republican. They crawled into a washout, or head of a hollow, the banks of which were overgrown with tall grass and sunflowers, where they were satisfied they would not be found that day, as they had been careful to leave no trail behind them. They could hear the firing all day long and at night they knew that their party was still holding out.

As soon as it became dark they started south again, meeting two parties of Indians during the night, which delayed them considerably; and just at daylight on the second morning they reached the South Republican,

to find that they had gotten within about half a mile of the Sioux and Cheyenne village, something they did not expect. It was learned afterward that the trail turned south about one mile west of where the battle was going on.

They crawled under the river bank and got between the river and a kind of bayou, in the tall grass, and lay there the remainder of that day.

The Indians crossed very near them during the day; in fact they lay not over thirty feet away from where the latter stopped and watered their horses and talked for some time. They could hear the Indians mourning in the village for their dead, and also saw them taking out several bodies for sepulture on scaffolds.

That night as soon as it was dark they crossed the south fork of the Republican and started south again. The morning of the third day found them on the high rolling prairie between the head of Goose Creek and the stream they had just left. They had decided now to travel in day time; but by eight o'clock in the morning they saw the advance of what they afterward learned was the Dog Soldiers, separated and moving south from the Sioux, the latter going north. It was therefore necessary to change their plans for the day.

In looking for a place to hide they accidentally discovered some yellow weeds growing up around a buffalo carcass. They crawled to the carcass with the intention of breaking the weeds off to cover themselves with, so as to more effectually hide. The buffalo had evidently been killed the winter before, as the frame was almost intact, with a small piece of hide still adhering to the upper ribs. They crawled in as near as possible to this dried carcass and lay there. One of the mounted Indian scouts approached very near during the morning, scanning the country in all directions for over half an hour, and not over one hundred yards from where they lay.

It was then that the "rattlesnake business," so widely published, took place. There was a snake in the carcass, and he crawled around and made it very uncomfortable for his new neighbors. Stilwell finally spit tobacco juice on his head which caused him to vacate the premises.

That night Trudeau broke down completely, and seemed for a while to lose his mind; but after they had reached some water and he had drunk freely of it, and after he had vomited two or three times, Stilwell persuaded him to eat a piece of the horse meat he had in his pocket. This revived him, and they traveled on.

The fourth morning being foggy they had no trouble in traveling by day time. They struck the Denver wagon road about eleven o'clock, about

twenty miles west of Fort Wallace and met two mounted couriers going to Colonel Carpenter's command, then lying at Lake Station, some sixty miles from where General Forsyth was besieged. They gave the couriers a full account of what had happened, and told them as nearly as possible General Forsyth's position. Colonel Carpenter, as soon as these men arrived, responded promptly and marched with his entire force to General Forsyth's relief, meeting a second party of two that had also come through the Indian lines; which accounts for this last two getting back to Forsyth before Stilwell and Trudeau did. The latter reached Fort Wallace just at sundown and reported to Major Bankhead, who was in command. Bankhead had but twelve mounted men in the post. He took the in-



THE SCOUTS AND THE RATTLESNAKE.

fantry in wagons, together with two small cannon — his command consisted of about 130 men — and with Trudeau and Stilwell started back at midnight, traveling night and day with the exception of one night, when they camped on what was called Thick Timber, a small stream running into the Republican, where they had a little brush with the Indians, and arrived at the island the next day after Colonel Carpenter had got there.

Trudeau never recovered, but died the next spring. He lies buried at Fort Sill, Oklahoma Territory.

Judge S. E. Stilwell is now a United States Commissioner at Anadarko, Oklahoma Territory.

It was afterwards admitted by the Indians themselves that not less than seventy-five of their own number had been killed.

After this affair troops were sent to the field of action from other departments. The services of volunteers from Kansas were accepted, and operations against the hostiles were pressed. General Custer was sent south with eleven companies, and struck the trail of a band of Cheyennes under Black Kettle. On the 27th of November he came upon the Cheyenne camp, consisting of fifty-one lodges, and with his usual impetuosity charged upon the village. The weather was cold and snow lay deep on the ground. Black Kettle and a number of his warriors were killed, all the arms and ammunition captured, fifty-three women and children were taken prisoners and the village was destroyed.

On Christmas day, 1868, a Comanche village was burned, and General Sheridan regarded his winter campaign as having proved a success. At midnight on the last day of the year, to quote his own words, "a delegation of the chief fighting men of the Arapahoes and Cheyennes, twenty-one in all, arrived at this place on foot, their animals not being able to carry them. They had ruled the village. They begged for peace, and permission for their people to come in, asking no terms, but for a paper to protect them from the operations of our troops while *en route*. They report the tribes in mourning for their losses, their people starving, their dogs all eaten up, and no buffalo."

"This," he reports, "gives the final blow to the backbone of the Indian rebellion;" which, however, proved to be only a temporary check. The troops were at no time able to close with the main body of the Indians, and while Custer's pursuit and attack was a success so far as one particular band was concerned, yet even that success was not achieved without serious loss. Major Joel H. Elliott, while in pursuit of a portion of Black Kettle's band which had escaped, overtook them on the Washita, where they turned, and being reinforced by warriors from the main camp, destroyed his entire command.

Through the earnest solicitation and coaxing by those in charge of the administration of Indian affairs, the Indians were at last induced to come in and make a display of surrender and peaceful disposition, and it was again officially announced that the end of the Indian wars had been reached. The prophecy was made that no more would occur in the southwest, yet as these same troops returned north, moving back toward their various stations in the early spring of 1869, the Indians followed, and reopened hostilities by depredations upon the settlements along the Saline,

the Solomon, and the Republican Rivers, in Kansas, and a condition of affairs very similar to war was inaugurated, and continued for five years. The Indians practically remained masters of the plains country up to 1874.

My first impression of the plains country was obtained after leaving Fort Leavenworth, in the Spring of 1869, as we passed out through the fertile valleys of Kansas to what was then the terminus of the western railway system, Ellsworth. There we took a construction train, which was carrying rails and material, a short distance further to the westward to what was then known as Fort Hays, where I found the headquarters of my regiment, the Fifth United States Infantry. The plains were then a wild, weird waste of rolling prairie and valley. Along the lowlands and river courses were occasionally trees and tall grass, with here and there a grove or small forest, but generally speaking, the face of the upland country was covered with a close mat or carpet of buffalo grass not more than one or two inches in height, while on the hillsides sage brush and bunch grass were found.

General Custer had a command near Fort Hays at that time, and while I had known this gallant young general during the war, I had never had opportunity to see much of him and his gentle and refined wife, who, whenever possible, accompanied him in camp and field. Mrs. Miles being with me, we frequently met them socially, and enjoyed many hunts and pleasure parties together. Little did we think at that time that the one who had won such high distinction as a cavalry leader and able general in the great civil war, should within the next few years win a special renown as one of the prominent frontier officers, and meet so tragic a death—

“In a barren land and lone
Where the Big Horn and the Yellowstone”

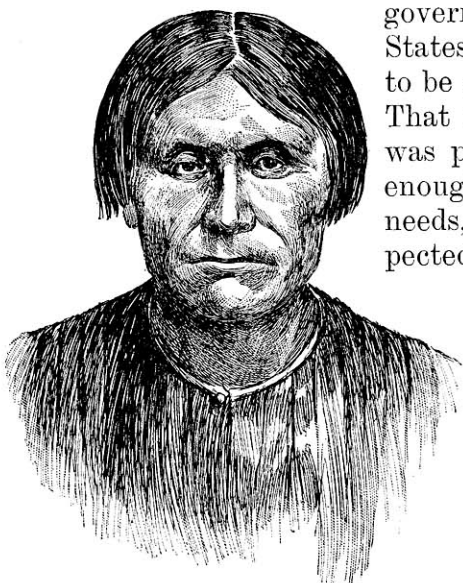
unite, or that his wife in becoming the faithful historian of his life and stirring deeds would herself attain marked distinction in the field of literature, as well as popularity on the rostrum.

My first experience upon the plains was romantic and filled with novel and exciting incidents. Here we found abundance of game, including buffalo, deer and antelope, and here, with Custer and a party of officers and soldiers, I enjoyed my first buffalo chase. I came to look on my horses and dogs as friends and companions. The former were used in the chase and the latter in the pursuit of small game. Here I watched the tremendous strides that were making in the construction of railroads and the extension of channels of communication and commerce, and the steady

westward march of settlements as the long trains of cars came laden with immigrants, not only from the East, but from all parts of Europe, and established hamlet after hamlet, and village after village, farther and still farther toward the western horizon.

Later I took station at Fort Harker, which was found more agreeable and more within the confines of civilization, and still later at Fort Leavenworth, one of the most delightful of posts, of which I have already given some account.

After the establishment of the Council of Indian Delegates at Ocmulgee, Indian Territory, in December, 1870, an effort was made on the part of the government to place all the Indians in the United States on separate tracts of land or reservations, there to be guarded against all molestation from the whites. That the Indians might take kindly to this plan it was proposed that the reservations should be large enough to provide ample room for their reasonable needs, say six hundred acres to each. It was not expected that all the tribes would readily assent to the proposition, as it contemplated their removal from familiar haunts to remote parts of the country, and in fact the opposition to such efforts at removal brought about many difficulties with them. The "Modoc War" was a case in point. This tribe numbered only a few hundred, and were removed by the government from their fine lands near the boundary line between Oregon and California to a reservation where the soil was so poor that they would



CAPTAIN JACK.

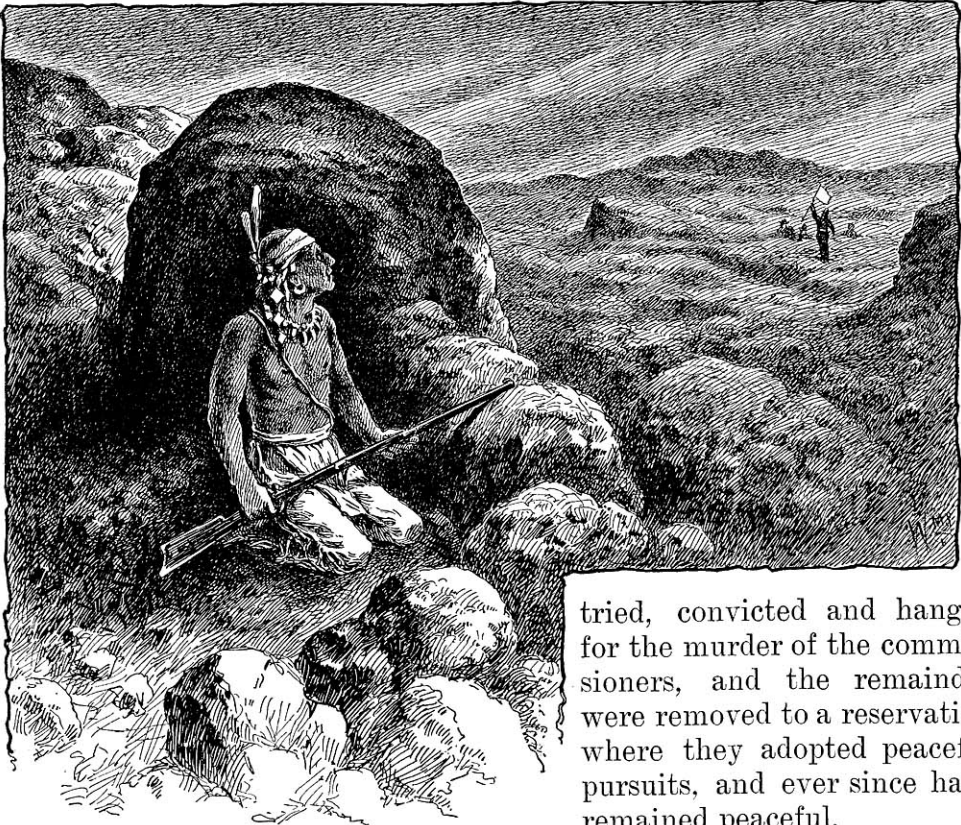
not accept it, and went back in wrath to their old homes, in defiance of the United States authorities.

Finding that a determined attempt was about to be made to bring them into subjection, a few of the Modocs, under the leadership of Captain Jack and Scarfaced Charley, withdrew to the lava beds to make the best resistance in their power. Here they were surrounded, but they held out stoutly, and it seemed impossible to dislodge them. In their inaccessible fastnesses they could defy a hundred times their number, and it was plain that many lives would have to be sacrificed before they were whipped into submission.

April 11, 1873, four members of the Peace Commission, headed by Major-General Edward R. S. Canby, met the leaders of the disaffected band

under a flag of truce. While the conference was in progress the Indians suddenly, upon a preconcerted signal, assailed the white men, killing General Canby and Dr. Thomas on the spot and badly wounding Dr. Meacham.

From this time the war was pushed with vigor, and in July following they were forced to surrender. Captain Jack and two associates were



IN THE LAVA BEDS.

tried, convicted and hanged for the murder of the commissioners, and the remainder were removed to a reservation where they adopted peaceful pursuits, and ever since have remained peaceful.

General Canby was one of the ablest officers that ever held a commission under our government. The General Commanding the Army paid him a deserved tribute in General orders, as follows:—

HEADQUARTERS OF THE ARMY, }
WASHINGTON, April 14, 1873. }

General Orders, No 3.

It again becomes the sad duty of the general to announce to the army the death of one of our most illustrious and most honored comrades.

Brigadier-General Edward R. S. Canby, commanding the Department of the Columbia, was, on Friday last, April 11, shot dead by the chief "Jack," while he was endeavoring to mediate for the removal of the Modocs from their present rocky fastness on the northern border of California to a reservation where the tribe could be maintained and protected by the proper civil agents of the government.

That such a life should have been sacrificed in such a cause will ever be a source of regret to his relations and friends; yet the general trusts that all good soldiers will be consoled in knowing that General Canby lost his life "on duty" and in the execution of his office, for he had been specially chosen and appointed for this delicate and dangerous trust by reason of his well-known patience and forbearance, his entire self-abnegation, and fidelity to the expressed wishes of his government, and his large experience in dealing with the savage Indians of America.

He had already completed the necessary military preparations to enforce obedience to the conclusion of the Peace Commissioners, after which he seems to have accompanied them to a last conference with the savage chiefs in supposed friendly council, and there met his death by treachery, outside of his military lines, but within view of the signal station. At the same time one of the Peace Commissioners was killed outright, and another mortally wounded, and the third escaped unhurt.

Thus perished one of the kindest and best gentlemen of this or any country, whose social equalled his military virtues. To even sketch his army history would pass the limits of a general order, and it must here suffice to state that General Canby began his military career as a cadet at West Point in the summer of 1835, graduating in 1839, since which time he has continually served thirty-eight years, passing through all the grades to major-general of volunteers and brigadier-general of the regular army.

He served his early life with marked distinction in the Florida and Mexican Wars, and the outbreak of the Civil War found him on duty in New Mexico, where, after the defection of his seniors, he remained in command and defended the country successfully against a formidable inroad from the direction of Texas. Afterward transferred east to a more active and important sphere, he exercised various high commands, and, at the close of the Civil War was in command of the Military Division of the West Mississippi, in which he had received a painful wound, but had the honor to capture Mobile, and compel the surrender of the rebel forces in the Southwest.

Since the close of the Civil War he has repeatedly been chosen for special command by reason of his superior knowledge of law and civil government, his known fidelity to the wishes of the Executive, and his chivalrous devotion to his profession, in all which his success was perfect.

When fatigued by a long and laborious career, in 1869, he voluntarily consented to take command of the Department of the Columbia, where he expected to enjoy the repose he so much coveted. This Modoc difficulty arising last winter, and it being extremely desirable to end it by peaceful means, it seemed almost providential that it should have occurred in the sphere of General Canby's command.

He responded to the call of his government with alacrity, and has labored with a patience that deserved better success — but alas! the end is different from that which he and his best friends had hoped for and he now lies a corpse in the wild mountains of California, while the lightning flashes his requiem to the furthest corners of the civilized world.

Though dead, the record of his fame is resplendent with noble deeds well done, and no name on our Army Register stands fairer or higher for the personal qualities that command the universal respect, honor, affection and love of his countrymen.

General Canby leaves to his country a heart-broken widow, but no children.

Every honor consistent with law and usage shall be paid to his remains, full notice of which will be given as soon as his family can be consulted and arrangements concluded.

By command of General Sherman,

WILLIAM D. WHIPPLE, Assistant Adjutant-General.

