

No. 104.

NOME LACKEE INDIAN RESERVE, CALIFORNIA, *July, 1858.*

SIR: The reservation system, adopted for the care and support of the California Indians, has so far at least as this place is concerned, met the expectations of its originators, and proved successful during the past year.

The improved condition of the Indians is most apparent. They have in a great measure discarded their old debased habits and mode of life, and are making good progress in useful and industrial pursuits. The amount of land cultivated, and the estimated yield of grain and vegetables for the subsistence of the Indians, demonstrate the practicability of the system, at the same time exhibiting the capacity of the Indians, with proper management, to produce a sufficiency for their own support. There were in cultivation at this place during the past season about twelve hundred acres of land, mostly in wheat. The plowing, seeding and harvesting were almost entirely performed by the Indians, under the supervision of white overseers. Under the superintendency of white men, they are now engaged in threshing and housing the crop. The skill manifested by the Indians in the various branches of agricultural labor is truly astonishing, especially to those who have regarded the California Digger as being but little better than the brute creation. In plowing, there are many of the Indian boys as serviceable and capable as the average of white farm laborers; while in the harvest field, with the cradle, scythe and sickle, they will compare favorably with any other operatives. To make their labor remunerative, however, requires the constant attention and supervision of experienced and practical white men. The Indians left entirely to themselves would do but little towards growing and providing the necessary food for their subsistence. Deprive them of the governing power and protecting care of the white man, but a short time would elapse before they would fall back into their former condition of destitution, misery and want.

Located upon this place proper are about fifteen hundred Indians, remnants of various tribes that formerly made their homes in the valley and foot hills of the Sacramento. This number are generally here, drawing their supplies from the garner filled by their own labor. In addition to the flour, wheat and vegetables furnished to them as regular rations, with fresh meat to the laboring hands during plowing and harvesting periods, they gather large quantities of their natural food, such as seeds and roots, upon which they fare well, and have never been in the least pressed for food.

The Indians resident at this place are classified and numbered as follows:—Nome Lackees, one thousand; Feather river and Yubas (Noi-yu-cans), two hundred and twenty; Uye Lackee, remnants of Battle Creek, Trinity, and tribes from the Upper Sacramento, two hundred and fifty; Noi Mucks, one hundred; making a total of something over fifteen hundred in all. At Nome Cult Indian farm, attached to this reservation and under charge of this agency, there are reported by the overseers to be "about two hundred Yuba or Nevada

Indians, sixty of whom are men." He estimates the Yukas of that valley at three thousand, and adds, "that the most present at the station at a single time during the past year have been two thousand five hundred. At least three hundred Yukas have come upon the farm, for the first time, during the past two months, probably in consequence of the passage of a body of soldiers through the surrounding mountains." Heretofore it has been impossible to confine the Yukas within the limits of the valley, not having had sufficient food for them; but no embarrassment is anticipated for the future from such cause, as it is expected a sufficiency will be raised this season to support all the Indians that have ever been in that place.

All of the tribes on this place as well as Nome Cult, with the exception of the Yubas, bury their dead, and with them whatever of valuables or trinkets they may have at the time of their death. The Yubas burn their dead as soon as life is extinct, "at the same time committing to the flames their valuables, bows, arrows, beads, and clothing." The general health of the Indians is good, although many of them have died, mostly old ones, their systems having completely worn out. There is a species of "lung fever" to which the Indians are subject, and which in many cases baffles the skill of the physician.

Of the farming operations of this place for the last year, you have been kept advised through the quarterly reports. The grain is now being threshed and stored, and we can only at present estimate the yield: wheat, twenty thousand bushels; barley, one thousand five hundred; rye, six hundred; corn, two hundred; there has also been cured and put up two hundred tons of hay. Vegetables of all kinds, except potatoes, were raised in quantities sufficient for the use of the employés, and a great amount fell to the Indians. It is now fully demonstrated that potatoes cannot be raised at this place. The bean crop also was a failure, owing to late frosts; the peas yielded abundantly. The Indians are excessively fond of them, and it is my purpose to pay more attention to their cultivation, with a view of raising them in sufficient quantities to form a regular ration of Indian food.

At Nome Cult Indian farm there is an estimated yield of two thousand bushels wheat and rye, three thousand bushels of corn, with an immense amount of pumpkins, turnips, &c., &c.

The white residents in some sections of the upper Sacramento country have been very clamorous for the removal of the Indians in their respective localities. In answer to a call from the citizens of Battle creek and vicinity, the Indians, in number one hundred and eighty-one, were removed to this reservation. More than one-third of this number were found on inspection to be badly diseased, some of them beyond the reach of medical aid. Everything has been done in the power of the agent to relieve the white settlement of the presence of the Indians, and where the citizens unite, as in the case referred to, the Indians can be taken away easily; but in most cases where there are Indians, the whites are divided in sentiment relative to their removal: those who have good Indian house and farm servants oppose their removal, while their less favored neighbors urge it. With this

conflict of sentiment the agent is unable to do anything, hence these complaints; whereas if the sentiment of the community was united, no difficulties would be incurred in taking the Indians to the reservation.

In other localities again there is opposition made by men who are living with Indian women, and in some places these men constitute a force sufficient to resist the agent and those citizens who desire their riddance; again there are localities in which the Indians have been made to perform all kinds of drudgery and labor, for which they get a scant subsistence, and as a consequence the old ones become worn out and helpless, and *then* it is their former task masters wish to get rid of *them*, but insist on retaining the young and healthy ones. There are many difficulties in the way of removal, all owing to the differences of opinion, arising from the causes cited, among the white citizens.

The citizens have been notified of the willingness and readiness of the agent to take to the reservation the Indians of any locality when the inhabitants will give their countenance and support to the matter. With the limited number of men attached to the reservation, all of whom are engaged in daily labor, it is impossible to make forcible demonstrations against the Indians; besides the agent does not believe that it was designed by the government that he should engage in expensive forays and Indian hunts. Acting upon this principle, the agent has been ready, whenever satisfied of the wishes of the citizens and their ability to aid against opposition, to remove the Indians complained of to the reservation. It is worthy of remark here that from the same locality there have been received letters and petitions asking for the interference of the agent, and at the same time letters and remonstrances against such action.

Your attention is called to the fact that there are no federal or State laws sufficiently stringent providing for the punishment of evil disposed persons, who by bribes, promises, &c., induce Indians to leave the reservation, and then harbor and conceal them. It is necessary that the Indians thus decoyed should be recaptured and brought back, (or else the system would be at the mercy of the abandoned white men,) and in doing this, the employés of the government are compelled to use force in many cases, the law providing no means by which the offending parties can be reached. Those who harbor or employ Indians escaping from the reservation should be made as culpable as those who steal or decoy them.

Respectfully, yours,

VINCENT E. GEIGER,  
*Indian Agent.*

HON. THOS. J. HENLEY,  
*Superintendent Indian Affairs,  
San Francisco, California.*