No. 107.

WASHINGTON, *November* 4, 1858.

SIR: It was contemplated, in your instructions to me of the 2d of July last, that, while visiting the Indian reservations in California, I should not only acquaint myself with their actual present condition, but with their history, to the end that I might furnish the Indian office with the data on which to base an intelligent opinion upon the practical working of the reservation system, and its value as applied to the Indians in that State. The very limited time allowed me to pursue my inquiries rendered anything more than a brief visit to the reservations a physical impossibility. I have been unable, therefore, to investigate the subject as thoroughly as you expected. Still, by close observation, and diligently availing myself of every opportunity for procuring accurate information, I have been enabled to collect some valuable facts and to form a tolerably just estimate of the results actually attained. These facts, with some suggestions as to the policy to be pursued in future, in dealing with the Indians of California, I have now the honor to present for your consideration.

The so-called reservation system of California being based upon that adopted under Spanish and continued under Mexican rule, a brief notice of the latter is, perhaps, essential to a clear understanding not only of the results proposed to be attained by the system now pursued, but of the mode and means by which they were to be wrought out.

Neither the Spanish nor Mexican governments appear to have recognized the claims of the Indians otherwise than by extending facilities (in the way of land grants) to the church for establishing missions among them. The church, however, charged itself with the duty of civilizing and otherwise providing for the Indians, and established mission stations at various points, many of which remain to this day oases in a desert, to attest the patient industry with which the Indians executed the benevolent conceptions of the missionaries. These estab-

lishments were intended to be, and were, self-sustaining; the labor of the Indians sufficing, under the intelligent guidance of the whites, for the production of all that was required for their support. The Indians were, in point of fact, slaves; but slaves under a patriarchal rule. The sacred office of the priests rendered absolute the influence their superior intelligence gave them over the Indians, who seconded with ready zeal the efforts made for their improvement. They labored cheerfully to raise the crops and tend the flocks and herds, from which they were comfortably subsisted, and, while the missions grew rich, the Indians themselves appear gradually to have acquired civilized habits, and to have been contented and happy.

It was measurably to re-establish this condition of things, as I conceive, that Mr. Beale devised the system of collecting the Indians upon reservations, or, in other words, government farms, and there subsisting them by their own labor. I am not prepared to say that the leading ideas of his plan could not, under certain conditions, be successfully applied in practice, but it must be admitted that the experiment has so far proved a lamentable failure.

At present the reservations are simply government alms-houses, where an inconsiderable number of Indians are insufficiently fed and scantily clothed, at an expense wholly disproportioned to the benefit conferred. There is nothing in the system, as now practiced, looking to the permanent improvement of the Indian, or tending in any way to his social, intellectual or moral elevation; the only attempts at anything of the sort that fell under my observation seeming to be rather the result of individual effort than to spring from the system itself. The reservations have been so often and so fully described in official reports, it is unnecessary, upon the present occasion, to do more than sketch rapidly the appearance the principal of them presented at the time of my visit. The first in order is

NOME LACKEE.

This, the most prominent of all the reservations, is eligibly located about twenty miles west of Tehama, on the edge of the foot hills into which the eastern slope of the coast range breaks as it descends into the Sacramento valley. I was unable to procure the data for ascertaining accurately its exact cost to the government, but believe I am within bounds in estimating the total disbursements, since its establishment, at one hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars. The soil is well adapted for the cultivation of grain, and the hills are covered with a luxuriant growth of wild oats, an unsurpassed range for stock. There are two fields under cultivation, containing, in the aggregate, some six hundred acres. The crop on one of them was ruined by smut; the other had been reaped before my arrival, and was said to have yielded ten thousand bushels of wheat, thirteen hundred and fifty bushels of barley, and six hundred bushels of rye, though I am inclined to think this estimate much too large. There is no other cultivation. There is a garden, indeed, and a gardener, at a salary of seven hundred and twenty dollars per annum, to cultivate it, but there was nothing in it except a few sickly looking melon and pumpkin vines,

some stunted fruit trees, and a rank growth of weeds. The houses at headquarters are substantially built, chiefly of adobes, and are sufficient to accommodate all the employés.

Two of the Indian chiefs occupy small board shanties; the rest of the Indians live in brush "chapidans" in the summer, and in small mud hovels during the rainy season.

There is a flourishing mill upon the reserve, and an abundance of water, but the canal by which the mill is supplied is out of repair, and the wheat grown upon the reservation is ground elsewhere by contract.

The estimated number of Indians on the reserve is twenty-five hundred, four-fifths at least of whom were absent gathering berries, grass seeds, &c. Whether they will return in the winter is doubtful. There was a dance at headquarters the night after my arrival, and I had thus a favorable opportunity for estimating the number of Indians then upon the reserve. I estimated them at four hundred, of whom three hundred and twenty-five belong at headquarters and seventy-five at Nevada camp. There is a station also at Thorn's creek, but it was deserted.

I saw some half dozen girls at Nevada camp employed in manufacturing straw hats, which they did very neatly, but the great mass of the Indians appeared to have no occupation whatever.

Admitting the overseer's estimate of the crop to be correct, it may be instructive to make a rough calculation of its cost and the number of Indians it would feed. The expenditure of the Nome Lackee agency for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1858, was sixty-six thousand one hundred and seventeen dollars and sixteen cents, a part of which, probably one-fourth, was disbursed at Nome Cult, leaving an estimated expenditure at Nome Lackee proper of forty-nine thousand five hundred and eighty-seven dollars and eighty-seven cents. The quarterly returns do not show what portion of this was expended in making the crop, but it may be estimated with sufficient accuracy. There are, including the agent, seventeen salaried white employés at Nome Lackee, whose aggregate pay amounts to seventeen thousand one hundred and sixty dollars per annum. Each of these employés receives a ration and a half for himself, besides rations for his family, if he has one. Commuting these rations at the army rate, though they cost much more than that, it would require three thousand and sixty-six dollars to subsist the employés one year. The official report for eighteen hundred and fifty-seven states that the average number of Indians worked during the year is forty. The expense of subsisting these Indians one year, at fifteen cents each per day, a moderate estimate, would be twenty-one hundred and ninety dollars. Now if, without taking into consideration the cost of seed, the wear and tear of implements, the feed consumed by work cattle, the interest upon their cost, and other items properly chargeable to this account, these sums be assumed to represent the cost of the crop, it would follow that government paid twenty-two thousand four hundred and sixteen dollars for the grain, or a fraction over one dollar eighty-seven cents per bushel. The ration for a work Indian, when grain alone is given, is three pounds. This crop then, estimating the crop at fifty-six pounds, would subsist six hundred and eleven and one-tenth Indians one year.

A calculation based upon a measurement of the grain, and the actual expenditures as shown by vouchers, would probably double the cost of the former and materially diminish the number of Indians it would feed, but the result is sufficiently startling as it is. The government provides a magnificent farm of twenty-five thousand acres in one of the finest grain countries in the world, and stocks it at lavish expense; seventeen thousand one hundred and sixty dollars are annually expended in salaries of overseers, &c; thirty-two thousand four hundred and twenty-seven dollars and eighty-seven cents more are applied to the purchase of clothing, provisions, and supplies of every description; an unlimited supply of Indian labor is furnished, and finally a net result is attained of eleven thousand nine hundred and fifty bushels of grain. I say a net result because the system in its present working does not look beyond the mere feeding and clothing of the Indian. There is no gain in the way of civilization to go to the credit side of the account, and therefore the clothing and provisions distributed are the absolute net result of the expenditure.

NOME CULT.

This beautiful valley is embosomed in the coast range about sixty miles southwest of Nome Lackee. A full and accurate description of it will be found in the correspondence between Major Storm and myself, a copy of which with accompanying documents is herewith submitted (marked A.) I have seen no where in California a spot so admirably adapted for an Indian reservation as this. With a soil of extraordinary fertility, a mild equable climate, an unlimited supply of every variety of timber and completely isolated by a belt of almost impassable mountains, if the reservation theory can ever be successfully worked out it can be done here. The wheat and rye had been harvested before my arrival, but there was a fine field of corn and some sixty acres of vegetables all growing with great luxuriance. There are a number of well built log cabins on the reserve, and the cultivated portion is enclosed with a substantial oak fence. The place has a thriving, prosperous look constrasting most favorably with the neglected appearance of Nome Lackee. Yubas and Nevadas here, like those of the same tribes at Nome Lackee, have some little knowledge of agriculture and seem to possess some intelligence. The Youkas and other wild tribes are mere savages, the most degraded specimens of humanity I ever saw; I had no means of ascertaining their numbers as they were scattered in small rancherias all over the reserve.

There is one serious drawback upon the prosperity of the reservation. A portion of the valley has been thrown open to settlement and some ten or twelve settlers have taken claims there. The vicinity of the whites produces the usual effect upon the Indians; whiskey is sold to the men, the women are corrupted, and insubordination and disease follow as inevitable consequences. It is needless to enlarge upon this subject; the necessity of isolating the reservations from all contact with the whites is as obvious as it is paramount, and if Nome Cult is to be retained for Indian purposes the white settlers there must be removed. The valley is not large, containing altogether only about

twenty-five thousand acres, and there can be no objection to retaining the whole of it.

MENDOCINO.

This reservation embraces a strip of land on the coast of an average width of three miles and about ten miles in length, extending from Hare creek to a short distance above the Bedatoe. It is in many respects well suited for a reservation, the natural resources for subsisting the Indians being unusually abundant Besides the ordinary supply of seeds, berries and edible roots, rock and right cod, and a species of sardine of which the Indians are very fond, and a great variety of shell fish abound on the coast, and immense quantities of salmon can be taken with nets in the Noyo, a small river running through the southern portion of the reserve. Grain does not yield well, but the soil is admirably adapted to the cultivation of vegetables, especially potatoes.

Notwithstanding these natural advantages the reservation has not thriven. There are but few Indians upon it, (seven hundred and twenty-two according to the statement of the sub-agent in charge,) and the great majority of these could in no wise be distinguished from their wild brethren. The whole place has an effete, decayed look that is most disheartening. I saw it it is true at an unfavorable season of the year, but there were unmistakable indications everywhere that whether considered as a means of civilization or as purely eleemosynary, the system as tried here is a failure.

The expenditure at this place for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1858, was fifty thousand eight hundred and fifty-eight dollars and forty-one cents, of which seventeen thousand nine hundred eighty-three dollars and eighty-one cents were required to pay the salaries of the sub-agent and other employés. The sub-agent estimates that the crop if it turns out well will feed four hundred and twenty-one Indians for ten months. At this rate the subsistence of one Indian for one year would cost in salaries alone fifty-one dollars and thirty-eight cents. If the crop should not answer the expectations of the sub-agent the cost of course would be proportionably increased.

There is a fine steam saw mill on the Noyo and a store near it, the nucleus of a future village, both of which are within the reservation; but, as I have already acquainted you with all the facts in relation thereto, and my reasons for believing them an injury to the reservation, I shall dismiss them without further remark.

On my return home I visited the Fresno and Kings river farms and the establishment at the Tejon, but it is scarcely necessary to describe their appearance. *Mutatis mutandis*, what has been said of Nome Lackee and Mendocino, will apply to all the others except that at Tejon. The agency buildings and grounds are well kept, and there was an air of comfort about headquarters that agreeably surprised me.

In thus hastily sketching the salient points about the reservations, I have endeavored to invite attention to such facts as might be useful in making up an estimate of their value, and while the picture I have drawn gives, I am aware, but an inadequate idea of the state of things which exists, it will suffice, I hope, to illustrate, if not to justify the

views I have been led to adopt. The leading ideas of the system being, as I have already stated, first, the feeding, clothing, and civilizing the Indians, and second, the accomplishment of all this without expense to the government; the questions to be considered are, first, does the system feed, clothe, and civilize the Indians? and second, does it do this economically? Before proceeding to answer these questions it may be well to have a clear understanding of the sense in which the word civilization is used in this communication. By the term civilization, then, as applied to the Indian, I understand not the mere teaching him to ape the dress and habits of the white man, or even the instructing him in the rudiments of mechanical and agricultural knowledge, but the planting in his mind the germ of some idea which shall be self-developing, and which in its development shall lift him out of the slough where he now wallows. It implies the teaching him, practically, the "immense superiority of a fixed over a roving life," and the dignity of labor, and this not so much by ministering to his physical appetites as a reward for labor done, as by enabling him to apprehend how labor, properly applied, will procure for him the objects of his desire. I might, perhaps, more briefly express the idea by saying he must be taught to use his reason for his own improvement. The system does not civilize the Indian in this sense; scarcely, indeed, in any sense. Some few of them, it is true, are taught to plough, to sow, to reap, to handle an axe, and the like, but they are not taught the use of this knowledge. They learn the thing but not the reason of it, and therefore it makes no permanent impression and leads to nothing.

The Indian performs his task because he is told to do it. He does it mechanically and is no more improved by it than the ox he drives. They are both (the Indian and the ox) educated by the same method, to about the same degree, and with very nearly the same results, and even this education is confined to a very small number. At Mendocino they work regularly ten or twelve hands; at Nome Lackee perhaps forty; at the other reservations an equally limited number. These two are the only Indians who are regularly retained. The great mass of the Indians live exactly as their ancestors did; an occasional blanket is doled out here, or a quart of beans there, to eke out the scanty subsistence nature furnishes them; but with these exceptions their condition is precisely the same as before they were brought upon the reserves. As a set-off to this attenuated benevolence, syphilis prevails to a frightful extent, and whiskey debases still more this already degraded race.

In answering the first question I have also answered the second, but it may be instructive to glance at the system in an economical point of view. Assuming that the system, though it does not civilize, yet feeds and clothes the Indians, and admitting the propriety of establishing government almshouses for their benefit, the question recurs is this a cheap method of doing it?

A single fact in addition to what has already been stated will answer. There was expended in California during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1858, for salaries of employés, including the pay of the superintendent and agents, eighty-one thousand eight hundred

eighty-nine dollars and forty-eight cents. The subsistence of this army of employés costs probably a fourth more, which would swell the total to quite one hundred thousand dollars. Now if nothing more is to be done than to distribute food and clothing it is evident that the greater part of this money is wasted, and that it would be eifinitely cheaper to dispense with the services of the majority of the mployés and purchase the requisite supply of food. I have already made a calculation of the cost of raising wheat on government farms by Indian labor, and need not recapitulate it here, especially as it will scarcely be urged that the crops which have just been harvested are worth one hundred thousand dollars, or even the fourth of that sum. Besides it must be borne in mind that this sum of one hundred thousand dollars represents only a portion of the cost of raising those crops.

A rough calculation of the amount of food one hundred thousand dollars would buy and the number of Indians it would feed, will illustrate the economy of the present system.

Beans and potatoes may be purchased in San Francisco at an average of one and a half cents per pound. Beans and potatoes are not, it is true, a luxurious diet, but they will sustain life and are preferable to the acorns, roots and grass seeds that constitute the usual food of the Indians. One hundred thousand dollars, then, would purchase six millions six hundred sixty-six thousand six hundred and sixty-six pounds and sixty-six hundredths of nutritious food, and would feed six thousand and eighty-eight Indians for one year, giving each one three pounds per day. I have purposely overrated the price of beans; they are imported into San Francisco from Chili in enormous quantities and may be bought by the cargo at a very low rate. I have not, therefore, taken into consideration the cost of transporting them to the reservations and delivering them to the Indians. In this mode the Indians could be fed at an annual cost of sixteen dollars and forty-two cents per head, which is about one-fourth what it costs at present.

If it be conceded that the reservation system, as practiced in California, does not civilize the Indian, and does not feed and clothe him cheaply, that, in short, it is a failure, it only remains to ascertain the cause of the failure. Is the defect in the system or the management? and, if in the system, what remedy shall be applied? These are grave questions, and I attempt their solution with hesitation.

That Indian labor can be successfully used in agricultural and mechanical pursuits cannot be doubted. Evidence of the fact is to be found, not only in the history of the old missions, but in the every-day operations on many a private ranch in California. But it may well be doubted whether any government, and especially a government like ours, can successfully carry on farming operations with Indian or any other labor; and herein lies, as I conceive, the radical defect of Mr. Beale's plan. It is not in the nature of things that one should work for another as he would for himself; and it was not to be expected that a salaried superior of a farm should manage it as profitably as the owner of it.

With the missions the cause was different. The land belonged to

them, and the Indians on it were very nearly in the condition of the slaves upon a plantation in one of the cotton-growing States. They were kindly treated, well fed, sufficiently clothed, and to a certain extent instructed, but the surplus of their productions belonged to the missions; and thus it was, that while the Indians improved the missions grew rich. To improve the condition of the Indians was to improve, so to speak, their own property; and it is no reflection upon the benevolence of the priests to say, that without this reciprocity the scheme would never probably have been crowned with success. It must be admitted that the social and intellectual, and perhaps the moral condition of the Indians, was greatly benefited under this regime.

Wherever, in California, an Indian is discovered superior to the mass of his fellows it will be found, with scarce an exception, that he speaks Spanish, (not English,) from which it may be safely inferred that he was once attached to some mission. There is about the same difference between these mission Indians and the wild tribes as there is between the educated American negro and a wild African; these have both undergone the same process, and with very nearly the same results.

Upon the Lupillomi ranch, near Clear lake, there are some three hundred Indians, the only really prosperous and happy ones I saw in California. These Indians, with the permission and by the aid of the ranchero, cultivate several fields near the edge of the lake; and with the products of these, and the fish which abound in the lake, subsist themselves comfortably. In spring-time and harvest the men go down into Napa and Sonoma valleys and hire themselves at good wages to the farmers there, and thus procure the means of clothing themselves and families. The owner of the ranch finds his advantage in thus protecting, encouraging, and aiding these Indians. They make capital vaqueros, and he can obtain the services of almost any number at a moderate price. They are his feudatories, and while *he* protects *them they* serve *him*. Here again is reciprocity, and a corresponding, probably, consequent success. Can government vicariously establish such relations with the Indians? The question is an embarrassing one, and I leave its solution for abler heads.

The whole subject is embarrassing. It is very much easier to demolish existing systems than to establish new ones; and I have hesitated in recommending the total abandonment of that which obtains, chiefly because of the difficulty of devising a substitute. Careful reflection has served rather to develop objections to existing or proposed systems than to suggest one that shall be unexceptionable. It is with extreme diffidence, therefore, that I present for your consideration the plan which has occurred to me.

The Indians of California may be divided into three classes, each of which requires a separate treatment.

First, there are the wild tribes, occupying the coast range north and east of Mendocino and the slopes of the Sierra. They are a timid and generally inoffensive race, rarely wandering beyond the limits of the mountain valleys, where they and their ancestors have lived from time immemorial. There is nothing to induce settlements in their

immediate vicinity, and years will elapse before the wave of civilization invades their hereditary domain. Nothing is required to be done for these Indians at present, except to embrace all proper opportunities of establishing friendly relations with them and gaining their confidence.

The second class embraces the Indians in the vicinity of Owen's lake, those of the Tejon, and of San Bernardino, Santa Barbara, and San Diego counties, and a few small bands scattered at various points over the State. These Indians cultivate the soil, and subsist in part upon the products of their fields. They are not devoid of intelligence, and retain a certain rude civilization, the fast fading traces perhaps of the old Mission system.

The undisturbed possession of the lands now occupied and cultivated by these Indians should be secured to them; I would also recommend the appointment of visiting agents to supply them with seeds, agricultural implements, and a little clothing, and to encourage and aid them in working out a future for themselves. But the assistance rendered should be limited to supplying deficiencies, otherwise they will lose all self reliance, and be quickly degraded to the level of the mere "Digger."

The third and last class consists of those Indians who formerly occupied the Sacramento, San Joaquin, and other valleys, now covered with settlements. Their natural resources cut off and reduced to a pitiable condition, these Indians hang about the mining towns, where they drag out a miserable existence, a nuisance to the community and a reproach to the government.

I would recommend that these Indians be gathered upon a reservation and made to labor there for their support.

In conducting this reservation several modifications of the present system might advantageously be made. The labor should be performed exclusively by the Indians, and no more white men should be employed than are necessary to instruct and control them; no white person should be permitted to come upon the reserve, and the Indians should never be permitted to leave it; such of the Indians as desire it should have assigned them a small field, the product of which should be their own; and lastly, they should be kept constantly occupied.

As a single reservation will suffice to accommodate all the Indians embraced in the third class, it will not be necessary to retain more than one. If the proposed experiment should result satisfactorily, it will be easy to establish additional farms as circumstances may require; if it should not, unnecessary waste of public money will have been avoided.

Should these suggestions meet your approval, I would further recommend that Nome Cult be selected for carrying them into effect, and that the whole valley be reserved for the purpose.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

G. BAILEY,
Special Agent Interior Department.

Hon. CHARLES E. MIX,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.