

No. 15.

HOOPA VALLEY RESERVE, CAL., July 1, 1865.

SIR: In compliance with instructions received from the superintendent of Indian affairs, requesting a quarterly report of the sanitary condition of the Indians on this reservation, I have the honor to submit the following:

This being the first report of the kind forwarded from this place, I will not confine myself to the quarter just expired, nor will I attempt a statistical statement of diseases and deaths during the quarter, but will endeavor to present a general idea of the condition of the Indians, and such items of information concerning them as may be of interest to the department; and first, as to the habits and means of subsistence of the Indians. The aborigines of this part of the State of California were living in the enjoyment of a rude plenty, when discovered by the adventurous whites some sixteen years ago. Miserable savages as they were, they were conscious of but one imperative necessity—the need of food; and harassed by one anxious care only—the dread of enemies. Their food varied with the seasons of the year; each successive season furnished its own peculiar staple articles.

Autumn furnished the all-important acorn, large quantities of which were collected and kept in store for use during the winter and ensuing spring. Winter was the great hunting time. Then they chased the *manwitch*, deer, and small game, over the hills, bow in hand, or laid in wait for them in the thickets. Grouse, quails, and small birds were hunted and shot with arrows, or caught in rude snares set for them. The fruit of the chase, with the acorns, thus constituted the winter supply of food almost exclusively. Spring brought new viands; early vegetation furnished abundance in the form of young leaves and stems of succulent plants, with their roots attached, and various species of clover, which were gathered in large quantities and eaten. This was the season when the squaws might be seen setting out in procession, each with a basket swung upon her back, and furnished with a piece of wood about three feet in length and sharpened to a point at both extremities, to dig up the roots, worms, &c. Hence the name of Diggers, by which California Indians are so generally designated. This was the season also when fishing commenced, sometimes earlier, sometimes later, according to the subsidence of the high water and other circumstances.

The summer months prolonged the same supply, with the addition of Indian potatoes or soap root, as it is called by the whites—a large and nutritious bulb which grows abundantly upon the hills—various kinds of wild fruits and nuts, together with the rich, fat salmon so acceptable to the civilized as well as the savage epicure.

This was the feasting time *par excellence* of the California Indian. In summer they held their dances—festive dances, fish dances, medicine dances, and war dances, and rioted in savage luxuriance. But this their season of abundance, now spoiled now, and unproductive, by the presence and doings of the whites. They no longer sport on the banks of clear streams literally

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alive with salmon and other fish, but gaze sadly into the muddy waters, despoiled almost of their finny prey by the impurities from the sluice-boxes of the miners at the head of the stream. In this consists one of the greatest calamities inflicted upon the Indians of recent years. Their salmon fishing is destroyed to a very great extent, and with it one of their chief means of subsistence. Those who saw the Klamath and Trinity rivers in early days say that during the summer months they ran as clear as crystal, and thronged with salmon from the sea; now they are muddy streams and almost deserted by this fish.

With all the innovations of recent years, these rude savages still maintain to a great extent their peculiar usages, whether collected upon reservations, as here, or left to their own resources, as upon the Klamath river. North and east of this they persist in gathering the acorn, devouring the clover tops and other crude vegetable matter, and securing all the fish they can. The allowance of fresh beef and flour dealt out to the Indians on this reservation by the local agent is in a measure lost to them from the destructive and wasteful manner in which they prepare it. Especially does this apply to the flour. They are unacquainted with the process for the manufacture of light bread, but prepare the flour for use by mixing it with water to the consistence of dough, partially cooking it in hot ashes, and then eating it while hot. I have examined the clods thus made, and am persuaded that while it satisfies their hunger for the time, it is doing them great injury, especially in winter, when used in association with acorns, and without the crude vegetable matter or fat fish of summer. If the preservation of the lives and health of the Indians be a desirable object, it could be greatly promoted by instructing them in the preparation of light bread, or by making it for them, even though much less flour were furnished them. With the present uncultivated habits of the Indians, the substitution of houses for the rancherias or wigwams they at present inhabit would confer no benefit upon them; indeed, few of them, I think, would desire the change. In the matter of clothing, the Indians will always take all they can get, and continually beg for more; but there are some articles, such as strong boots and blankets, which are really necessary for their health and comfort, particularly in winter.

What were the prevailing diseases among the aborigines in northern California previous to the coming of the whites I have not had an opportunity of ascertaining, but that some of the diseases from which they suffer most at present, and which are fast working their extermination, were unknown to them prior to the advent of the Caucasian race, is firmly attested by the older Indians, and corroborated by early observers. The disease to which I have reference is venereal, in its various forms; and these, together with other scrofulous diseases, are at present the blight and curse of the whole native race. The different forms and stages of venereal diseases embrace in one contaminated mass old and young, male and female. The sufferings entailed upon these wandering savages from this cause alone are atrocious, and beyond description. This one inheritance from the whites has of itself made them irremediably miserable. The adage, "prevention is better than cure" they know not, they heed not, and their rude practice of the healing art makes no pretensions to curing those maladies. My experience among them has demonstrated to me that they are extremely susceptible of cure would they but submit to a course of treatment; but this, with very few exceptions, they cannot be induced to do. Indians, every one of them, so far as I have seen, inherit a scrofulous constitution; hence many die of consumption and ulceration of the glands in various parts of the body. Inheriting the constitutions they do, I believe they would all die of scrofulous diseases were it not for some preserving circumstances in their mode

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of life, the abundance of fresh air and out-door exercise they enjoy, and particularly the large quantity of fish oil they consume as food, &c. Let an Indian assume the white man's mode of life, or be adopted into a white family, and no amount of cure or kindness will preserve his life for more than a very few years. Universal experience during the last half century has demonstrated to the medical profession that cod-liver oil is the great remedy for scrofulous diseases in the Caucasian; and I feel fully satisfied, from my observations and experience with these Indians, that their lives are preserved from year to year largely by the great quantities of fish oil they make use of as food. Remove them from the source of this supply, or cut it off entirely from them, and Indians, with the constitutions these possess, would quickly disappear. As to the causes of death among the Indians, I may make the general statement, that syphilis destroys many of the newly born and very young, and also causes many abortions. Bowel complaints, especially in autumn, when the acorns begin to be used, carry off many of the children, while scrofula, in its various manifestations, claims a large proportion of the adults. Rheumatic diseases, too, are tolerably prevalent in winter and spring, but cause few, if any, deaths. The sanitary condition of the Indians upon this reservation is, upon the whole, very much improved, I am confident, since last fall, when I began to treat them; all could be relieved, and many cured completely, would they only submit to a course of treatment. Many of the best working ones on the reservation are almost incapacitated for labor on account of disease; altogether, I am not aware that more than three or four deaths have occurred during the past six months. I shall endeavor to extend my observation in this respect in future, also in respect to births.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

DR. P. MOFFATT, *Surgeon on Reservation.*

HON. CHAS. MALTBY,
Superintendent Indian Affairs, California.
