

No. 161.

CALIFORNIA SUPERINTENDENCY.

OFFICE SUPERINTENDENT INDIAN AFFAIRS,
San Francisco, California, September 4, 1857.

SIR: In submitting my annual report, I am relieved of the necessity of making it an extended one, for the reason that but little change has taken place either in the condition or character of the service in this superintendency during the past year. My last report having dwelt at considerable length upon the character, habits, wants, and necessities of the Indians, any extended remarks upon that head would seem to be an unnecessary repetition.

The causes there set forth as having produced the present miserable and degraded condition of the Indians interspersed through the white settlements in California, still operating with increasing force, are gradually decimating their numbers, and hastening them on in the downward road to final extermination. Left to the prey of diseases by them incurable, to the effects of intoxicating liquor, and the abuse of evil disposed white persons, there is nothing before them but inevitable death, or the interposition of the arm of the government in removing them to those asylums on the reservations already prepared for their reception, where they can be treated as the wards of the government, and receive that sort of protection and care which can alone be beneficial to Indians.

Foreseeing at an early period that the condition of the Indians in

their present haunts would from year to year grow worse, my greatest efforts have been directed to preparing the reserves for the reception of the greatest number at the earliest practicable period; and in this I am happy to say I have been successful to a very considerable extent. At Nome Lackee, Klamath, Mendocino, and Nome Cult farms, the result of the present crop shows that we can subsist a considerable number of Indians in addition to those already there; and the experiments already made in regard to the capacity of the soil for agricultural purposes demonstrate that these locations are capable of sustaining the entire Indian population in the northern and central portions of the State. The Indians in closest contact with the mining population are in the greatest need of immediate assistance, and of these it is intended to remove as many as can be supported with the surplus produced at the above places. In another year there is but little doubt that the number of Indians may be doubled and easily fed from the products of the farms, so that, in a few years, all those residing in the districts named may be removed to reserves and properly provided for in their new homes.

In the southern portion of the State the prospects are by no means so cheering. From the San Joaquin to the extreme southern boundary of the State an unusual drought has prevailed during the past season, cutting short the resources of Indian subsistence, nuts, berries, grassseeds, and other natural articles of food, upon which they have hitherto relied for a scanty and precarious support. In the county of San Diego it is believed that much suffering, and, perhaps, starvation and death in many instances, will ensue from this cause. It is also feared that pressing wants of hunger will drive many to the necessity of committing depredations upon the cattle of the rancheros, whose sparsely settled condition and thinness of numbers will leave their property almost entirely at the mercy of starving Indians, and great anxiety is felt upon the subject by the settlers. Every effort in my power has been and is being made to remedy, as far as possible, this state of things. An agent has been appointed, who resides among and has great influence with them, who is instructed to spend all his time with the tribes, encouraging and assisting them in preparing and storing for the winter such articles of their natural food as may be within their reach. In this way, by industry and economy, it is hoped a sufficiency may be provided to avert the danger of starvation to which circumstances give a somewhat threatening appearance.

Captain Burton, the commanding officer at Fort Yuma, has kindly consented to act as special agent at that place, and he has been furnished with a few articles of clothing, agricultural tools, and seeds, for the use of the Indians on the Colorado. The lands on the banks of this stream are, in some locations, exceedingly fertile, and the Indians support themselves by a rude system of agriculture. The distribution of tools and seeds among them it is probable will enable them greatly to improve their present condition.

The crops upon the Tejon this year have been almost an entire failure in consequence of the extreme drought. It is probable that not half food enough has been produced for the consumption of the place; and one common fate attends that entire region of country—a failure

of the crops. There is nothing to sell, if we had the means to buy. It is too remote from other points, and the price of transportation is too high to supply the place from other localities. The agent at that place has therefore been instructed to send the Indians to the mountains and surrounding plains in search of such food as may be gathered, and to furnish mules and wagons for its transportation to the reserve. This, it is supposed, with a reasonable allowance of beef, will enable them to pass the winter without suffering.

At the King's river farm a good crop has been raised, and assistance will be afforded from that point to all the Indians in the Tulare valley.

At the Fresno the crop was a comparative failure, and similar instructions have been given to the agent, in relation to gathering wild food, as those given to the agent at Tejon, and there is no doubt but they will be able to provide a sufficiency for the winter.

With a view to encouraging the Indians scattered through the mining regions to provide food for the winter, and to acquaint them with the intentions of the government in regard to them, special agents have been temporarily appointed in several mountain localities with instructions to induce them to gather food, build houses, and make the necessary preparations for the approaching winter. In short, nothing has been omitted within the power of this office consistent with economy, and authorized by law, which could contribute to the protection, security, or comfort of the Indian population.

Throughout the entire extent of the State, from the Colorado to the Oregon line, and from the shores of the Pacific to the Sierra Nevada mountains, the gratifying fact exists that universal peace prevails. Not a hostile sentiment is entertained by the Indians in any portion of the State, and a general feeling of security pervades the entire white population.

The progress of the reservations is attended with as great a degree of success as could be expected or desired by the most sanguine friends of that system. The Indians perform with entire willingness all the labor required. Coercion is seldom necessary, and a resort to punishment very rarely occurs. The progress they have made in acquiring a knowledge of the pursuits of industry is remarkable, and in the highest degree encouraging to the friends of the system of subsisting Indians by their own labor.

The mention of a few facts upon this point is not considered inappropriate. At Nome Lackee the wheat crop of this year, consisting of over ten thousand bushels, was harvested entirely by the Indians. The Indian labor, and the threshing, sacking, and hauling to the storehouse, was also performed by them, attended only by two white men as overseers. From Nome Lackee to the mountains, where the supply of timber is procured, is a distance of fifteen miles. Two Indians will take a team of four or five yoke of oxen and wagon, go to the timber, load the wagon, and return down a steep and circuitous mountain road requiring skill and judgment to insure safety. In like manner in obtaining supplies from the river, a distance of twenty miles, an Indian will take the horse team, drive down one day and return the next.

At Mendocino the Indians have been taught to draw the seine, which they do with no other assistance than one white man as an overseer. A crew of these fishermen have been trained as sailors to manage the vessel, a schooner of twenty tons, used for bringing supplies from the landing at Mendocino city to the reserve by sea, a distance of twelve miles. Upon one occasion this vessel was in charge of a white man, as captain, and the Indians, three in number, as sailors. While lying in the harbor at Mendocino, which is exposed to the southwest winds, a gale sprung up. The captain was ashore, intoxicated. The vessel was in danger of going ashore. The Indians, who were watched with great interest by those on land, with the small boat took the anchor to windward, dropped it, and hauled the vessel off until she was far enough out to clear the point, then set sail and went out to sea, returning the next day in safety. Since that time the vessel has been placed entirely in their hands, and is believed to be perfectly safe.

Four ploughs are now in operation at Mendocino. They are the large prairie steel ploughs, and are drawn each by four yoke of oxen. With these, there is one white man as overseer. The work is done entirely by Indians, there being two drivers to each team, and one to hold the plough. The work is well done, and presents a very beautiful appearance. Illustrations of this character could be multiplied to any number, but more is considered useless. To what further extent the Indian is capable of being made useful or of gaining knowledge, time and experiment alone must determine.

That Indians can be collected on reservations and subsisted chiefly by their own labor, the experiments we have already made sufficiently demonstrate; and the success which has so far attended the enterprise is sufficient to justify a continuation of the system and renewed efforts for its ultimate and triumphant success.

The reports of the agents will give you more in detail the condition and prospects of the reserves.

It affords me pleasure to be able to say that the agents and sub-agents have been energetic and zealous, evincing industry and economy in the discharge of their duties.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

THOS. J. HENLEY,
Superintendent Indian Affairs.

Hon. J. W. DENVER,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington City, D. C.