

Letter from Fort Gaston.

FORT GASTON,
Jan. 28th, 1864.

MR. EDITOR TIMES:— Affairs have taken a change here. The long spell of inactivity is broken at last. Last Monday evening Lieut. Col. Whipple received intelligence that Big Jim's band was in the valley, just across the Trinity. Late in the night, two large detachments of men, under Lieutenants Middleton and Hempfield, crossed the river as quietly as possible. The moment the crossing began signal guns were fired by the Indians in the Ceonultin ranch. By this it will be seen that their system of spies is perfect, making a surprise impossible. The ranch was invested as soon as possible, Capt. Pico's company taking station on this side the Trinity to prevent the Indians from swimming over and escaping. Not an Indian man was found in the ranch, and but two, or three old squaws. Everything indicated that the Indians had left in all haste. Early next morning a few Indians were found near Jonathan Lyon's farm; several shots were exchanged in which one Indian was killed and two others mortally wounded. "Dave"—a "jennin of color," was mistaken for an Indian and fired upon, one ball passing through his leg. The Indian killed was known as Big Harry, and was brother to the notorious warrior Mike; he carried a good gun, well supplied with ammunition, and was an excellent shot.

It now turns out that Handsome Billy, leader of the late raid, was badly, if not mortally wounded on Salmon. He is reported dead—the report is not to be credited.

From all indications the war has opened here in all earnestness, the men in consequence are highly elated, and Col. Whipple is growing very popular. Capt. Pico with twenty of his company start this morning to escort the Government train through to Arcata. The Capt. is very active and energetic, and I think will do good service in the district.

As the fashion is I bid you adios,

NRELY.

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