

ARTICLE.

No.38. Vol.10.  

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SUBJECT.

White Bird Canon, Battle of,  

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ARTICLE

No. 28, Vol. 10.

SUBJECT

White Bird Canyon, Middle of.

(7)

~~Headquarters Division of the Pacific,~~

~~PRESIDIO OF SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.,~~

....., 188

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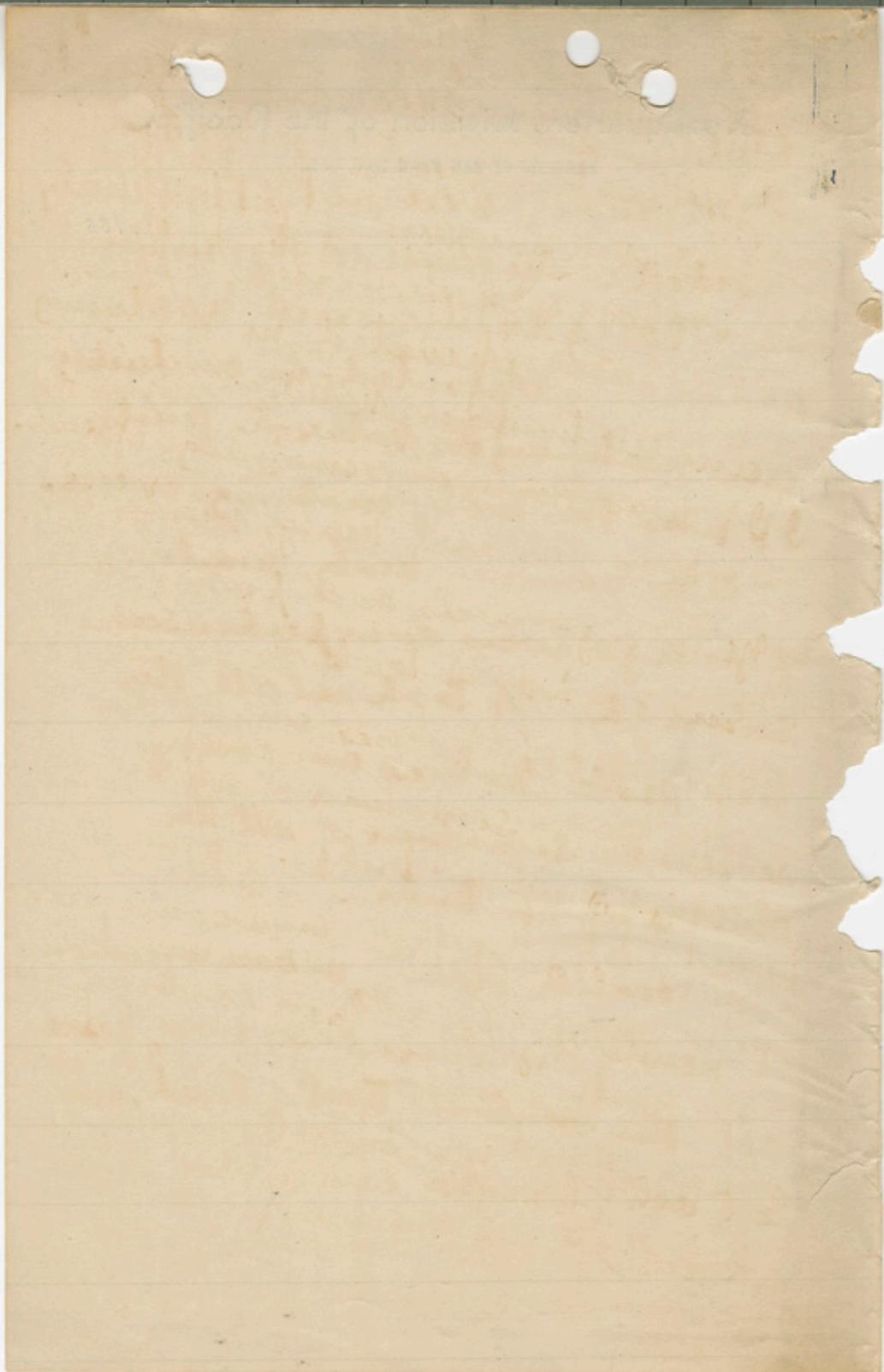
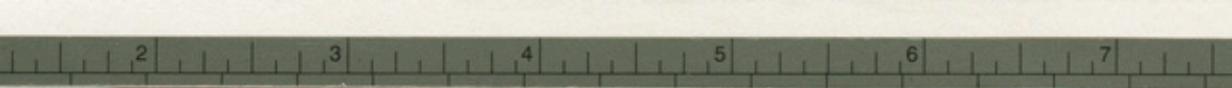
Battle of White Bird Cañon

by

Major General O. O. Howard.

U. S. Army.

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The history of White Bird Canyon.

The Nez Percé Indians, like the Children of Israel under the Son of Solomon were in 18877 hopelessly divided. The cause of the rupture had long existed and had gradually operated in nurturing and maturing its natural fruits. It was the treaty-making process.

The primary treaty, made years ago was comprehensive enough. It took in all the Nez Percé homes and easily secured the signatures of all the chiefs of the tribe.

The second treaty, <sup>made</sup> in consequence of newly discovered mines, <sup>paired</sup> off the original tract of land, and left out <sup>old</sup> Joseph and many of his adherents. The third treaty, secured

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, as was the second, in the interest<sup>2</sup>  
of some enterprising frontiersman,  
cut down the Nez Percé lands  
to still narrower limits, and  
left outside not only Joseph's  
Band,<sup>as Wallowah</sup> but Too-hul-hul-foot's  
on the Snake river, White Bird's  
on the Salmon and Hush-hush-  
cut's ~~beyond~~ beyond the North  
Border.<sup>old</sup> Joseph, the stern old  
champion of opposition died in  
1873 - his two sons Joseph &

Ollicutt in some Indian way  
<sup>Together</sup> succeeded to his <sup>chieftainship</sup> ~~authority~~.  
Joseph, usually called "young  
Joseph", when war came, was  
vested with supreme authority;  
but his brother kept close to  
him and was to him, as it were  
a chief of staff. Joseph was at



his period about forty years of 3  
age. He was a tall, finely propor-  
tioned man of a uniformly serious,  
demure countenance. He  
dressed in the wild Indian style,  
painted his face, braided his  
hair, and prided himself in  
his blanket adornment. Allcutt  
was apparently younger <sup>though later than he,</sup> of  
a lively, impulsive turn and  
much more inclined to fraternize  
with white men.

The outside Nez Percés were <sup>named</sup> called  
in order and in the journals  
and reports "non-treaty Indians".  
Those <sup>within</sup> ~~at~~ the boundaries <sup>far the most numerous</sup> were  
designated "Treaty-Indians" or  
"Treaty-Nez Percés".



4  
... as the treaty-negotiations  
were in progress, the white  
settlers were pressing their ranges  
and their ranches ever nearer  
& nearer to the small final  
Reservation. ~~White~~ <sup>by white men</sup> whiskey selling,  
mutual quarrels, petty feuds, the  
death of an Indian now & then,  
superstitious Indian demands,  
spiritism with rizzard performances,  
such as wild dances & incessant  
drummings, the killing of cattle, the  
opening of fences, ~~theft~~ <sup>thefts</sup> of ponies,  
excessive gambling, periodic horse-  
racing annoying the neighbors, and  
other pernicious doings ~~kept~~  
with abundant fault finding from  
both white & red men, <sup>had during the</sup> legends  
& perpetrated anything but good  
feeling.



Notwithstanding the reiterated 5  
statement that "no Nez-Perce  
ever <sup>had</sup> killed a white man", the  
settlers <sup>far + near</sup> were <sup>constantly</sup> apprehensive of  
an Indian war. Every annual  
assemblage of the Savages for  
any alleged purpose, <sup>or new</sup> created alarm.

At last the Government agents  
insisted that these chronic  
difficulties should cease and they  
begged for a Commission of men  
who should have power & <sup>the people</sup>  
influence with the Executive &  
with the Indians. <sup>such a Commission</sup>

~~At last~~ <sup>was organized</sup> <sup>came from Washington</sup> <sup>It finally</sup>  
in the fall of 1846, and set at

^ Fort Lapwai - a beautiful Army  
Post situated in the midst of  
the present Nez Perce Reserve.  
The civilized & Christian Indians, <sup>round about,</sup> both  
Protestant & Catholic, came to this



6  
Council; and so did <sup>a portion of</sup> the wild  
Indians also. After many  
earnest meetings, though no  
agreement came of them, the  
Commission decided that  
the "non-treaty neg-pees" must  
come within the limits ~~last~~  
prescribed in the <sup>last</sup> treaty. The  
Executive <sup>at Washington</sup> approved the Commission  
report. The Sapsuai Indian  
Agent was instructed to carry  
out the ~~Commission's~~ decision.  
And the Department Commander  
with his troops was to be at  
the call of the Indian Agent - i.e.  
to use influence & force, if  
required, to bring the scattered people  
in & distribute them within the  
boundaries to their newly allotted  
grounds.



The manuscript is a copy of the  
 first volume of the series on  
 the history of the Republic of  
 the United States of America  
 from the first settlement of  
 the country to the present  
 time. It is written in a  
 clear and concise style and  
 contains a great deal of  
 interesting information  
 regarding the early history  
 of the country. The author  
 is a well known historian  
 and his work is highly  
 respected. This volume  
 covers the period from the  
 first settlement of the  
 country to the year 1789.  
 It is a valuable work  
 for anyone interested in  
 the history of the United  
 States.

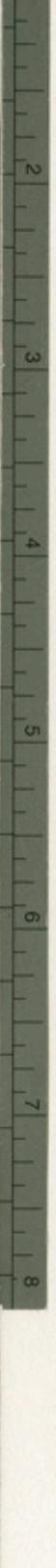
The successive efforts of  
the Indian agent, Mr John  
Monteith, and of the Commander  
of the Geographical Department  
General Howard, seemed at  
first during the Spring months  
of 1897 to be attended with  
gratifying success.

Joseph, White-Bird and  
Kush-kush-ent<sup>had</sup> promised  
collectively & severally to move  
upon the Nez Percé Reservation by  
the middle of June.

And they all did  
approach ~~the~~ and encamp  
near the edge of the Reservation.

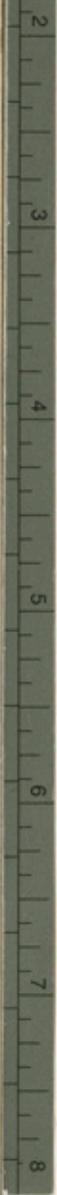
Gen. Howard who arrived at  
Fort Lapwai the 14<sup>th</sup> of June, found  
every thing as he wrote "peace-like and  
happy as home". But toward evening

See page 100 of the book  
written by Mr. J. P. Brown  
on the subject of the  
history of the  
state of Ohio - a  
very interesting  
work. The  
author has  
gathered  
together a  
great deal of  
information  
and has  
written it  
in a very  
clear and  
concise  
manner.  
It is  
well  
worth  
reading  
and  
is  
one  
of  
the  
best  
works  
on  
the  
subject  
of  
Ohio  
history  
that  
I  
have  
seen.



Col. Perry, the Post Commander, (8  
received a letter <sup>written by</sup> ~~from~~ Mr J. P. Brown  
from Mt Idaho - a village seventy  
miles distant <sup>+</sup> near the <sup>non-tribe</sup> "Indians"  
Camp. Mr Brown was not  
get <sup>much</sup> alarmed but he warned <sup>the Colonel</sup> ~~us~~  
of an apparent preparation to  
resist any force that should  
be sent against them.

Early the 15<sup>th</sup> a small detachment  
with an interpreter sped on toward  
the Indian camp to gather  
information. At half past  
four <sup>of the same day</sup> the detachment returned  
bringing in Mr West a half-breed and  
the brother of Looking Glass, a  
handsome <sup>holistic</sup> sub-chieftain who lived  
within the limits <sup>but</sup> whose position  
between the contending factions was  
not yet well defined. <sup>the messenger</sup> ~~the~~ brother  
however was <sup>than</sup> the pronounced friend  
of the white man.  
The messengers put into our hands



I received the following  
 information from the  
 office of the  
 Department of  
 the Interior  
 regarding the  
 land in question.

The following  
 is a list of the  
 land in question  
 as shown on the  
 map of the  
 Department of  
 the Interior  
 dated 1877.  
 The land is  
 situated in  
 the County of  
 the State of  
 California.  
 The land is  
 bounded on the  
 north by the  
 land of the  
 State of  
 California,  
 on the south  
 by the  
 land of the  
 State of  
 California,  
 on the east  
 by the  
 land of the  
 State of  
 California,  
 and on the  
 west by the  
 land of the  
 State of  
 California.

a second letter from Mr Brown. (9.)

The startling news it contained was glanced at by the Commanding officer and then read aloud to the anxious group of friends, who in painful <sup>rager for the contacts</sup> suspense had been watching his <sup>during his hasty perusal</sup> face. He read

as follows:

Mount Idaho of A. M.  
Friday June 15, 1877.

Commanding Officer  
Fort Lapwai:

Last night we started a messenger to you who reached Cottonwood House, where he was wounded and driven back by the Indians. The people of Cottonwood [18 miles from Mt. Idaho] undertook to come here during the night; were interrupted, all wounded or killed. Parties this morning found some of them on the Prairie. The wounded will be here shortly, when we will get full particulars. The whites are



injured, about forty of them, in <sup>(11)</sup>  
getting the wounded. One thing  
is certain: we are in the midst of  
an Indian war. Every family is  
here, and we will have taken all the  
precautions we can, but are  
poorly armed. We want arms  
ammunition and help at once.  
Do not delay a moment. We have  
a report that some whites were  
killed yesterday on Salmon river.  
No later word from them; fear that  
the people are all killed, as a party of  
Indians were seen going that  
way last night. Send to Lewiston  
and hasten up. You cannot  
imagine people in a worse  
condition than they are here.  
Mr West has volunteered to go to  
Lapwai; rely on his statements.  
Yours truly

L. P. Brown

Then followed a post script:



x x x The wounded have come <sup>(11)</sup>  
in. - Mr Day mortally; Mrs  
Norton with both legs broken; Moore  
shot through the hip; Norton killed  
and left in the road six miles from  
here. Teams were attacked on  
the road & abandoned. The Indians  
have possession of the prairie and  
threaten Mount Idaho. All the  
people are here and we will  
do the best we can. x x x  
Hurry up; hurry! Rely on this  
Indians' statement; I have known  
him for a long time; he is with  
us.

L. P. Brown

Peace had now fled & Mary <sup>indeed</sup> had  
come. General Howard wrote  
Mr Brown at <sup>5. P. M.</sup> ~~the~~ - "Dear Sir:

Your two dispatches are received.  
I have sent forward two companies  
of Cavalry to your relief. They  
leave tonight. Other help will be  
en route as soon as it can be brought  
up. I am glad you are so cool and

*[Faint, illegible handwriting on aged paper, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side. The text is mirrored and difficult to decipher.]*



ready. Cheer the people. Help shall be prompt and complete. Hewston has been notified.

Yours truly,  
O.O. Howard

Talking with him since. Shelter of the Infantry Colonel Perry with his ninety enlisted men all well mounted set out that very night, the 15<sup>th</sup> of June for Mount Idaho - while General Howard remained <sup>at Sappaway</sup> to gather up his scattered garrisons & bring them to the front.

The murders and wounding of citizens were numerous - about forty in all. The outrages committed beggar description. The stories, which in youth have seemed but unreal tales of horror, ~~white~~ <sup>inventions</sup> the Savages have seized & tomahawked helpless females & innocent children, were at this time around Mount Idaho portrayed in actual life. The day before the troops arrived was



for the survivors one of  
indescribable terror and  
anguish. Perry pressed forward  
his horses, long pursued to such  
forced marches. Before noon  
of the 16<sup>th</sup> he reached the

deserted Bottom-wood house,  
whence <sup>36 hours before</sup> the Norton family had ~~the~~  
~~not~~ issued <sup>vainly attempted to flee</sup> ~~for~~ for refuge  
toward <sup>the south</sup> ~~Mount Gales~~; by

Sun down he was at Grayville  
- a small ~~settlement~~ hamlet a

few miles north of Mount Gales.  
<sup>Here numbers of citizens</sup> ~~some~~ had

come out to meet <sup>the Indians</sup> ~~the troops~~ The horses  
were very tired and the men

had their fatigue aggravated as  
is always the case by the jaded  
animals. Yet the citizens plead

for an immediate advance. They  
feared that the Indians would get  
away. They predicted an easy victory.

The first part of the paper is a  
reproduction of the original  
manuscript. The paper is  
of a yellowish color and  
the handwriting is in  
dark ink. The paper is  
of a standard size and  
weight. The paper is  
of a standard quality and  
is suitable for use in  
any office or business.



and declared <sup>with the savages</sup> they were not for (14)  
off. Gov. Perry had his eyes judgment  
over-borne and again sounded  
the advance. About a ~~dozen~~  
dozen citizens, as many as  
could arm themselves accompanied  
the little squadron. While  
Perry & his command are tailing  
on through an other heavy  
night, let us see <sup>where the wild Indians are</sup> what they  
are doing. Two depths of good  
conceive a ~~deep~~ river, perhaps  
a thousand feet across, plunging  
along like a mountain torrent.  
with its bed filled with boulders  
and its banks jagged with  
precipitate cliffs & <sup>immense</sup> broken rocks;  
such ~~was~~ <sup>is</sup> the famous Salmon  
a tributary of the <sup>almost</sup> Indian Snake.  
The part near the bridges of

The first thing I noticed when I stepped  
 out of the train was the smell of  
 the sea. It was a fresh, clean  
 smell that I had never before.  
 The air was cool and crisp, and  
 the sun was shining brightly in  
 the sky. I felt a sense of  
 freedom and adventure. I was  
 about to embark on a journey  
 that would change my life.  
 I had heard so much about the  
 sea, and now I was finally  
 experiencing it. The waves were  
 crashing against the shore, and  
 the sound was so beautiful.  
 I had never before. The sea was  
 so beautiful, and I was so  
 lucky to be here. I was about  
 to embark on a journey that  
 would change my life. I had  
 heard so much about the sea,  
 and now I was finally experiencing  
 it. The waves were crashing  
 against the shore, and the sound  
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 before. The sea was so beautiful,  
 and I was so lucky to be here.

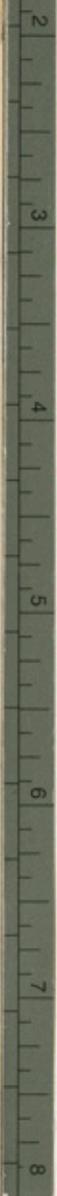
15  
The hostile Indians was  
blowing westerly. From  
this river's bank toward the  
north White-Bird-Canyon  
opens back like a broad  
place from a city-avenue.  
The Canyon is deep. White  
Bird Creek quietly courses  
along in its bottom.

At the Canyon's head there is  
a narrower ravine that  
ascends to the lofty table land.  
down this ravine is a smaller  
stream trickling along among  
thickets of small trees & bushes.  
Beside this stream a narrow  
roadway - rather a horse trail  
than a wagon road - finds its  
way to the low ground embraced  
in the broad Canyon. This trail

*[Faint, illegible handwriting on aged paper, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side. The text is mirrored and difficult to decipher.]*



16  
dunes suddenly <sup>to the left</sup> at the lower  
level and winds off past  
several detached hilllocks or  
"buttes", till near the large  
White-Bird Creek it <sup>gradually</sup> changes <sup>direction</sup>  
again to the south. Just  
beyond the bend <sup>is a sort of bridge with</sup> ~~two~~ <sup>two or three</sup> more  
"buttes" a few rods apart - the  
smaller is only a rounded hill  
perhaps forty feet high  
with gentle slopes. The <sup>new</sup> other  
was irregular, somewhat  
parallel with the Creek  
and having an abrupt face  
toward the approach and crowned  
with broken rocks of considerable  
size. Behind these "buttes"  
the <sup>smoke</sup> ~~smoke~~ <sup>of the 17th of June</sup> ~~at dawn~~  
the smoke was ascending from  
the Indian lodges. These <sup>"buttes"</sup> + others  
further east were Joseph's watch towers.



The first thing I noticed  
 when I stepped out  
 morning of rain - thick - the  
 clouds + the warm wetness  
 melting for hours, whole  
 the entrance of the Kold  
 this was not a typical  
 kind of winter flight down  
 the corridor across the shaft  
 feature but rather like  
 a white door felt on first  
 New surface underneath  
 than there to a wet  
 weather to be could be  
 and felt as if it were  
 they knew the way  
 the necessity of the  
 know which one to  
 brought to the  
 the advantage of  
 and had  
 sent off to the

at the first glimmer of daylight (197).  
As Perry began to descend the  
ravine - trail - ~~the~~  
Joseph & his warriors who were  
watching for him, detected  
the advance of the soldiers -  
they were not without hesitation,  
many <sup>are unprepared</sup> counseled flight down  
the canyon & across the swift  
Salmon, but leaders like Joseph  
& White Bird <sup>said "pop" they</sup> felt confident in  
their superior numbers <sup>for they had</sup>  
than three to one, <sup>without reckoning</sup> ~~besides~~ the  
women who could be horseholders  
and helpers in a hundred ways.  
They knew the ~~the~~ fewness &  
the newness of the Lapwai  
horses which Perry & Trimble  
brought to the field. They saw  
the advantage of their position. They  
could hold the ridge & "batter" and  
send <sup>arms</sup> ~~off~~ to their left <sup>front</sup> sufficient force



10 Run for around Perry's  
squadron, ascend one of the  
transverse ravines & get to the  
high land <sup>in advance</sup> before the soldiers <sup>would do so</sup>;  
and <sup>so</sup> cut off completely their  
retreat; meanwhile the main  
Indians ~~could~~ <sup>would</sup> stand by the  
ridge and do all they could.

The Indians were already well  
armed with the best of rifles.

It was said that one of their number  
who had descended to herd  
cattle on the slopes & ravines of the  
Selmon & its tributaries had  
furnished the <sup>Indians</sup> command, <sup>treasury</sup>  
with a money chest of several  
thousand dollars. However that  
may be they did not lack in this  
battle for ammunition nor for  
well trained forces.

As I <sup>was</sup> <sup>are</sup> informed Joseph & Olcut  
stayed at the center while the



superiorable White-Bird (19)  
ushed out to assail Perry's flank.

Dirut. Theller preceded the  
column with a small advance-  
guard.

Capt. Perry with the citizen-allies  
and his troop  
came next.

Major Grumble, after an interval,  
with his own troop  
completed the little column  
as it marched along steadily &  
nearly toward the fated  
field.

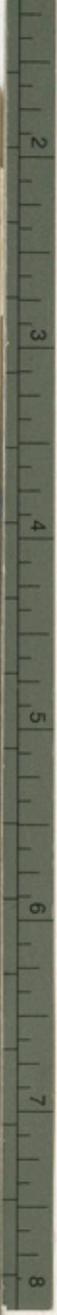
Suddenly the ~~medium~~ ~~skirmishers~~,  
mostly hidden by rocks, trees in  
the ground or ravines, began their  
<sup>hodie</sup> mark. It was an irregular but  
a deadly fire; for remember these  
Savages were "practised shots."

As saddles were being emptied & horses  
getting <sup>desperate</sup> wild, hundreds of these wild

The first of these is the fact that the  
 system of the world is not a simple  
 one. It is a complex one, and it is  
 this complexity which makes it so  
 difficult to understand. It is not  
 enough to say that the world is  
 a system. We must also say that  
 it is a system which is constantly  
 changing. It is not a static  
 system, but a dynamic one. It is  
 this dynamic nature which makes  
 it so difficult to study. We must  
 not only study the system as it  
 is, but we must also study it as  
 it is changing. This is the  
 challenge which we face as we  
 study the world. It is a challenge  
 which we must meet if we are to  
 understand it. It is a challenge  
 which we must meet if we are to  
 improve it. It is a challenge  
 which we must meet if we are to  
 save it. It is a challenge which  
 we must meet if we are to  
 live in it. It is a challenge which  
 we must meet if we are to  
 be part of it. It is a challenge  
 which we must meet if we are to  
 be human. It is a challenge which  
 we must meet if we are to be  
 alive. It is a challenge which we  
 must meet if we are to be  
 free. It is a challenge which we  
 must meet if we are to be  
 happy. It is a challenge which we  
 must meet if we are to be  
 whole. It is a challenge which we  
 must meet if we are to be  
 true. It is a challenge which we  
 must meet if we are to be  
 good. It is a challenge which we  
 must meet if we are to be  
 great. It is a challenge which we  
 must meet if we are to be  
 God.



*[Faint, illegible handwriting, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The text is mirrored and difficult to decipher.]*



some becoming madurs of (21)  
the horses which were not well  
trained and never good at a  
stand up fight. who shall  
describe <sup>it all</sup> the noise and resulting  
confusion? who shall tell  
just what was done or not  
done? Lieutenant Parnell, saw  
a throng of Indians supple &  
pawther like <sup>as they are</sup> rushing for the  
highest rocky point. He sent  
with a sergeant & six men.  
and sharply <sup>with carbines rang</sup> cracked their  
carbines. The <sup>hostile</sup> throng <sup>was checked &</sup> crept back  
& down for better cover.  
The bugler on whose party relied  
for calls about the din of battle  
fell mortally stricken. Some  
cavalry men had turned & were  
galloping to the rear. Two citizen volun-  
teer men manned & the remainder

*[Faint, mirrored handwriting, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the page. The text is illegible due to fading and bleed-through.]*



ran back & surrendered their <sup>(2)</sup>  
"butte". Both flanks were <sup>now</sup>  
enveloped and the line was <sup>already</sup>  
broken when Perry & <sup>Trimble</sup> ~~Farnell~~  
came together and exchanged  
a word.

"Can't go to Salmon River Trimble!"  
"No, that's anihilation."

First <sup>after this</sup> Perry undertook an orderly  
retreat to a new & strong position,  
but <sup>under such leadership</sup> it could not be secured.

The panic stricken men  
blinded & cried out anything  
in their distress & urged their  
comrades to run for their lives,  
and <sup>from</sup> faster & faster the Indians  
came on. Balder now,  
hardly covering themselves <sup>at all</sup>  
mounted & dismounted they  
pressed forward, killing the  
wounded and chasing individuals



who <sup>managed to</sup> ~~trayal~~ <sup>man</sup> from the <sup>man</sup> ~~bad~~ (23)

or who were thrown from disabled horses. Lieut. Meller was dismounted. - Powell & Trimble <sup>at that time</sup> saw that he was rescued and again mounted.

As guns without saying it that the battle was really over. A panic and rout <sup>were</sup> consequent, for the wild Indians were relentless.

Yet the splendid American horses <sup>by their speed</sup> enabled a few to outstrip White Bird's flankers by taking a shorter way to the heights above. Perry & Powell then organized a new unit and caused <sup>by their repeated charges</sup> & firings all <sup>their friends</sup> who had passed them.

But many, many, & the brave Meller among them perished before they could struggle up the <sup>steep</sup> sides of the bloody White Bird Canyon.

Subsequently the history of their

*[Faint, illegible handwriting on aged paper]*



courageous struggle for life (24)  
could be traced by the spots where  
their bodies were found. Here  
& there in groups and then <sup>alone</sup> like  
advanced pickets <sup>they were</sup> ~~scattered~~ <sup>left</sup> along  
the steep & in the gulches where  
they had sorely but vainly  
sought shelter from their  
merciless pursuers.

A personal witness said: "The  
Indians fought us to within  
four miles of Mount Idaho,  
and only gave us up on seeing  
we could not be driven farther,  
except at our own gait."

Of the devoted ninety, so ~~bold~~  
heartily & strong, <sup>& confident</sup> who had three  
evenings before gone out from  
Fort Lapwai to help the citizens  
of Mount Idaho & stop the  
murders, thirty two were slain,  
and <sup>most of</sup> the remainder so thoroughly

*[Faint, illegible handwritten text, possibly bleed-through from the reverse side of the page.]*



remoralized. <sup>for a long time</sup> ~~that~~ ~~the very name~~ (25)  
mere rumor of ~~an~~ a hostile  
advance inspired them with  
terror.

Imagine the feelings of the officers  
families at Fort Lapwai, - when  
the news doubly exaggerated by  
Indian messengers began to  
come in - Even General Perry's  
first letter made it worse

than the Guster massacre.  
He begged her Howard to break the  
dreadful tidings of her husband's  
death to Mrs Teller. When he  
slowly made his way to her  
quarters she approached the  
worst. She did not have to be  
told for she read the unwelcome  
truth in his face. The shock  
however was greater than one  
could describe.

Such was General Howard's introduction  
to the famous Nez Percé Campaign.

