

THE WAR OF THE REBELLION : A COMPILATION OF THE OFFICIAL RECORDS OF THE UNION AND CONFEDERATE ARMIES

Prepared, under the direction of the secretary of war

By

Lieut. Col. Robert N. Scott, Third U. S. Artillery

Series I—Volume XV

Pages 1093—1095

Findings of a General Court—Martial in the cases of Brig. Gen. H. H.
Sibley and Capt. Alexander Grant, C. S. Army.

General Orders
No. 47

Hdqrs. Department Trans—Mississippi,
Shreveport, La. September 25, 1863.

I. At the general court—martial convened at the Headquarters District of Louisiana, pursuant to Paragraph I, Special Orders, No. 91, current series, from these headquarters, and of which Maj. Gen. John G. Walker, Provisional Army of the Confederate States, is president, was arraigned and tried,

1st. Brig. Gen. H. H. Sibley, Provisional Army of the Confederate States, in the following charges and specifications:

Charge 1st.—Disobedience of orders.

Specification 1st.—In this, that Brig. Gen. H. H. Sibley, Provisional Army of the Confederate States, was, on the night of April 12, 1863, at Camp Bisland, ordered by Maj. Gen R. Taylor, commanding District of Western Louisiana, to make the necessary arrangements for an attack, and to attack the enemy at daylight on the 13th of April, 1863, below Camp Bisland, and the said Brig. Gen. H. H. Sibley did not make the necessary arrangements for said attack, and did not make the attack on the morning of April 13, 1863, as ordered to do. This at Camp Bisland, La., April 12 and 13, 1863.

Specification 2d.—In this, that the said Brig. Gen H. H. Sibley, Provisional Army of the Confederate States, was ordered by Maj. Gen. R. Taylor, commanding, to remove the sick and wounded officers and soldiers of the C. S. Army from Camp Bisland and transport the same from Franklin, La., to New Iberia, La., in wagons, carts, carriages, and ambulances; but he, the said Brig. Gen H. H. Sibley, ordered the said sick and wounded officers and soldiers of the C. S. Army, and certain prisoners who had been captured from the enemy, to be placed on the steamboat Cornie, and the said steamboat having on board the sick and wounded prisoners aforesaid, was ordered by the said Brig. Gen H. H. Sibley to proceed up the Bayou Teche, from Franklin to New Iberia, although he, the said Brig. Gen H. H. Sibley, had been informed by Major-General Taylor, commanding, that the enemy was in position on said bayou, between Franklin and New Iberia, and commanded the passage of the same between those points; and by these orders of the said Brig. Gen. H. H. Sibley the steamboat Cornie and a large number of sick and wounded officers and soldiers of the C. S. Army were captured by the enemy, and the same Federal prisoners were recaptured by the enemy. All this between Camp Bisland and Franklin, on the 13th and 14th days of April, 1863.

Specification 3d—In this, that on the 14th day of April, 1863, at Franklin, La., Maj. Gen. R. Taylor, commanding, ordered that said Brig. Gen. H. H. Sibley, Provisional Army of the Confederate States, to place himself at the head of the column, then retreating from Franklin toward New Iberia, to conduct and direct the same, to prevent straggling and disorderly conduct by the troops, and to select a suitable encampment for the army for the night of the 14th April, 1863; the said army being closely pursued by a largely superior force of the enemy; but he, the said Brig. Gen. H. H. Sibley, without obtaining permission from his commanding officer, without reporting to his commanding officer his intention, without applying for permission to leave his command, and without communicating the orders and instructions aforesaid to the officer next in command with the said retreating column, did leave his command, and retire toward New Iberia by a road different from that taken by the said troops, and did fail and neglect to execute the order aforesaid, by which said failure and neglect to obey the orders aforesaid great confusion was created, much straggling occurred among the troops, and the safety of the army and its train was

seriously endangered. This on the march between Franklin and New Iberia, on the 14th of April, 1863.

Charge 2d.—Unofficer-like conduct.

Specification 1st.—In this, that on the 14th April, 1863, Brig. Gen. H. H. Sibley, Provisional Army of the Confederate States, having been ordered by Major-General Taylor, commanding, to conduct the retreating column from Franklin toward New Iberia while Col. Thomas Green, Fifth Texas Mounted Volunteers, in command of the rear guard, was covering the retreat, did send an order by one of his staff officers to the said Colonel Green, to fall back in haste through the town of Franklin, stating that the enemy was advancing on the only road by which the retreat could be made, and this order, given by Brig. Gen. H. H. Sibley when the enemy were not advancing as stated by him, was not communicated to the major-general commanding, who was in the rear, and personally superintending the retreat through Franklin; and by the falling orders, the retreat of the force under Brigadier-General Mouton, then holding the enemy in check to the right of and above Franklin, was greatly endangered, and Captain [O. J.] Semmes and other officers and crew of the gunboat Diana were captured by the enemy.

Specification 2d.—In this, that the said Brig. Gen. H. H. Sibley, provisional Army of the Confederate States, having been ordered by Major General Taylor, commanding, to superintend and conduct the retreat of the forces from Camp Bisland, and the removal of the train, and to give his personal supervision and attention to the same, did fail and neglect so to do, but went to his bed and remained in it during the greater portion of the night, without giving his personal management to the movement. This at Camp Bisland, on the night of the 13th of April and the morning of the 14th of April, 1863.

To which charges and specifications the accused pleaded “Not Guilty.”

FINDING.

The court, after mature deliberation on the testimony adduced, finds the accused, Brig. Gen. H. H. Sibley, Provisional Army of the Confederate States, as follows:

Of the 1st specification of the 1st CHARGE, “Specification proven, and although the court are of opinion that Brig. Gen. H. H. Sibley (the accused) did not display that promptness in making the necessary arrangements for the attack that he should have done, and is to that

extent censurable, yet they are of the opinion that the evidence shows a train of circumstances that relieve him from the consequences of a deliberate disobedience of orders.”

Of the 2d specification of the 1st CHARGE, “Specification proven (except as to that portion relating to the Federal prisoners), but attach no criminality thereto, inasmuch as the evidence shows that there was no other possible means in Brigadier-General Sibley’s control to save the sick and wounded from capture by the enemy than by using the steamer Cornie.”

Of the 3d specification of the 1st CHARGE, “The facts set forth in the specification proven, and although the court do not acquit the accused of having done all that he should have done in conducting the retreating column, and in the selection of the camp, they are of opinion that the apparent disobedience of orders arose from a misconception of the orders of his superior.”

Of the 1st Charge, “Not Guilty.”

Of the 1st specification to 2d Charge, “Not Guilty.”

Of the 2d specification to 2d Charge, “Not Guilty.”

Of the 2d Charge, “Not Guilty.”

And the court does therefore acquit the accused, Brig. Gen. Henry H. Sibley, Provisional Army of the Confederate States.

2d. Capt. Alexander Grant, serving with the Confederate States gunboat Cotton, on the following charge and specification:

Charge—Disobedience of orders.

Specification.—In this, that the said Alexander Grant, serving with the Provisional Army of the Confederate States, and commanding the boat in the defense of Fort Burton against any attacks which might be made against it by the enemy, and to remain with his said fort, to remove the garrisons guns and stores on the said gunboat Cotton or Mary T., did, although repeatedly ordered and required by Captain Holmes, commanding said fort, to remain, for the purposes above mentioned, on the 20th of April, 1863, leave the said fort and its vicinity with his said boat, without rendering suitable assistance in its defense, and did abandon the fort and its garrison without making proper efforts to assist in their defense or in the removal of the garrison guns and stores.

To which charge and specification the prisoner pleaded "Not Guilty."