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Christina Edson

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CHRISTINA EDSON.

FEBRUARY 19, 1890.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

Mr. DE LANO, from the Committee on Pensions, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 4810.]

The Committee on Pensions, to whom was referred the bill H. R. 4810, have had the same under consideration and beg leave to report as follows:

No case has come before our consideration more strongly appealing to the sense of justice of this Congress than the one which we now report.

Christina Geisel, now Christina Edson, emigrated in the early years from the Atlantic States to the shores of the Pacific, and with her husband, John Geisel, and their little family they settled upon the shores of the Pacific Ocean, near the mouth of the Rogue River, in Oregon. Their house was upon the then traveled trail leading from the coast of California into Oregon. They were comfortably fixed when they settled about the premises in occasional services. The village of the Indian tribe of the "Too-toot-nas" was 8 miles distant up the Rogue River. Very little apprehension existed among the settlers as to any hostile intent on the part of the Indians.

Ben Wright, the Indian agent in the vicinity, and known in the Pacific States as a daring Indian fighter, gave positive assurances that no danger existed.

On the night of February 22, 1856, the settlers for some miles around attended a ball at Rogue River in observance of Washington's birthday. The Indians expecting to find the country comparatively defenseless, owing to the assemblage at the ball, concluded upon a general massacre of the whites who remained at home. Owing to the illness of one of the children, none of the Geisel family attended the ball.

About midnight Mr. Geisel was awakened by a rap upon the door and by hearing their Indian servant saying that he desired to obtain something to eat. Upon this the door was opened, and immediately several stalwart Indians rushed in and commenced their attack, with long drawn knives and tomahawks, upon Mr. Geisel.

Mrs. Geisel, leaving her three-weeks-old infant in bed and though quite feeble, rushed to her husband's rescue. In the conflict she received a severe wound. Her husband was soon overcome and fell dead in her presence. She was securely bound and, with her infant and a seven year old daughter, was forced without. There she witnessed her three boys, aged , , , years, respectively, taken from their little

beds in an adjoining room, and while piteously begging for life they were, one by one, slaughtered in her presence.

After rifling the house of all such articles as they desired, they applied the torch to it and compelled their captives to witness its destruction, with the burning of the bodies of the slain. Mrs. Geisel, bare-footed and clad in her thin gown, and with her two children, were then marched to the camp of the Too-toot-nas, and while en route witnessed the burning of many houses and the massacre of their neighbors. Great indignities were inflicted upon the captives by the Indians in the village of the hostiles. They were kept prisoners, under strict watch, for two weeks, when they were exchanged or ransomed by the white people who were fortified at the mouth of the Rogue River.

During her captivity Mrs. Geisel took careful notes and sketches of what she observed. She discovered that several allied tribes were constructing very strong fortifications from which they proposed making raids upon all the surrounding country, in California and Oregon, and thus complete the destruction already begun. Mrs. Geisel discovered a concealed approach through the mountain gorges into this fortification and village by which, if it could be assailed in that direction by sufficient force, defense would be without avail. She also learned from conversations among the Indians, in their own language, which she interpreted, that great preparations were in progress for a raid on the people of the town of Port Orford, 30 miles distant, where they expressed great confidence of exterminating the men and children and making captives of the women. The time was fixed for their departure and surprise. This information she disclosed to the settlers in the fort immediately upon her ransom, and they sent forward to Port Orford a swift traveling messenger to inform the people of their approaching danger. Port Orford was at once placed in a condition of defense, and when the Indians appeared before it they were repulsed, and returned to their camp on Rogue River.

Soldiers and volunteers were soon on the ground, and availing themselves of the information communicated by Mrs. Geisel, they made a sudden assault upon the Indian fortifications by way of the approaches discovered by the captive woman, and after a closely contested battle they completely routed and killed many of the Indian warriors. This defeat so dispirited them that they never rallied again, and were afterward the most peaceable Indians on the Pacific coast. The Rogue River war, which extended over a large portion of southern Oregon, was substantially ended at this place. It is a part of the written history of the Pacific Coast States and Territories. The testimony of the present judge of the county, who escaped the massacre, and who was in the fort at the time, and one of those who assisted in the ransom of the captives, and also the testimony of the commander of the volunteers who dislodged the Indians from their stronghold, as well as the sworn narrative of Mrs. Geisel herself, is all before us.

Your committee find, from the facts, that the services rendered by Mrs. Geisel were of precious value to many people and to a large portion of northern California and the southern Oregon Territory; that many lives were preserved and much property saved by her timely information. She is now aged, infirm, and poor, and without a home, although kindly provided for by the grateful people of the same county in which she still resides. We therefore recommend the passage of the bill.