

No. 104.

FRESNO INDIAN FARM, July 22, 1856.

SIR: The number of Indians which live on, visit, and recognize this place as their home and headquarters, and which I understand to be termed the Fresno Indians, consist of the remnant of nine distinct tribes, estimated at twelve hundred and five, all told. Their comparative numbers and locations are as follows, to wit:

Pitcatches.—Live on San Joaquin, mostly at Millerton, and number over one hundred.....	100
Sallenches.—Former residence San Joaquin, now united with Choocchanceis.....	80
Monos.—Live on head waters of San Joaquin, frequent fine and coarse gold gulches.....	250
Choocchancies.—Live on Fresno, and visit coarse and fine gold gulches.....	275
Chowchillas.—Live on Fresno; have long been the ruling tribe; speak the Chowchilla, (travelling language;) visit Chowchilla waters.....	125
Pohoneeches.—Live on Fresno, and visit its headwaters.....	100
Nootchoos.—Live on headwaters of Chowchilla; among them now reside the remnant of the Sosemity tribe, the former occupants of the Sosemity valley.....	75
Potoancies.—Mostly reside on Merced; always work here during harvesting, and attend all feasts; number over one hundred.....	100
Wallalshimmez.—Tuolumne Indians, visit this place on all feast days, have worked more or less, and number over one hundred.....	100
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Making a sum total of twelve hundred and five Indians	1,205

men, women, and children, all of whom can be quietly settled on any selected place made known to them as their future homes, within the bounds of their former range and homes, to which they are partial, without any other expense than a few presents when they arrive at their place of destination.

There are other Indians known to live higher up in the mountains, which have no friendly relations or associations with the whites, and but little with the Indians here enumerated, and it is a prevalent opinion among the more civilized Indians, and the few whites that pretend to know, that they are numerous; but from all the information I have been able to get on the subject, I am inclined to a different opinion.

All these Indians herein enumerated appear not only friendly and well disposed towards the whites, but appear to have become much attached to them. Nearly all the males who have been industrious have found employment among the miners and farmers, until recently; the chances for mining are not encouraging, on account of the diggings in their vicinity being nearly all taken up by whites and Chinamen, and when labor is required, the service of Chinamen is sought in preference to that of Indians. Many of those Indians, during their intercourse with the whites, have proven themselves fully susceptible of such improvements in agriculture, and other pursuits of industry, as would soon enable them to provide a living for themselves, while there are others much disposed to indulge in idleness, drunkenness, and gambling; and though they obtain but little liquor, they continue to visit the mining villages and whisky shops, and indulge in all the vices not withheld from them, taking great pains to allure their young relations and associates into their evil ways.

The women by nature appear well disposed, industrious, and submissive, and in my opinion, could they have the same chance, would prove more than the equals of their masters, morally and intellectually; but being looked on by the men in no other light than tools and servants, and treated as such, they have no chance for profitable employment of a praiseworthy character; consequently, from necessity and an inclination to gratify their craving appetite for food, and their fancy for dress and trinkets, in the absence of all words of moral advice, at the same time sought for by white men, and encouraged by those who ought to be their friends and protectors, they have been led astray at an early age, and soon thereafter become the sport and traffic of worthless Indian men. In one or two brief years they become diseased, and at the age of twenty wear the features of thirty-five to forty; outcasts among their own people; and, as a general thing, before they arrive at the age of thirty, die a shameful and miserable death.

There are but few marriages now, compared with former days, to be attributed mostly to the jealousy of the Indian men from the early association of their women with white men; and though the men are, or once were, the absolute masters of the women, many of them at this time, who have been led astray, have found shelter among the whites, and are consequently independent of the men; and many of them in the vicinity of the mining village indulge in drunkenness to a considerable extent. Taking the women as a people in the mining

vicinities, I consider their condition worse than before they saw the face of a white man; and at the same time I am well satisfied, from practical proofs here, that a large majority of these young squaws would prefer constant labor for a living, in preference to the means so many of them resort to.

The chances for employment.

I am quite sure that the white population in this section of country, except in harvest time, will not, if it were sought for, give employment to more than one-fifth of the Indian male population, whilst the women have comparatively no chance for employment, the white women not being disposed to engage their services, which are but little required elsewhere.

Their condition and mode of living.

The condition of the Indian population in this section of country, at this time, when considered *en masse*, is by no means enviable; the Indian farmers having almost entirely failed to receive anything in the shape of food, whilst their supplies in the plains and foot hills, provided by Providence for generations back, have been consumed by the stock of white men. One of the resorts of those people for food, during the summer and fall seasons of the year, has been the burning of the plains to catch grasshoppers, and of the thickets to kill rabbits and other small game, which they have always been taught as right by their forefathers; but which, if persisted in now, and they caught at it, would seem to be certain death. Only a few days since, a fire was seen to start up in the plains, near King's river, to which some of the nearest neighbors hastened, and finding three Indians near by, commenced to chastise them; soon leaving one apparently dead on the ground, they pursued the other two, who immediately fled. The justification of this unexpected and rash treatment towards these Indians for the exercise of a privilege which they have been allowed from their infancy, it is rather hard to explain to them; whilst it it was considered by the whites as done in self-defence, and necessary for the protection of their property.

The acorns, the most important and most available bread stuff, in the low hills and vicinity of the plains, where it is most plentiful and easiest obtained, are consumed by the hogs of the whites. True, as a general thing, there is plenty higher up in the mountains, but not so easily obtained and transported to desirable places for winter quarters; and there are, at this time, droves of hogs as high up in the mountains as there is an acorn to be found at accessible points.

A good hunter can kill an antelope occasionally in the plains, or a deer in the mountains; and it is found profitable to hunt at convenient times, but it will not do to rely on this as means of subsistence.

The three means of subsistence in this section of country during the fall and winter seasons, other than the kind of food used by the white people, and purchased from them at high rates, or furnished by the government, consist of the acorn, piñon, manzanite, and a few other seeds and berries of but little consequence; all of which, at this time, can only be obtained high up in the mountains, too much so for con-

venience, besides fish, which only serve those tribes that live on the rivers. There is an abundance of fish that can be caught in the San Joaquin and King's rivers at certain seasons of the year, and more or less all the time; but from actual experiment made, I find that the Indians not accustomed to living on those rivers, which are, at least, one half of the whole number of Fresno Indians, prefer taking their chances in the mountains for food to leaving their favorite homes in pursuit of fish. All Indians living on either of these rivers, by a little perseverance, can obtain a bountiful supply of fish.

Their spring and summer food, such as clover, wild lettuce, serrino, grass roots, and various other kinds of vegetables which they are fond of during spring and summer, have this season, and will hereafter, be consumed by cattle, horses, and hogs, before maturity.

Thus it is to be seen that at least half their former means of subsistence is hereafter to be cut off, with many inconveniences and difficulties thrown in the way of obtaining the balance.

There are but few Indians stopping on the farm at this time, the larger portion having permission to go into the mountains in small parties in pursuit of manzanites, and other berries, and are in no way molesting or intruding on the rights or interest of the whites; and, so far as I have been able to learn, for the short time they have been absent, there is no other than a confiding good feeling existing between the white and red men.

The number of Indians on King's river and its waters, including the Four Creek Indians, which are much scattered and confused, agreeably to the best information obtained, exceeds the number of the Fresno Indians; but, in my opinion, there cannot be more than two thousand concentrated there, including the Tulare Lake Indians.

These Indians, at this time, might be settled on King's river, or its waters, without any other expense than a few presents on the occasion of first concentrating on the ground. The Tulare Lake Indians, in my opinion, had better remain where they are for the time being, and, if found politic, later. With a little help they will support themselves, and improve in arts of agriculture and civilization. Situated as they are, and where they are, they can do no mischief; neither have they ever shown any disposition to do mischief, but, unfortunately for them, they are claimed by more than one white man, and, as I am informed, by false and designing pretences, which keep them all the time in confusion and suspense. They ought to be protected and helped a little by the government, and left in peace where they are for the present.

The remainder of the King's River Indians that could and ought to be concentrated in a reserve, would not likely exceed one thousand; and could the location be made on King's river above all the white settlements, a majority of all these Indians might be permitted to live pretty much in the mountains, depending on themselves, which would be a great saving of provision, and a gratification to them, until such time as the farm would afford a sufficiency of food. The reservation being below, and between the mountain Indians and whites, would protect the property of the whites from the petty thefts that it might be subjected to under other circumstances.

The character, condition, and mode of living of the King's river

Indians are very similar to that of the Fresno, and their natural resources are very nearly as much consumed and cut off by the settlement of the whites as those of the Fresno. They have not been so successful in obtaining a bountiful supply of food by resort to the mines and the purchase of cattle at an early day, consequently are easier satisfied and controlled.

Neither have they had the same chance to inculcate the vices and immorality of the mining villages and drinking shops, consequently not so much diseased, and continue to retain their former and more natural attachment for their own habits. The true policy of the government towards these Indians is clear to my mind. Fix them on homes that they would look on as their own, and feel some interest in, so that some kind of discipline may be enforced, and thereby insuring their labor and services more certain and available.

I am of opinion it would be good policy to locate the Fresno and King's river Indians on separate reservations, calculating from one to two thousand each, which would be in bounds, as it is quite certain there are more than one, and perhaps less than two, thousand in each section of country. In which event, if consistent, it is desirable that each division should be located in their own section of country, gratifying a fixed partiality that prevails among all Indians in favor of the homes of their ancestry, and obviating the trouble and expense pertaining to moving them, as well as securing the no less important consideration of conciliating the prejudice and jealousy that so universally exist among the California Indians against each other residing in different sections of the country.

So far as the Fresno Indians are concerned, settle the Chowchillas and Choocchanceys, and all the balance will gradually come in as their necessities or the policy of the department would seem to require. In the meantime it would only be actually necessary to subsist and keep on the reservations a sufficient number to do the work required, and exercise a controlling influence over the balance of the tribes belonging to the reservation.

I have no doubt but the same policy might be pursued in locating the King's river Indians, not rendering it absolutely necessary to keep and subsist at all times more than could be kept under a controlling influence, or number sufficient to perform all the labor required.

This policy is only recommended in anticipation of the Indian reservations not being surrounded or crippled by the settlements of whites. Free access for the Indians to the mountains would be a greater guarantee for peace and quietude than any other circumstance connected with the locating of an Indian reservation in this country.

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

M. B. LEWIS,

Indian Agent.

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