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Daily Alta California, Volume 3, Number 15, 16 January 1852 — Letter of Don Jose Joaquin Ortega. [ARTICLE]

Letter of Don Jose Joaquin Ortega.

The intelligence received from time to time from the seat of the Indian war in the Southern part of the State, has contained sundry mysterious givings out, to the effect that the Indian rebellion was instigated and urged on by native Californians, who were anxious to rid their country of the American inhabitants. This charge has been repeated so often, and no contradiction having been attempted, that the people of this section of the State, to a great extent, regarded the various statements as truth. It was not remarkable, then, that the news published in the San Diego Herald, and received here by the Northerner, should have been generally copied, as the implication of several persons by name was but the proper sequel to the numerous assertions to the same effect, which had been steadily persisted in for a month before. That news, it will be recollected, contained a statement of Antonio Garra, the chief of the insurgent Indians, declaring that Senor Estudillo and Don Jose Joaquin Ortega, two of the oldest and most respectable citizens of San Diego, were both guilty of conspiring with him in the atrocities he committed and meditated.

These disclosures were published at once by the press of this city, without comment, and they may possibly have gone to confirm the truth of the former grave charges. But it appears by later intelligence per Sea Bird, that this confession of Garra is not to be relied upon, and that he has labored, through the influence of unworthy motives, to blast the reputation of these two worthy and esteemed citizens of that portion of the State. Various letters received by us

go to confirm this view of the matter, some of which we have already published. With one of the gentlemen named above, Don Joaquin Ortega, we have the pleasure of a slight personal acquaintance, and we are gratified that we are enabled to lay before our readers directly from his own hand, the following satisfactory and conclusive exculpation from the malignant and scandalous charges which have been uttered:

SAN DIEGO, 30th Dec., 1851.

SIR:—With your permission, I beg to avail myself of the columns of your widely circulated paper, to correct by a few brief facts, an impression which has gone abroad of my collusion with Antonio Garra in the late insurrection among the Indians of Aqua Caliente, he being the head and front of such outbreak as it appears, and having in his confession as prisoner brought forth an imputation upon my fidelity and character, which calls upon me for a refutation. Were it not that my name has been published to the world in this transaction, I should not think it of sufficient importance to make a defence in public—but I rely upon my fidelity to the flag under which I live, a clear conscience, and upon the opinion of those natives of this soil, who have known me well for years, and a host of Americans in this part of this country, who can testify to my uniform good conduct, friendship and hospitality. Upon these few simple, and true assertions, I refute with indignation, every, and each implication of Antonio Garra, and with the relation of one or two matters which passed under my own observation, leave an intelligent public, capable I believe of discriminating between the character of a white man and an Indian, to draw just conclusions.

On the 11th of October, the Indians arrived at my rancho of Santa Maria, and sent for me to say that they wished to celebrate the feast day of their favorite bird, the Javilan. I told them that I had no objection to their feast, and they commenced dancing about four o'clock in the afternoon. They applied to me for something to eat, and having nothing else to offer them, I sent for four calves, which were tied near my house, made them this present, and told them to make themselves contented, and not to quarrel and fight. The day following, I told them that they must finish the feast that night, as the next day I was going to Santa Barbara, with seven others from San Diego, where we were going to have a convention; that others from Los Angeles, San Luis Obispo and Monterey, would also be there; and that our object was to petition the Government for a division of territory, that we, who were living here in the southern country, unable, without sacrifice, to pay our taxes, might get relief; and that they must remain peaceable and quiet, and get into no difficulties which might affect the Government in an unfriendly manner towards them.

With this I left. The tribe who had the feast were

'Dieguirios,' and have ever remained conformable to the instructions which I gave them.

Antonio Garra was not at the feast, nor were any of the Agua Caliente Indians.

One word more, and I am done. My reasons for cautioning the Indians to be quiet and behave themselves properly, was because I knew that they felt aggrieved at the levy upon them for taxes, as being something they could not comprehend, and consequently disliked.

If you will do me the favor, Sir, to publish this letter in your valuable paper, it will afford me much pleasure to reciprocate in any way, should you at any time visit this part of the country.

I have the honor to be Sir, your most ob't serv't,

JOSE JOAQUIN ORTEGA

To Hon. E. GILBERT, Ed. Alta California.

FROM SAN DIEGO.—We received, per Golden Gate a copy of the San Diego Herald of the 5th inst., from which we extract the annexed paragraphs:

A DUEL.—A dispute having arisen between Capt. Haig and his Lieutenant, they agreed to settle it by a duel with Colt's large sized revolvers—distance 20 yards. After an exchange of two shots, the seconds interfered, and the affair was arranged to the satisfaction of the principals. It is said that the Captain's second shot came near putting a quietus to the Lieutenant's aspirations for "glory"—the ball having grazed his whiskers.

AN UNFORTUNATE ENCOUNTER occurred yesterday, on the Plaza, at Old Town, between Lt. Watkins, of the "San Francisco Rangers," and one of our citizens, Mr. Philip Crosthwaite, in which both were wounded—the latter, it is said mortally. We have not been able to learn the origin of the difficulty, but are informed that Mr. Crosthwaite fired first—his ball taking effect in the right thigh of Watkins, who returned the fire, shooting the former through the abdomen.

A DUEL—ALMOST.—We learn that one of our city fathers sent a challenge to another distinguished citizen, a Californian, last week, which was accepted. The challenged party elected to fight on horseback, with California lances. Just as our citizens were getting "their backs up" for some novel sport, and the young ladies were discussing the propriety of embroidering a sash for the victorious knight at the anticipated *joust*, it was reported that the matter had been amicably arranged.

There is a report in town that one of the notorious Lugo family is at work, openly, in Lower California, raising a company of Mexicans to assist the Indians, in this part of the State, in their demonstrations against the Americans. If it be true, and our people get him, or any of his party, into their clutches, the time occupied in a Court Martial trial will be something less than was consumed.

Martial trial will be something less than was consumed in the examination of Bill Marshall.

Maj. Brown, U. S. A., left this city a few days since, for the Rancho del Chino, but owing to the intervening streams being so much swollen by the recent rains, he was obliged to turn back, and arrived here on the 4th inst.

It was reported yesterday, (the 4th inst.) that Major Heintzelman would return to town in a few days. Whether his command will also come in, we did not learn.

The San Luis Rey Indians, who came into the Mission for protection at the commencement of the recent outbreak, are returning to their villages, as they now feel secure, there being two companies of U. S. troops between them and danger. The San Luis Indians have always been friendly.

The following gentlemen are proposed as candidates for city officers at the approaching election: For Mayor, D. B. Kurtz; for Aldermen, Wm. P. Toler, C. C. Johnson, Wm. Lesmy, Abel Watkinson, R. E. Baimond; for City Marshal, Joseph Reiner; City Attorney, James W. Robinson; City Treasurer, Jose Antonio Estudillo.

WHERE SHALL THE LEGISLATURE SIT?—This momentous question has now come up, and is being agitated by the members at Vallejo. Our Legislative reports of yesterday (received through Adams & Co.) show that considerable division of opinion exists on this subject. A great number of variously specified propositions have been received. San Jose has been voted down by a vote of ten to forty-seven. Our correspondent informs us that, next to the prospects of an adjournment to Sacramento, are the chances of the Legislature remaining fixed for the winter on the dreary and homeless hills of Vallejo.