

Indian Reservations in California.

The experiment of maintaining the Indians of California upon Reservations—large tracts of land set aside by Congress for that special purpose—has had three year's trial. The general government has annually appropriated large sums of money to maintaining these Reservations, and did the system promise a successful result there is no object to which the means of the government would be so readily applied. Has it succeeded? Several papers of influence have denounced in unmeasured terms the manner in which the affairs of the Reservation are administered, whilst others find words feeble to express their praise. We have some hesitation in expressing our own opinion upon the subject, for we believe that a large majority of our citizens hold different views. And yet we are forced to this belief, that the whole system is founded in error.

The plan which was marked out for the conduct of these Reservations was very similar to that by which the old Mission establishments were governed, and under which the Indians were collected together and taught to maintain themselves by their own labor. The history of these Missions reads like a romance, and we find it difficult to believe that in the twenty-one establishments which once existed in California there was anything like the happiness and contentment which we find pictured in the books of some travelers. The Mission system has been altogether misunderstood. The priests who were undoubtedly pious men, had one grand object in view, the conversion of the Indians to christianity, and to this end they devoted their lives. Once within the Mission walls and baptized, the Indian was converted, and was then turned over to the soldiers and men who superintended their labor. The Indians were scantily clothed and scantily fed: the lash was ever ready; and runaways were flogged in the severest manner. Soldiers and alcaldes were continually on the move hunting these runaways through the different *rancherias*, and they found security only in the

clothed and scantily fed: the lash was ever ready, and runaways were flogged in the severest manner. Soldiers and alcaldes were continually on the move hunting these runaways through the different rancherias, and they found security only in the mountains. The harshness of the system was probably modified under some administrations, but its general features were such as we have described. Occasionally we find a priest active, lively, and fond of social intercourse. Such an one would establish games and festivals, and distribute delicacies among the Indians: but such periods are marked ones in the history of the Missions.

Around the Missions a great deal of prosperity was exhibited. In some of them were gathered several thousand Indians, and they performed a vast deal of labor, still the Indian does not love work, and it is only through the most rigorous measures that he can be forced to it. During the existence of the system we have described, the whole country was in the hands of the Missionaries and they had the most ample opportunity to elevate the Indians to a state of civilization. And yet, years before California passed to the Americans the system had been abandoned, and the Indians made happy by being permitted to enjoy once more the luxury of their *tule* dwellings.

It was believed at Washington that the Reservations would again restore the happy condition of things which (fabulously as we believe) surrounded the old Missions. Not so. The circumstances are so entirely different that success under the present system appears utterly impracticable. It might possibly succeed with a small number and those chosen from the mass, but of this we are somewhat doubtful. There are in the neighborhood of the reservations many white residents, and these produce a continual annoyance. In the first place they are vexed that these fine tracts of land should be set aside for a "parcel of Diggers," as they style them; and next they are annoyed by the prohibition which is put upon trading with the Indians. And there is still another obstacle to success. The rigorous measures which were pursued by the priests in charge of the Missions, would not be justified in the managers of the

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We believe the experiment has failed, and sorry indeed are we to confess it. There is not a right-thinking man in California who does not desire to see the condition of the Indian ameliorated. Philanthropy has been continually at work, but Destiny is ever thwarting its labors. We know how earnestly, how zealously the governments of some of the Eastern States have endeavored to preserve the remnants of the Indian tribes within their borders, and how signally they have failed. Year by year the Indians are dwindling away, and a few generations more and they will live only in history.

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