

No. 37.

OFFICE SUPERINTENDENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
Southern District of California, December 3, 1862.

SIR: I desire to call your attention to the Indians of my district inhabiting what is known as the Owen's river country, lying on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada. I desire to make a special report on the condition of those Indians, because they need the attention of the government most, and have received it less than those of any portion of the State.

On my return from Washington last May, I found the southern country filled with apprehension of a destructive Indian war, threatening to desolate the sparsely settled region bordering on the Great Desert. Already hostilities had commenced, and several victims had fallen, before the United States troops, ordered by General Wright, arrived on Owen's river. As soon as I could arrange the affairs of my office I started to the scene of difficulties, accompanied by one of my supervisors, Mr. Godey, (an accomplished interpreter,) taking with me a quantity of annuity goods, provisions, &c., for distribution amongst them. On my arrival I despatched runners to the different tribes, inviting them to a council, and was happy to find my call readily responded to. After telling them of the folly of endeavoring to oppose the government that was desirous of aiding them, and assuring them that while any indication of rebellion would meet with prompt and severe punishment, good behavior would secure its fostering care, I found them willing to live in peace, and anxious to cease hostilities if the government will only afford them protection and means of support.

The past winter was one of universal severity. Game, upon which they subsisted in former years, is fast disappearing with the encroachments of civilization; and although the General Land Office has withheld from sale a reservation for those Indians, much of the best portion of it has been settled by whites and the Indians driven off. I laid off a reservation of about six townships, bounded by the Big Pine creek on the north, George's creek on the south, Owen's river on the east, and the Sierra on the west. The amount of land will seem large for the number of Indians, (about 2,000,) but it must be remembered that it is only in small spots that it is susceptible of cultivation, the balance being scarcely fit for grazing purposes, and none of it attractive to settlers. Placed on a reservation where the agent's authority is respected by the emigrants, and where they know they are secure from interference and are treated with kindness, experience has demonstrated there is no difficulty in managing the Indian. The troubles in the State have always arisen outside of the reserves.

Should the department agree with me, as I trust it will, (for I see no other way of keeping those Indians quiet,) I hope it will recommend to Congress the immediate appropriation of \$30,000 for the purpose of enabling me to establish this reservation. That sum, judiciously expended in the purchase of seed, stock cattle, mules, wagons, ploughs, &c., would place those wretched people beyond the necessity of stealing for a livelihood, and would relieve the government from any further expense for their support, as well as dispense with the necessity of maintaining an expensive military post in a country where everything has to be

224 REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR.

hauled a distance of 300 miles over a sandy road, with water only at long intervals, and every obstacle to surmount which is objectionable for a military depot. Already the government has expended many thousands of dollars in sending and keeping troops there to suppress difficulties that would never have occurred had Congress appropriated, a year ago, for this reservation.

The discovery of gold and silver mines in the ranges of the mountains on the borders of the Great Basin make what was three years ago an unknown region at this time a great thoroughfare; and the importance of averting such a calamity as an Indian war is more pressing, as it would prevent travel and deprive the country of valuable resources made known by the energies of our hardy pioneers.

It would be impossible to remove the Indians of the more southerly portion of my district to this proposed reservation, because the rigor of the climate is such that it would be difficult to keep them during the inclement part of the year when snow covers the ground, even if the expense of removing them was not an insurmountable objection to such a proposition. The importance of prompt action by Congress in this matter cannot be presented more strongly than in the fact that it can, by a comparatively small appropriation, if made at once, secure permanent peace with a people who have shown themselves formidable in war, and save the government the enormous expense attendant upon an interminable Indian difficulty which will inevitably occur.

Aside from this view of the matter, every principle of justice and humanity demands that a portion of what really belongs to them by inheritance should be secured to them, and that a nation as noble as ours should lend a helping hand to these unfortunate people to raise them from their degradation.

I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

JOHN P. H. WENTWORTH,
Superintending Agent.

Hon. WILLIAM P. DOLE,
Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Washington, D. C.
