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Sacramento Transcript, Volume 1, Number 46, 24 June 1850 — The Indians of California. [ARTICLE]

The Indians of California.

Fears are sometimes expressed that difficulties may continue with the Indians in this country, until a general and organized system of hostilities be waged against us. These fears are liable to be increased in the States, where the condition of things here is not understood, and hence we deem it our duty to place such facts before the public as we have been able to gather in regard to the probabilities in the matter.

The Aborigines of California are perhaps the most feeble, and incapable of carrying on a formidable system of warfare, of any of the North American Indians. Certain it is, they have never shown any of that skill and boldness that have characterized the Indians in other portions of the continent, ever since its discovery. They are different in their mode of life, more imperfect in their physical development; and in whatever light we view them, inferiority to most of the Indian race is stamped upon their character. They have existed in this country without any evidence of nationality, without establishing bounda-

ries, without claiming a right even in the soil, with little or no knowledge of property of any kind, and in fact as a disorganized though distinct people.

Game, although abounding in the country, has never, so far as we have been able to learn, constituted any considerable part of their diet, for the only apparent reason that it is too much trouble to kill and prepare it for food with their rude weapons and implements. Thus, what the great western tribes glory in, the California Indians are too indolent scarce to attempt.

To give a correct idea of this people, it will be necessary to enter somewhat into particulars. In the summer season, they lead a roving life, and are found in greatest numbers along the borders of the western side of the Sierra Nevada. In these regions they find berries, grapes, seeds, acorns, various kinds of roots, and insects, on which they principally subsist. The rank herbage and grasses that spring up during the latter part of the rainy season, and come to maturity in summer, wither and die on the surface of the earth during the latter part of the dry season, and swarms of grasshoppers, large and fat, abound among it. The Indians set fire to this dried up vegetable matter, when the wind is favorable, and burn over whole districts; the grasshoppers cannot escape: their wings are

grasshoppers cannot escape; their wings are burned off, and after the fire has consumed the grass, the burnt district is covered with the lifeless bodies of these insects. Then comes the Indians' harvest. Their food is all around them, cooked and ready for eating. With their bows and arrows, they sometimes kill elks, deers, hares, &c.; but as before remarked, they manifest, as a people, but little taste or skill for hunting. In the proper season, they manage by means of wooden spears of their own manufacture, to catch fish from the numerous streams of the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys; and it is said that they manifest more skill in taking fish than in any other art.

They are called "Digger Indians," from the nature of their habitations, which are constructed in the following manner:

A circular hole is dug in the earth—say three or four feet deep, and from ten to twenty feet in diameter; over the top of which poles are laid in an arching form, and covered first with small sticks and weeds, and then with earth and green sods. A small opening in the centre of this roof is left for the escape of smoke, and on one side a door way, just large enough to admit a man's feet first, which serves also as a window. In these cellars the natives are buried through the winter, in the most filthy and disgusting condition. Some contend that there is a class of

of mountain Indians in California different

in their habits, from the race just described. After making extensive inquiry,

in which we have consulted gentlemen who have spent years in Oregon and California, we have come to the conclusion that the natives west of the Sierra Nevada are all the same class of beings. It is true they do not all burrow every winter, but this is a matter of chance. We have yet to learn that any of the Indian race can be found this side of Oregon, who ever build any thing like comfortable wigwams to shelter them from the weather. We have been assured by men who have been in the mountain regions, that the natives there are evidently the same class that are found in the valleys, and that during the most inclement season, one half of them are in a state of almost complete nudity. In the mountains, as in the valleys they chiefly subsist on acorns through the long rainy season. These are gathered in the latter part of autumn, dried and stowed away in large receptacles above ground, formed of a sort of wicker-work, in the shape of hogsheads, and containing sometimes several hundred bushels. Through them the air circulates, and the acorns become dry and hard. To prepare the acorns for food, the Indians pound them to a powder with stones, and then make a pasty gruel, and sometimes a sort of bread. Such are some of their habits.

Further evidence of the imbecility of this

people appears from the fact that they lack that feeling of independence, elsewhere a prominent trait in the Indian character.— Before the discovery of gold, it was customary among the few in this country who cultivated the soil, to keep droves of the natives around them to do their labor. When the first operations were commenced in the diggings, the Indians were employed for the consideration of a few most paltry trifles, to perform the heavy labors of mining. To get together a sufficient number, a few whites would go to the places frequented by them, and drive away as many as they chose.

The influx of strangers since the discovery of gold, has been so great, that the quiet of the race has been disturbed. A new order of things has commenced, to which they will not, or cannot, adapt themselves; still, their old customs have been in some measure broken up. The whites have introduced into their midst what to them are luxuries, which they have become accustomed to take possession of by stealth or robbery, whenever opportunity presents itself. Their rights have not always been respected; in many instances abuses have been practised upon them, and from these facts it is easy to see the cause of much trouble. A mutual hatred exists between them and the mining community, and their characters are so different that this feeling can hardly be eradicated from either party. Where that hostile feeling ex-

either party. Where that hostile feeling exists, one party or the other must prevail until the weaker party becomes extinct.

We will now take a hasty glance at this people as they have conducted themselves in war, citing a few instances. In the winter of 1848-'49, the people in the vicinity of Sutter's Fort often received accounts of Indian depredations in the north, and some time in February, about thirty murders committed by them, on various occasions, had been heard of. The victims were principally Oregonians. In the latter part of February, 1849, a company of about sixty, horse and foot, left Sutter's Fort to chastise the Indians. They took the direction of Sutter's Mill or Culloma, and the Indians fled before them. Some of the mounted men overtook the natives, and several were killed while trying to escape. A quantity of stolen property was recovered in this expedition.

Further depredations were committed, and a few weeks after, another company of about twenty whites left the region of Culloma, and followed the Indians to their encampment.—This handful of men actually took prisoners, and drove to Sutter's Mill, between two and three hundred Indians. A sort of trial was then given them, after which thirty of their number were shot. The rest were released. From that time very littte trouble was had with the Indians in the northern mines till the winter of 1849-'50. What has lately

taken place among them, our readers have already had accounts of. It will be seen that the difficulties between the whites and natives have been principally in the winter season, and early in the spring. The inference is, therefore, that the danger this season is past.

Such is the character of the race with whom the difficulties in California, on various occasions have arisen. It is not our purpose at this time to discuss the morality of the course pursued by both parties, in relation to each other. But we have seen that the natives of California have given no evidence of skill in warfare. Almost all their acts of violence have been perpetrated in a stealthy, cowardly manner, and never have they attempted to carry out any extended or general plan of operation. Never have they come upon a town in the night and laid it in ashes, as might be expected from a savage foe. They seem to have no higher idea of warfare, than to attack unarmed individuals, or to kill the sleeping inmates of a tent, in some isolated place.—They have only the rudest implements of war, and cannot successfully defend themselves against American rifles. The probabilities are that they are not clannish in their feelings, and will never unite as a people against the whites.

From the foregoing the inference is that no very serious troubles will occur with

the natives on this side of the Sierra Nevada.

MERCANTILE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION.—At the adjourned meeting on Friday the committee appointed to draft a constitution made a report. It was read by sections and passed after some little discussion without amendment. The initiation fee is ten dollars, and the quarterly dues afterwards three dollars. The subscribing of $150 will constitute an individual a life member. Col. Zabriskie, Mr. Nickerson, Dr. Mackenzie, Mr. Warren, and Mr. Queen, were appointed a committee to present the constitution to the citizens and give all who wish an opportunity to become members The committee are also to solicit subscriptions to forward the purposes of the association. The committee are to report on the first Monday of next month. The constitution will be found in another column. We call the attention of the community to the advertisement of the committee on membership to be found in our advertising columns.

MR. ROWE'S BENEFIT.—To night is the last time that our citizens will have an opportunity of visiting the Pacific Theatre while it is under its present management. On this the last Evening, of the appearance of the Olympic Circus on the boards of the Pacific, Mr. Rowe takes a benefit. This gentleman has labored incessantly for the amusement of the public and deserves at this his last call a bumper for a house. His friends we trust will turn out and show that

his efforts have been appreciated. A fine bill is presented, and Master Rafael will appear of course for the last time. Mr. and Mrs. Rowe will appear and ride a double act of Horsemanship. Moor's songs have taken finely with the b'hoys and we expect something rich to-night from him. This has been a favorite place of amusement for many of our citizens and will be much missed by all. Last Saturday night many of the beauty and fashion of our city were present. We are happy to see that the exquisite grace of Senora Fanny Manten is thus appreciated. There is certainly an artistic elegance about every movement of hers which places her high in her profession, and we are happy to observe a taste in our community which is capable of appreciating and ready to encourage the true excellence possessed by this danseues.

Mr. Rowe's daring acts of Horsemanship have won the applause of the audience night after night and of course no pains will be spared to give the performance that interest which all will expect on the occasion of his Benefit.

☞We direct the attention of the public to the call for a full meeting of the law and order association to-night. Business of importance will be transacted. The advertisement is in another column.

☞We tender our sincere thanks to our

cotemporary of the Pacific News, Gen. Winchester for his kindness in furnishing us with late and valuable papers from the States.

STEAMER SENATOR.—Opposition is beginning to manifest itself among the Steamers that run from the Bay to Sacramento. There is no Steamer here yet that can compete either in elegance or convenience with the Senator. The consequence is, that although her prices are as yet pretty well up, she continues to receive a large share of patronage. It will be a long time before the public will be supplied with another boat so excellent as the Senator.

SUTTER'S TITLE.—The following are the remarks of the Pacific News of Saturday relative to the confirmation of Sutter's title:

"But there are equities existing in numerous cases, which should have all the binding force of positive law. The case of Capt. Sutter, for example, is one that appeals amongst the strongest of those that should be remembered with justice and leniency before the ultimate tribunals. His energy should not go unrewarded, so far as a full reward of his enterprize is required.

Among the earliest of those who began the development of her resources, California should be bountiful to the patriarch of the Sacramento. Under his title rights have been acquired, and capital and ability employed, that demands both security and compensation."

MURDER!—A man by the name of Dutch George was most brutally murdered on the Cosumnes, N. Fork, 7 miles above the forks on Saturday the 15th, inst. George went into a storekeeper's tent by the name of Strikins, with a man from Wisconsin and awoke S. who was drunk or crazy, and asked for some shot. The man answered that he had none, and commenced abusing them for awaking him. They retired to the tent of the Wisconsin man, who said he would furnish him with some. Soon afte Strikins appeared at the door of the tent with a pistol in each hand and threatened to shoot George if he did not pay him for a small demand he had against him. Both George and his companion sprung to their feet, when S. discharged one of his pistols, the ball entering just below the navel

and passing through the body, killing Dutch George immediately,—the other was discharged at the Wisconsin man, but the ball missed him, they then clinched each other, when the store-keeper struck the other with the pistol over the head stuning him, which caused a relaxation of his hold. The former then ran to his store for his shot gun, and returning, shot at the latter but missed him. S. then ran some distance from the scene of this bloodshed to where a number of men were at work, and telling different stories, was arrested, a guard placed over him, but he managed to escape and had not been arrested when our informant left.

DESTROYING BUILDINGS.—In the first fire at San Francisco several buildings were torn down by order of the Mayor, to arrest the progress of the flames. The owners of the buildings destroyed have presented claims against the city for damages, to the amount of half a million dollars. The consequence was, that during the last fire, the city authorities did not take the responsibility of ordering houses re-

responsibility of ordering houses removed, in cases where it was necessary. In one place, a few citizens tore down three buildings, and made themselves responsible for damages, though the fire was stopped in that quarter by their exertions.

TULE PLAINS ON FIRE.—It is said by passengers who arrived from San Francisco, yesterday morning, that the Tule plains, on the San Joaquin, were on fire, Saturday evening, and that the flames could be seen from the Sacramento, lighting up the whole heavens. The appearance is described as brilliant in the extreme.

Messrs Editors:

I am glad to see the advertisement of the County Surveyor in one of your columns,—as there are several persons among those who are willing and anxious to take up preemption claims. (for agricultural purposes) in the county, who may not be aware that Mr. Cleal is the only Legal Surveyor, whose surveys and records will be recognised by law; and consequently by having surveys made by unauthorised persons, they will be likely, not only to lose their Money but their

only to lose their Money but their Location also. *

We extract the following items from the Pacific News:

The Cholera has again made its appearance at St. Louis. In the week ending the 4th ultimo, there were 22 deaths. It was on the increase.

A bed of bituminous coal, thought to be inexhaustible, has been discovered in Walker county, Ga., and near the railroad.

A shameful riot took place in the Tabernacle, New York, by which the Anniversary of the American Anti-Slavery Society was broken up.

The Forrest Divorce case was not yet settled.

DISSOLVING THE UNION.—Hon. THADDEUS STEVENS, in a letter from Washington to a gentleman in Huntington, Pennsylvania, says, "We dissolve the Union here every day, but it heals up the following night, and the next morning is as sound and strong as if it never had been dissolved."

Dickens, the celebrated novelist, was to have commenced the publication of a weekly periodical in London on the 30th of March, last, under the title of 'Household Words'

AUCTION SALES.—J. B. Starr & Co. will sell this morning, at ten o'clock, at their sales room corner Front and K. sts. 10,000 lbs Irish Potatoes, 1,000 lbs Butter, House Frames, Waggon and Harness, For par-

Frames, Waggon and Harness, For particulars see advertisement in another colun

☞ Report of mortality in this City for the week ending June 22nd :

Whole number of deaths 5.

Diarrhœa 2 ; Typhoid Fever 1 ; Disease not ascertained 1 ; Fever and Diarrhœa 1.