CHAPTER XXXIX.

Incidents of the Apache Campaign.

The Story of the Wounded Apache—Captain Wood's Story—Character of Apache Raids—The Case of the Peck Family—Indian Ideas About Insane Persons—Fight Between Apaches and Mexicans, and Some of Its Results—Meeting the Mexican Troops—Finding the Murdered Mexicans—Finding Dead Bodies on the March—Indian Manner of Riding Horses to Death—The Old Mines of Mexico—How the Soldiers Marched, Ate and Slept—Surprising an Indian Camp—Preliminaries of Surrender at Fronteras—Geronimo Comes in—Agreement to Surrender—Meeting With the Mexican Soldiers—Geronimo's Friendly Offer to Assist—Mexican Nervousness—Losing a Command—A New Rifle—A Stampede—Mexican Towns—Extreme Hardship of the Campaign—The Proportion of Survivors—Geronimo's Philosophy of Surrender.

IN July, while at Fort Apache, I had found the Indian before referred to, who had been wounded in Hatfield's fight, and who had worked his way north to Camp Apache. He had avoided the troops by traveling along the crests of the mountains, and had contrived to subsist on field-mice, rabbits, the juice of the giant cactus, and whatever he could find to sustain life. He reported that when he left the camp of the hostiles they were much worn down and disheartened, and that some of them were disposed to surrender. I was satisfied from his story that this was the time to demand a surrender, and that he could be made useful in opening communication with the hostiles. I, therefore, decided to send him with one other Indian, under the charge of Lieutenant Gatewood, to seek out the hostile camp and demand a surrender.

Captain Leonard Wood, the only officer who was with Captain Lawton during the entire campaign, is at present stationed at Washington, D. C., and gives me the following interesting account of the Apache campaign south of the border, from notes taken by him during the time.

CAPTAIN LEONARD WOOD'S STORY.

As illustrating the character of the raiding done by these Apaches, I may mention the case of the Peck family. Their ranch was surrounded by Indians, the entire family was captured, and several of the farm-hands

were killed. The husband was tied up and compelled to witness indescribable tortures inflicted upon his wife until she died. The terrible ordeal rendered him temporarily insane, and as the Apaches, like most Indians, stand in great awe of an insane person, they set him free as soon as they discovered his mental condition; but otherwise he would never have been allowed to live. He was afterward found by his friends wandering about the place.

His daughter, who was about thirteen years old, was captured by the Indians and carried by them three hundred miles, hotly pursued by Captain Lawton's command, when they met a party of Mexicans consisting of sixty or seventy men. The Mexicans fired a volley on the Indians, killing a woman and wounding the man who carried the little girl, thus enabling her to escape. This Indian's horse was killed at the same time, thus making it impossible for him to follow the remainder of the party as they retreated, so he took to the rocks, and stood off the entire sixty or seventy Mexicans, killing seven of them, each of whom was shot through the head.

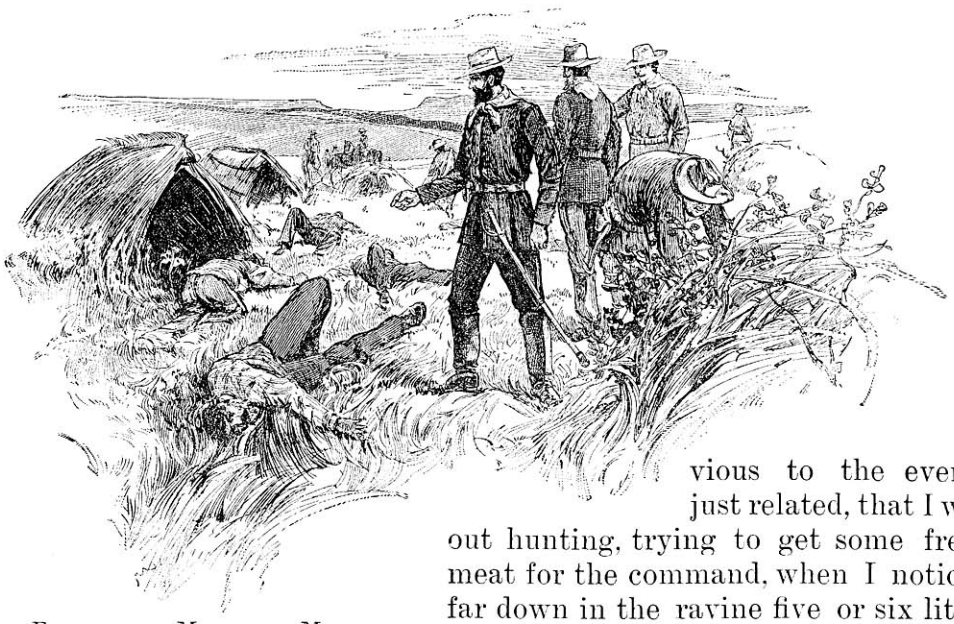
Captain Leonard Wood.

Our command had followed the outfit that had the little girl, and on the same day that this skirmish occurred with the Mexicans we had been able to get near enough to fire at them, but it was too late in the day to accomplish anything, and the next morning at daybreak we were again on their trail following as fast as possible, when our scouts came rushing back, saying they had met a large body of Mexican troops. Captain Lawton, Lieutenant Finley, and myself went on foot as rapidly as we could to try to overtake them but they were in full retreat and we had to follow them about six miles before we could catch them. As we approached, the whole party covered us with their rifles and seemed very much excited. They proved to be the very party who had

recaptured the little girl, and they now delivered her over to Captain Lawton, who sent her back to the United States where she was taken in charge by friends.

The Mexicans explained their fright at our appearance in this way. They had descended into the cañon where the fight had taken place to bring out the bodies of the seven men who had been shot, when they saw our five scouts advancing down the cañon. They mistook them for the friends of the Indian woman who had been killed coming to recover her body, and as they had had all the fighting they cared for with that particular band, they proceeded to retreat as rapidly as possible.

It was on this same expedition after the little girl, but a few days previous to the events just related, that I was out hunting, trying to get some fresh meat for the command, when I noticed far down in the ravine five or six little Mexican bush huts. I approached them and discovered the bodies of five Mexicans, all shot through the head. Some of their faces were powder-burned, showing that the shots were very close. They proved to be the placer miners, who had been working in the creek when the Indians crept stealthily upon them and killed them all, probably at the first volley. On one occasion the Indians rode right through a wood-chopper's camp, killing seven, and there were forty or fifty instances of similar atrocities. In one day we picked up as many as ten bodies, and the governor of Sonora reported the number of Mexicans killed during the whole campaign to be as high as five or six hundred.



FINDING THE MURDERED MEXICANS.

The Indians would start out with fifty or sixty horses, and after one had been urged as far as possible, his rider would kill him and then select a fresh animal and hurry on. When our troops got anywhere near them they would simply scatter like quail, to meet again four or five days later at some designated point. The general drift of the trail was about the headwaters of the Yaqui River, and in a country that was absolutely unknown. In this vicinity are situated those famous old lost mines of north Mexico, about which every Mexican town is full of stories. Just south of the boundary line is the only east and west trail for a hundred or two miles. All the trails of this region are of the very faintest kind, and can be followed only with the greatest difficulty by daylight and at night not at all, unless unusually good. Even in the daytime they are often lost. These old mines just referred to had long been abandoned, and as the Apaches have run over this region during the last two or three hundred years, they have never been rediscovered, but are supposed to be fabulously rich. One day while on the Yaqui River a man came to us who had been lost for sixty-one days. He was an American and almost demented. He had been following the course of the river, trying to find his way out of this wilderness. He had frequently seen signs of the Indians, but had not been molested by them. He had come across one of these old mines and gave a very complete description of it, which agreed with the recorded description given us by the old priest of Oposura.

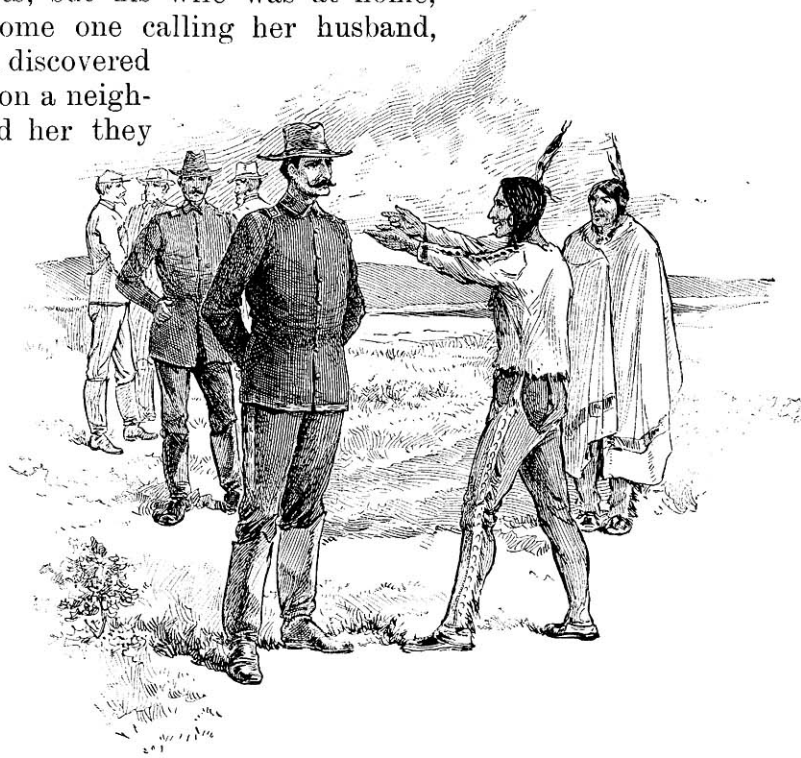
When we reached the Yaqui River country it was found impossible to make use of the cavalry—the mountains, volcanic in their character, being almost impassable. The heat was intense, and the command was reduced to deer meat for food. There were absolutely no vegetables, and in fact very little even of the meat mentioned. Our supply of bacon had hair on both sides of it. So thin had it become that nothing was left but the hide. One day Captain Lawton was made violently ill by eating some canned corned-beef, which had fermented soon after being opened, and for a few hours his life hung in the balance. At one time I was in command of the scouts on a trip across the main divide of the Sierra Madre to "cut sign" of the hostiles, and we were without rations for seven days with the exception of game. We slept in the bushes, and were without blankets or bedding. Our Indian scouts were always very loyal and ready for duty. They would follow a trail for days where there was not a sign that white men could see. Their sight was remarkable, and every movement of a bird or insect was noted by them.

On the 13th of July we effected the surprise of the camp of Geronimo and Natchez which eventually led to their surrender, and resulted in the immediate capture of everything in their camps except themselves and the clothes they wore. It was our practice to keep two scouts two or three days in advance of the command, and between them and the main body four or five other scouts. The Indian scouts in advance would locate the camp of the hostiles and send back word to the next party, who in their turn would notify the main command; then a forced march would be made in order to surround and surprise the camp. On the day mentioned, following this method of procedure, we located the Indians on the Yaqui River in a section of country almost impassable for man or beast, and in a position which the Indians evidently felt to be perfectly secure. The small table-land on which the camp was located bordered on the Yaqui River and was surrounded on all sides by high cliffs with practically only two points of entrance, one up the river and the other down. The officers were able to creep up and look down on the Indian camp, which was about two thousand feet below their point of observation. All the fires were burning, the horses were grazing, and the Indians were in the river swimming, with evidently not the slightest apprehension of attack. Our plan was to send scouts to close the upper opening, and then to send the infantry, of which I had the command, to attack the camp from below.

Both Indians and infantry were put in position, and advanced on the hostile camp, which, situated as it was on this table-land covered with cane-brake and boulders, formed an ideal position for Indian defense. As the infantry advanced the firing of the scouts was heard, which led us to believe that the fight was on, and great, accordingly, was our disgust to find, on our arrival, that the firing was accounted for by the fact that the scouts were killing the stock, the Apaches themselves having escaped through the northern exit just a few minutes before their arrival. It was a very narrow escape for the Indians, and was due to a mere accident. One of their number who had been out hunting discovered the red head-band of one of our scouts as he was crawling around into position. He immediately dropped his game and notified the Apaches, and they were able to get away just before the scouts closed up the exit. Some of these Indians were suffering from old wounds. Natchez himself was among this number, and their sufferings through the pursuit which followed led to their discouragement and, finally, to their surrender.

From this point they made a big detour to the south of the Yaqui River, captured a Mexican pack-train, remounted themselves, and started north

with our command hard after them. When we were about a hundred miles south of Fronteras we learned from some Mexicans whom we met that the Indians were in the vicinity of that place. Two of the Indian women had been in the town, and to the house of one Jose Maria, whom they knew well as he had been a captive among them for seventeen years. These two women had been sent to get him to open communications with a view to surrender. Jose was at the time with Captain Lawton, acting as interpreter for the scouts; but his wife was at home, and when she heard some one calling her husband, went to the window and discovered the two Indian women on a neighboring hill. They told her they had been sent to ask Jose to open negotiations with the Americans. This was the first really direct intimation of their intention to surrender.



"You Are the Man I Want to Talk With."

The news of their being in Fronteras had also reached several military commands in Arizona, and we found on our arrival that Lieutenant Wilder of the Fourth Cavalry had found these Indian women, and had sent a message by them to the hostiles, demanding their surrender. In the meantime Lieutenant Gatewood who had joined Captain Lawton's command about ten days before on the Yaqui River, the two Indians, his escort, interpreters, packers, etc., were sent to the hostile camp to discover the state of mind of the hostiles. The two Indians entered the hostile camp. One stayed all night, but the other returned and said that Geronimo wanted to meet Lieutenant Gatewood in the open and unattended, for a talk. Gatewood had this talk with him, found his tone friendly, and afterward with his party went into their camp. Lawton

was with his scouts in advance of his main command and near the Indians' camp. Gatewood, after his visit to the Indians returned to Lawton's camp very much discouraged, saying that the Indians had declined to recognize him and that he had no faith in their surrendering. Lawton replied that the Indians were not waiting there for nothing, and that he believed they meant to surrender.

The next morning at daybreak Geronimo, Natchez and twelve or thirteen other Indians came into our camp, and Geronimo rushed up to Lawton, threw his arms around him, and giving him a hug said:

"You are the man I want to talk with."

They had a short conversation, and as a result the entire body of Indians came down and camped within two miles of us, and later in the day moved still nearer, so that they were only half a mile away, and finally they agreed to accompany Lawton to where they could meet General Miles and formally surrender.

Under these conditions we had advanced a day's march, when we were very much surprised one morning before we had left our camp at the sudden appearance of a party of 180 Mexicans, commanded by the prefect of Arispe. Lieutenant Smith and Tom Horn, chief of scouts, jumped on their mules and rode down to meet them in a dense canebrake, and found them extremely hostile. They insisted that they were going to attack the Indian camp in spite of the fact that we assured them that the Indians were our prisoners, were peaceably on their way to the United States, and that we could not permit them to be attacked. They finally stopped advancing, Lawton came up and agreed to allow ten of their number to go into our camp and receive proof that the Indians seriously intended to surrender. During the time that an attack seemed imminent, Geronimo sent word to Captain Lawton that he held his Indians in readiness to attack the Mexicans in the rear while we attacked them in front.

As soon as the Mexicans halted I went on and overtook the Indians, who in the meantime had been instructed by Captain Lawton to "pull out, and keep out of the way." Walsh of the Fourth Cavalry and Gatewood were sent with them to protect them in case they came in contact with any of our own troops. Captain Lawton sent me to them to assure them that we would stand by them under any circumstances, and would not allow them to be attacked. Towards night some of their scouts came in with the report that ten Mexicans were with our people, which created considerable excitement among the Indians. This showed how well they kept posted regarding events that were transpiring around them. I hastened

to assure them that there were only ten Mexicans, and that there could not possibly be any treachery on our part. This satisfied them, and Captain Lawton came up soon after and went into camp close by them. He then sent a message to Geronimo to bring down his Indians as it was necessary to assure the Mexicans that they were going in to surrender.

Geronimo immediately complied, and came down with nearly all his men. As they advanced toward the tree under which the Mexicans were standing, one of the latter nervously moved his revolver in his belt. In an instant every Indian weapon was drawn, and the only thing that saved the lives of the Mexicans was the fact that we jumped in between and held up our hands to prevent the Indians from firing. The Mexicans now appeared to be perfectly satisfied, and from this time we saw no more of them.

The next day after this exciting episode, when Lieutenant Smith started off with the cavalry and pack-train, there must have been some misunderstanding about the designated camping place, for he took a direction different from that taken by the Indians, who were accompanied by Lawton, Gatewood, Clay and myself. It was necessary for some of us to travel with them in order that in case we ran into any of our troops an explanation might be made before a fight ensued.

About two o'clock in the afternoon Lawton became anxious about the disappearance of the command, and after arriving at an understanding with the Indians in regard to the camping place for the night, he started out to find it. Gatewood had with him his interpreter, a man named George Wratton, and about four o'clock we sent him out to search for the command. But unfortunately he did not reach the command until the next day, having wandered around all night and ridden his mule to death. This left only Gatewood, Clay and myself in the Apache camp, and entirely at the mercy of the Indians. Instead of taking advantage of our position, they assured us that while we were in their camp it was our camp, and that as we had never lied to them they were going to keep faith with us. They gave us the best they had to eat, and treated us as well as we could wish in every way. Just before giving us these assurances, Geronimo came to me and asked to see my rifle. It was a Hotchkiss and he had never seen its mechanism. When he asked me for the gun and some ammunition I must confess I felt a little nervous, for I thought it might be a device to get hold of one of our weapons. I made no objection, however, but let him have it, showed him how to use it, and he fired at a mark, just missing one of his own men, which he regarded

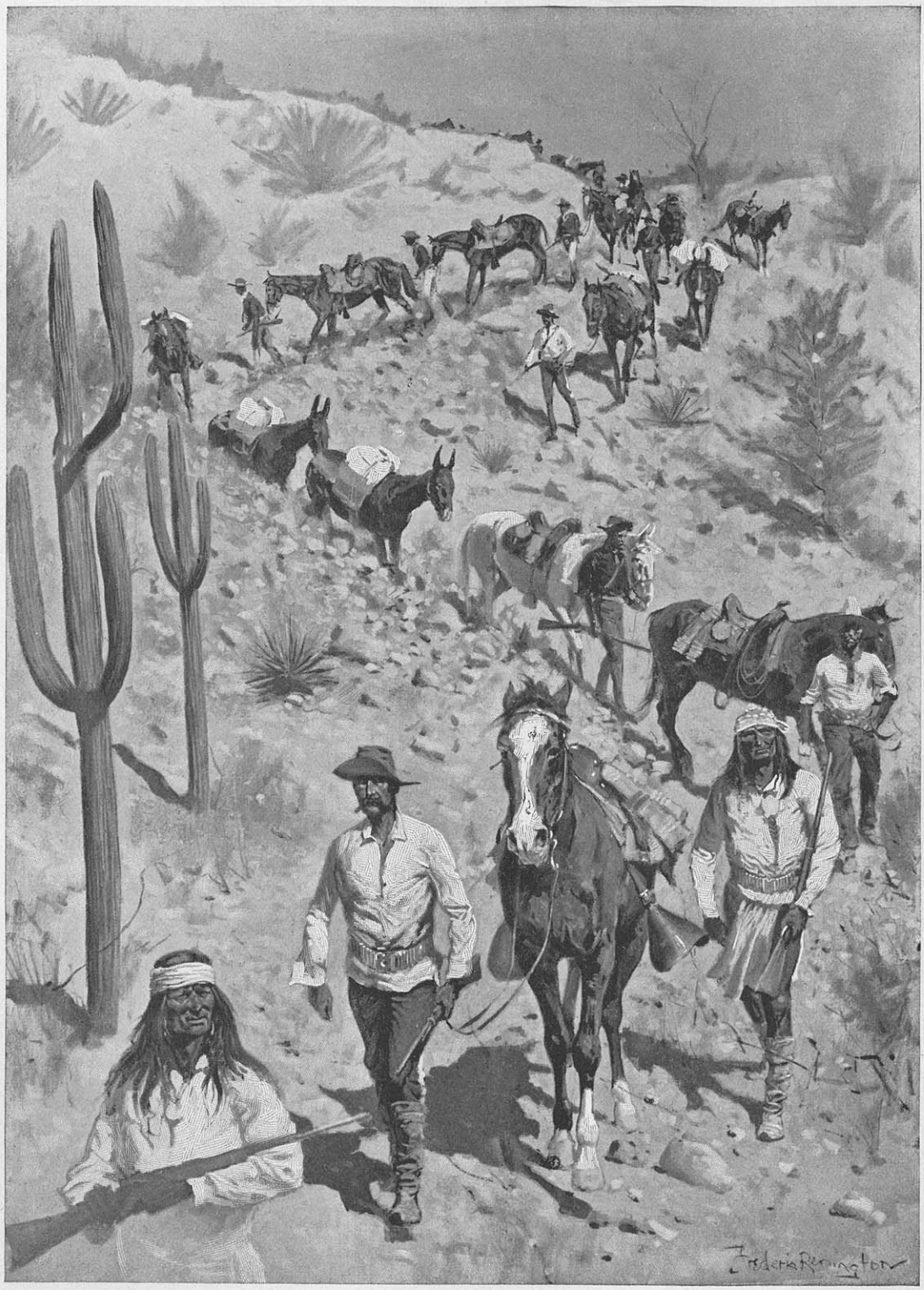
as a great joke, rolling on the ground, laughing heartily and saying "good gun."

Late the next afternoon we came up with our command, and we then proceeded toward the boundary line. The Indians were very watchful, and when we came near any of our troops we found the Indians were always aware of their presence before we knew of it ourselves.

After the surrender at Skeleton Cañon, the Indians who remained with our command were very quiet until we were within four miles of Fort Bowie. On the morning of the day we reached the fort, just before daylight, an officer rode suddenly down upon the Indian camp and stampeded it; and when daylight came we found seven of them had disappeared. The party consisted of three men, three women and a child, one of the men being the brother of Natchez. Lieutenant Johnson and myself were sent with small parties in pursuit of them, but though we each traveled about two thousand miles — going far down into Mexico, he on the east and I on the west of the Sierra Madre — we could not even learn their fate, though Johnson heard rumors of their being killed in Mexico.

During our pursuit of the Apaches, which lasted from April to August, we were sometimes very near them without seeing them. One day Horn and myself were out after deer, in the hope of being able to obtain something to eat, and while we were climbing the side of a cañon, we were both shot at and our faces filled with dust. Doubtless our unseen assailants were hostiles. Again, on another occasion, while going across the mountains to a Mexican town in quest of information, I found tracks of the Indians not over thirty minutes old. I knew this was so because they had been made since a heavy rain, which had occurred only a few minutes before. Two men had been killed on this trail shortly before, and the body of one was being taken into town as I came in.

The little Mexican towns that we passed were usually walled; every ranch was fortified, as well as every village, and the houses were loopholed for musketry. The people were primitive to a degree, many of them scarcely knowing whether Mexico was a republic or an empire, and nearly every family had lost some relative or friend through the Apaches. The Indians always chose this section of country when endeavoring to make their escape from the United States troops, and pursuit was especially difficult from the fact that the region was entirely unknown to us and almost impassable. The Indians would purposely lead us into places where there was no water, and sometimes all of that liquid that we had to drink would be as thick as jelly — stuff that had stood in rock tanks for



LAWTON'S PURSUIT OF GERONIMO.—SEE PAGE 486.

months. At other times they would set fire to the grass and bushes. Although the men for this expedition were picked with the greatest care, only about one-third of them endured the long fatigue, and we had practically three sets of officers. Only Lawton and I of the whole command went through the entire campaign from beginning to end.

One who does not know this country cannot realize what this kind of service means — marching every day in the intense heat, the rocks and earth being so torrid that the feet are blistered and rifle-barrels and everything metallic being so hot that the hand cannot touch them without getting burnt. It is a country rough beyond description, covered everywhere with cactus and full of rattlesnakes and other undesirable companions of that sort. The rain, when it does come, comes as a tropical tempest, transforming dry cañons into raging torrents in an instant. The small white-tail deer abounded and served us well as a meat ration. It was no unusual sight to see half a dozen brought into camp and disposed of in as many minutes. "Meat, and lots of it," that was the cry while we were doing our hardest work, and it seemed to be required to make good the waste. We had no tents and little or no baggage of any kind except rations and ammunition. Suits of underclothing formed our uniform and moccasins covered our feet.

There can be no doubt that the terms of surrender were fully understood by all the Indians. In all the talks at which I was present they seemed to comprehend perfectly that the surrender was to be unconditional, and they were told from the very first that the intention was to send them away. Geronimo only said:

"If you will tell me that the General will do all he can to save our lives, we will come in; but if we are going to be killed anyhow, we might just as well fight it out right here, because, in that case, a few of us might possibly get away."

The only assurance that was given him was that American soldiers did not kill their prisoners.

In the vicinity of Fronteras in their interviews with Captain Lawton the Indians asked terms and privileges similar to those they had before enjoyed. They sent me two messages through the interpreters, and made most urgent appeals to see the department commander. I replied to Captain Lawton that their requests could not be granted, and that he was fully authorized to receive their surrender as prisoners of war to troops in the field. They were told that the troops were brave and honest men, and

that if they threw down their arms and placed themselves at the mercy of the officers, they would not be killed, but held as prisoners of war subject, of course, to higher legal authority. They promised to surrender to me in person, and for eleven days Captain Lawton's command moved north; Geronimo's and Natchez' camp moving parallel with it and frequently camping near it.