
CAMP GIBSON, ON THE CHOUCILLE RIVER, CAL.,
March 24, 1851.

DEAR SIR: My last communication to you was from Stockton, on the 11th ultimo. On the 17th idem, and 5th instant, if I recollect right, joint communications, prepared by Colonel Barbour, were forwarded, and will have given you advice of our movements and operations up to the time of our arrival at Camp Fremont, on the Mariposa. In the latter, I sent a slip intimating my intention to write you by this mail. A letter of this date, now preparing by Colonel B., will convey the gratifying intelligence of our success in treating with six tribes or bands of the Mountain and Mercede Indians, on the 19th instant, at Camp Fremont, and of their amicable settlement upon lands we have allotted to them for their future home between the Mercede and Tuolumne rivers. We gave them all the land they asked for, not considering it of any real value to the government, or to the whites in the neighborhood, except at one or two points where ferries have been established, and some temporary improvements made. A copy of the treaty will be enclosed, and give you the stipulations which Colonel Barbour, who drew it up, thought it expedient to embody. It is not exactly, either in its diction, direct provisions, or restrictions, such as I could have wished; but as it met the approbation of the author, and of Dr. Wozencraft, I yielded my assent, intending to try *my* hand at *treaty writing* upon the next occasion or opportunity. With the general provisions of the compact I fully concur, and trust they will meet the approval of your department, and of the President. The Indians in this portion of California have, I am disposed to think, been greatly underrated, both as to physical and mental powers. Many of them have both courage, shrewdness and enterprise, and are, I think, quite as susceptible of improvement as their brethren east of the Sierra. You will have noticed that to the statement in our last joint letter about their reputed numbers, I dissented. My colleagues gave it as their

opinion that the State has an Indian population of 200,000 to 300,000 souls. By reference to Colonel Fremont's letter to your predecessor, you will find that his estimate is 40,000. This I incline to think is too low, if there are as many on the eastern slope of the Nevada, and on the Klamath, as reported; still I think it approximates the truth much nearer than the estimate referred to from my colleagues. There may be, in the whole State, from 50,000 to 75,000; but this, from all the information I have that I consider reliable, is the extent. We design, in accordance with our instructions, making estimates as we proceed, both of those we treat with and those who refuse; so that, after awhile, we shall know much more about their numbers than we do now. It seems to me, also, that until we do reach some estimate more to be relied on than any we have, the matter of dividing or districting the State had better be postponed, though on this point I have no private or personal views to gratify. In a division with reference to the permanent settlement of the *three agents*, regard should be had not only to natural divisions or lines, but to population, similarity of language, &c.; to ascertain which was, as I understand our instructions, a prime object of the department in sending us out. So far as it regards compacts or negotiations with tribes in different parts of the State at the same time, so as to economize time, and enable us to close up our present work the sooner, no new instructions are, I apprehend, necessary; for it is expressly left with us to act separately, or jointly, as we may deem best. For reasons which I have recently expressed in a private letter to my friend, A. H. H. Stuart, I incline to think the commission had better act jointly, at least for some time yet; though, if on this point either my colleagues or the department think differently, I shall make no objection to separate action. In this event, assuming that an appropriation has been made, and the amount transmitted to me as disbursing agent, I shall be pleased to have instructions as to the amount I am to pay over to each of the other commissioners at the time of separation, or whether I shall furnish them, from time to time, with whatever may be needed, upon their own requisition. From the information I now have, and much more that I hope to collect during the present summer and fall, I incline to the opinion that the Indian relations of Oregon and California should be confided to the superintendency or management of some one man, to reside at San Francisco or Sacramento city; from whence, as a centre, he could communicate with all parts of both States, and at least once a year visit all Indian *pueblos* or *settlements*, and then report the results to the government at Washington. The old Indian laws and regulations will have to be very much modified to suit the Pacific coast. If it shall meet your approval, and I am required to return home during the rainy season next winter, when travelling in this country will be impossible, I will probably be able to furnish you with some important information bearing upon these points. I would also here suggest whether much good might not result from my taking with me to Washington and our large Atlantic cities half a dozen or ten of the principal chiefs of the tribes we may treat with, so as to give them some idea of the power and resources of our country. In my letter to Mr. Stuart I referred to this subject, and presume you will see him before you reply. You will please forward

S. Doc. 4.

69

the enclosed communication, as addressed, to my family at Wheeling. It contains a specimen of gold and some flower-seeds. Please address a copy of your late report to my son, *A. W. McKee, Wheeling, Virginia.*
In haste, but very respectfully, your most obedient servant,

REDICK McKEE.

Hon. LUKE LEA,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington.

P. S.—The only letters I have yet received from you are under date of 9th and 29th November, 1850.

R. McK.
