

CHICO, CALIFORNIA, July 6, 1850.

SIR: Difficulties of somewhat a serious character have recently taken place between some of the Indian tribes and the white population on the headwaters of the Sacramento, which was originally included within the bounds of my agency. The more recent occurred on the waters of Bear river and Wolf creek, where several white men were killed, and some property destroyed by fire. At the time of these difficulties I was south of San Francisco, and did not hear of them for several days. Indeed, I was not sure, after the appointment of Captain Sutter as agent for that region, and my own agency having been designated for the valley of San Joaquin, that the scenes of those difficulties came properly under my notice. Being aware, however, that Captain Sutter had declined accepting the appointment, and that no other agent had been appointed, it occurred to me that some good might result from the presence of a government Indian agent in that region of country. I accordingly set out for "Camp Far West," situated on Bear river. I reached Sacramento city on the morning of the 29th May, where I met with Major General Thomas J. Green, of the California militia, who informed me that he had just returned from above, and not only chastised the Indians who committed the crimes attached to them, but had also entered into an armistice or treaty with them. General Green, and his excellency Burnett, were about leaving for San Francisco on board the steamer. The General, expecting to leave for the States soon after arriving in that city, desired me to examine his treaty, and to approve or recommend its adoption to the department, if, on examination, I thought it such as to warrant me in doing so. I therefore concluded to return to the city with them. On my way down, and after reaching San Francisco, I gave to the document a careful examination, but could not give it my approval, or recommend its adoption to the government.

On the 3d day of June I again left the city of San Francisco for the scene of those difficulties, and on the 7th reached "Camp Far West," a government military post, under the command of Captain Day, of the 2d infantry, an accomplished officer, to whom I am indebted for his hospitality and friendship during my stay in that region of country. It was not far distant from this cantonment that the Indian depredations were committed. On inquiry I found the people of that vicinity did not view the transaction of the 23d as of very great importance or utility in controlling or restraining the Indians. Such transactions sometimes receive much of their magnitude from being reduced to paper. From all that I could learn in the vicinity of the difficulty, and from my knowledge of the Indian character in this country, and their present condition, I am of the opinion it would be miserable policy on the part of the government to adopt the treaty as it stands.

My reasons for coming to this conclusion are the following:

First. The occasion was isolated, having been committed by but few individual Indians, and perhaps provoked on the part of the whites; and under no circumstances was it of sufficient magnitude to call for a treaty.

Second. The chiefs present were but few in number, and without power to bind the balance of the numerous surrounding tribes.

Third. The object of the treaty seems to have been the purchase of peace and friendship from the most stupid wretches of the country. That kind of consideration does not seem to me such as should enter into any arrangement the government might be disposed to make with them.

Fourth. The payment of one thousand dollars as a semi-annual annuity to the several tribes represented in the treaty, by the government of the United States, for the purpose of obtaining peace and friendship from the most degraded and unwarlike beings on the continent, would not only be unnecessarily expensive to the government, but wholly useless to the Indians. They have not the least conception of the value of money, and the consequence would be, it would fall into the hands of a few avaricious whites, without benefiting the Indians.

With due respect for those connected with the formation of the treaty, I must, for the above reasons, dissent from their opinions in regard to its adoption by the government of the United States. I visited the region of country in which the treaty was concluded, principally to meet the several chiefs whose names appeared upon the treaty, and to ascertain whether they fully understood its import, and the contingency of its adoption or rejection on the part of the government. I was, however, disappointed, as I did not get to see any of the intelligent chiefs, they having gone to one of their annual festivals or councils on the headwaters of Feather river. After remaining a few days at and in the neighborhood of Nevada, I returned to the mouth of the Yuba, and from thence continued up Feather river. On my way I visited the several tribes inhabiting the shores of that stream: the "*Hocks*," near the residence of Captain Sutter, and from whom the celebrated Hock farm takes its name; the "*Yubas*," the "*O-lip-as*," the "*Bogas*," the "*Hohil-le-pus*," (properly the Jollillepas,) the "*Erskins*," and the "*Ma-chuc-na*;" and have had some talk with most of the chiefs of these tribes. They reside in villages at some distance from each other, and number from 70 to 150 in each family or tribe. They are independent of each other, but possess much the same characteristics—live in the same manner, and speak almost identically the same language. Like all Indians west of the Sierra Nevada, they are the least warlike or savage of any Indians on the face of the globe. They possess no weapons of war except their bows and arrows—no war-club, scalping-knives, nor savage tomahawks. They are a wild and ignorant people as yet, and, though not warlike, they will steal and commit murders on individuals; but, in my opinion, it requires but little time to remedy these evils.

They seem to have some sagacity in locating their villages on the most beautiful spots to be found on the banks of the streams. The whites have generally, in locating their ranchos, built their houses near those of the Indians, not only on account of the beauty of the situation, but that they can the more readily command the services of the Indians. Some of them are used as domestics by the ranchoses, while others work at some of the more simple arts of husbandry—such as cutting and cleaning barley, wheat, &c. In some instances the whites have not only built their own houses close to those of the Indian villages, but have laid out towns around and over them, which must eventually drive them from such homes.

Their means of subsistence, which have heretofore been limited, are

now greatly diminished on account of the immigration overrunning their country. The miners have destroyed their fish-dams on the streams, and the majority of the tribes are kept in constant fear on account of the indiscriminate and inhuman massacre of their people in many places, for real or supposed injuries. They have not any particular boundaries or fixed homes for any great length of time together, but change their locations as taste or their necessities may require. Yet they all have an indistinct and undefined idea of their right to the soil, the trees, and the streams. From these they have heretofore obtained their subsistence, which consisted of grass-seeds and roots from the earth; acorns, pine-seeds and berries from the trees and bushes; and fish from the streams. They became alarmed at the immense flood of immigration which spread over their country; it was quite incomprehensible. I have been told of several acts of depredation which were instigated by the chiefs of certain tribes, through the apprehension that their people must die of starvation, in consequence of the strangers overrunning their country, feeding their grass, burning their timber, and destroying their dams on the streams. For these innovations they claim some compensation; not in money, for they know nothing of its value, but clothing, blankets, and something to sustain life upon. So far as I have been able to ascertain, all the tribes in the valley of the Sacramento would not only be satisfied, but greatly gratified, with an arrangement for a small annuity to be paid in clothing, blankets, and food, at stated periods. That they have some cause for complaint, no one familiar with their mode of life, their present condition, and, in some instances, the cruel treatment by a few whites, can doubt. I have seldom heard of a single difficulty between the whites and the Indians of the valley or mountains, in which the original cause could not readily be traced to some rash or reckless act of the former. In some instances it has happened that innocent Indians have been shot down for imaginary offences, which did not in fact exist. For instance, on one occasion, when cattle were missing, it was quickly supposed that they had been stolen by the Indians, and the lives of several Indians taken on this supposition. Again, when a man was absent a few days longer than he was expected to be, his death was *imagined*, and attributed to the Indians in the neighborhood, and the lives of several paid the penalty of the supposed murder. In the one case, the cattle were found in the course of a few days; and in the other, the man also returned, but the innocent Indians were no more.

Several similar instances have been related to me where the lives of Indians have been taken for supposed injuries. The consequence of such acts, inflicted on Indians knowing themselves innocent, has been revenged on their part. They possess a principle similar to the *old Jewish law*, which required "an eye for an eye," and "a tooth for a tooth." If one of their number be killed by a white man, they require the blood of a white man; and it seems to matter little whether or not he be the guilty person—the blood of one is required for the blood of the other. This kind of retribution is a matter of religion with most of the tribes of this country.

As the Indians of California have been undoubtedly disturbed in their possessions, and the means by which they have heretofore sustained

life rendered more difficult to obtain, I beg leave to suggest a plan for their management, which I think would not only ameliorate their present condition, and gradually bring them into civilization, but be the least expensive to the government.

It is to stipulate with the various tribes in the valley of the Sacramento to pay them semi-annually a certain amount in clothing, blankets, and provisions. The climate is mild, and they would require but little clothing, although I find they readily adopt the apparel of the whites, where they can by any means obtain it, and this seems as much to cover their nakedness as for comfort. It seems to me this course would be less expensive to the government than any other method for managing the Indians of the country, and it certainly would be more beneficial to the Indians themselves. To pay them money, would only be indirectly to put it into the hands of a few unscrupulous whites, without benefiting the Indians, as they know nothing whatever of the value of money. They will readily give all they may have for any article they may fancy. In order to carry out this plan, it might be necessary to establish two or three depots in the valley of the Sacramento; say one at Plumas, near the present residence of Captain Sutter, and one about two hundred miles up Feather river, and one about the same distance up the Sacramento river. These would be sufficient to supply the whole of the tribes in the valley of the Sacramento and adjacent country. It would be well if some means could be adopted by which to insure those who labor for the whites a reasonable compensation. Heretofore, those living near to the ranchos have labored for little or no compensation. A calico shirt, worth, perhaps, fifty cents, would be given for a week's labor. Captain Day, of the 2d infantry, who has resided some time in the country, kindly furnished me with his observations regarding the present condition of the Indians of the mountains, which agree with my own. They are as follows:

"These Indians, unlike any heretofore treated with, have no nationality, but are divided into small bands, each under sub-chiefs, and wander independent of each other; inhabiting, by undisputed possession, the hills and mountains of the Sierra Nevada; most of the year subsisting on vegetable productions, but occasionally on wild game, and principally on the fish of the streams, both of which are debarred them now by the mining population. It becomes a question, how are they to be provided for in mere charity, to say nothing of their native rights in the soil? Remove them further west, *unless it be beyond the west*, and into the Pacific, is out of the question. To the east of the Sierra Nevada, into the desert, would be more unreasonable than utter extermination. The alternative would seem to be their domestication at the farms or settlements in the valley, with a liberal allowance of subsistence *in kind* from the United States. Of money they have no idea, and therefore an annuity in coin would only fall into the hands of avaricious white men. One-half of the bread and meat rations of a soldier might, together with such items of the vegetable kingdom as are to be found, and to which they are accustomed already, form ample subsistence for them.

"H. DAY, *Captain 2d Infantry.*

"JUNE 9, 1850."

These observations agree in general with my own, although made in regard to the Indians inhabiting the mountains.

Under some such regulation as I have recommended herein, I am convinced it would require but little time to induce the entire tribes of the valley and mountains to abandon their present mode of living and adopt a civilized life.

During the last few months I have been engaged in collecting such statistical information as is required by the department. I find it tedious, and not unfrequently difficult, on account of not being able to obtain proficient interpreters. In many cases, the Indians have no words in their language to express the ideas I would wish to impress them with, and I have not found either a white man or a native of California who could speak the full extent of even their limited language. There are many who have become acquainted with the most common terms, and are able to make themselves understood in ordinary matters, but this is about the amount they ever acquire. So with some of the Indians; they have acquired a few words of the Spanish, but not sufficient to make themselves understood to any extent, or to understand more than a few ideas. This applies to the Indians of the Sacramento valley; those on the San Joaquin and southern part of the State have become more proficient in the Spanish language.

In order that my agency be of efficiency, it is necessary that the salary be increased considerably, as it is immensely costly to travel or to live in any position in this country. There should also be more facilities afforded me in cases of necessity. I should, when necessary, have authority to call upon the military posts, and to co-operate with them under certain circumstances.

On my return, I shall be able to furnish the department with such statistics as I have collected.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
ADAM JOHNSTON.

HON. ORLANDO BROWN,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.
