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The Tulare Valley.

Size and Quality of the Tulare Valley—Indians—White Thieves—Lieut. Williamson—Captain Beal—Walker's Pass &c., &c.

We have been kindly permitted to publish the following interesting letter from Lieut. Stoneman, 1st Dragoons, U. S. A. now stationed at Fort Miller. It will be found to contain much valuable information and gives a thorough description of the Tulare Valley, through which it was expected the Pacific Railroad would have to pass. Lieut. Williamson, who has been engaged in making a thorough reconnaissance of all that portion of the Sierra Nevada from the head of Bear River to the Coast Range, is of opinion that Walker's Pass is altogether unfit for the construction of a railroad. The portion of country described by Lieut. Stoneman is very little known, and his account of it will be found valuable as well as interesting.

S. F. Sun.

DEPOT CAMP, CAL., (on Pose Creek,) }
August 23d, 1854. }

Sir: Since our arrival, and on the way here, I have had something of an opportunity of obtaining considerable information, which is both new and interesting to me; and hoping it may prove so to others, I will give it for what it is worth. I find that the character of the great Tulare Valley is very different from what most people generally supposed; and although I had seen both ends of it several years

ago, I had formed a wrong opinion of its value and advantages. At the southern extremity, I saw a very pretty arable spot, and had formed the idea that it was much larger in extent than is really the case, and that there are other and similar locations. But to be more particular, I will begin at the northern extremity and come south, describing it as I go, on the eastern side. The valley by way of the wagon road from the San Joaquin river to the Tejon Pass, is about 197 miles in length, say in a straight line 150 miles, and on an average 50 miles in width; or in area about 7500 square miles. From the San Joaquin to King's River it is a dry, arid plain. On King's River there is a narrow bottom averaging about half a mile in width, by 25 long---12 1-2 square miles. From King's River to the first of four creeks is a dry plain. Here is one of the most fertile and beautiful spots in California. In extent it is about 25 miles by 10, and about one-half of it is at present susceptible of cultivation, the other half will require a great expenditure of labor in draining, to make a portion of it inhabitable---say 200 square miles in all. From the four creeks to Tula River is a dry, arid plain, little or no arable land on it; Tula to Kern, a barren plain. On Kern River there may possibly be 20 square miles of inhabitable land. From Kern River to Tejon Pass, barren sand plain. At this point there may possibly be 150 miles of tolerably good land, though in some portions it is very handsome and the soil of most excellent quality. Through the whole length of this valley runs a Tula marsh, which expands in some places into lakes. These lakes are, during most of the time, connected by a sluggish stream of water, and bordered by

marshes of Tula, but during very dry seasons these canals or channels are dry, and the lakes are nearly or quite so. A Mr. Anderson tells me he crossed the valley (from east to west,) about the middle, in 1844; and found the whole valley dry, with no water from mountain to mountain. The average distance from the Sierra Nevada on the east to this marsh, is about twice as great as the distance from the marsh to the Coast Range of mountains on the west. As there are no streams making down from the Coast Range into this marsh, except in very wet weather, the whole of that portion west of Tula

lakes is worthless in the extreme. The proportion then, of this immense valley which can possibly be looked upon as inhabitable, is small indeed, in all not more than 375 square miles, or one-twentieth part. With the exception of the places above mentioned there is little or no timber throughout the length and breadth of the whole valley. The Indians throughout this valley, (and the same may be said of those in all this part of California,) appear to have no particular name for any of their lakes, rivers, plains, or mountains, but call that one, or that portion of either, occupied by them, after the name of the particular tribe or rancheria living there.

The Indians that live in this valley, reside for the most part of the time, along the base of the mountains. They have no permanent residences down in the plains, on account of the great annoyance which they experience from the mosquitos, ants and other insects. They come down, however, at the proper season to fish and gather the roots of the Tula, wild rice and grass seeds, for food;

upon these, together with the acorns in the mountains and a little game which they contrive to kill, they manage to eke out a most miserable existence, but when very hard off for they are compelled to resort to theft. They have the reputation of being most accomplished thieves, but I know, from the best authority, that a great deal of the credit they have obtained for this kind of rascality, is justly due to a class of Americans stopping on the four creeks, King's River, and at some other parts as far north as Stockton; particularly as to the stealing of horses, mules and cattle.

The Indian thieves live along the east side of the Coast Range from the Cajon Pass, up as far as the Tejon Pass, and then along the east side of the Sierra Nevada, as far north as the head waters of the Merced and Tuolumne rivers. These Indians are all connected together, but the largest and worst band live just north of the head waters of Kern river, in the vicinity of a large Lake, probably the one put down on Fremont's map, (Fremont never was there, though a portion of his party was,) as Owen's Lake. They are called the Sey-pan-te-se tribe, and in the Indian language the Mez-tene-os, (or bad Indians.) When in the Tejon Pass to the north you have the great Tulare and San Joaquin Valleys; to the east, the eastern slope of the Coast Range; and to the south-west and west, the passes of San Francisco and Walker's Pass, leading to Los Angeles and Santa Barbara respectively. (This last pass is named after an Indian chief called Wal-ke-ra, and by Americans perverted into Walker, and is the Walker's Pass of the Coast Range, not of the Sierra Nevada. He is from the river Severn, and the most expert

horse thief in California; he is a Lutaw chief, speaks Spanish, and has a large band with him, and several of the rancheros, amongst whom is Williams—pay him tribute or black mail.) From this point you can go with wagons in each of the directions mentioned, except to Santa Barbara. Bear in mind the fact that the mountain Indians are those who steal and commit all the depredations (though those in the plains may be cognizant of the act,) and also that they live on the east side of the mountain range. They go to the southern country, steal animals, run them out of the Cajon or San Francisco passes, bring them north, run some of them into the Tulare Valley through the Tejon Pass, dispose of them to traders, (many of whom are deserters from the army) and take the rest on north and cache them near the head waters of the Merced and Tuolumne rivers, and then at their leisure dispose of them to these or other Americans or Californians. A large proportion of the animals stolen are killed for food or used by the Indians as saddle animals. Among these horse thieves are a great many Indians who were brought up on the missions, they speak the Spanish language, and are commonly great rascals. (It is said, with what truth I know not, that horses are stolen from the north and taken to the south by the same route.) In fact, for all movements against these Indians living between the Cajon Pass, on the south, and Carson Valley on the north, the Tejon, or Walker's Pass (though I think the former by far the preferable location,) appears to be the two bests points from which to start, and as the great sand plain on the east, and Coast Range on the west, necessarily force all travellers by land, between the above mentioned limits,

to go by this point, it is most admirably adapted for all the purposes of a frontier post. There is an amount of good land sufficient for raising a supply of grain or supporting a number of animals adequate for all practicable purposes. The distance from San Pedro to Los Angeles is twenty-seven miles, and from Los Angeles to the Tejon Pass but eighty-five, and all but a few miles, a most excellent and level road, with plenty of grass, water and wood. It being at an elevation of several hundred feet above the valley, the winds blowing fresh most of the year, and no marshes in the vicinity, nothing should prevent it from being one of the most healthy spots in the healthiest country in the world. Another idea has struck me very forcibly, this point, the Tejon Pass, is right in the midst of the very Indians who go to Inrupa, (a post garrisoned by 15 or 20 soldiers, and within rifle shot of a settlement of 500 stalwart Mormons) and steal animals almost every moon.

Between Walker's Pass and the Tejon, and about 30 miles distant from each there

is plenty of pine timber for building purposes, and although it is in the mountains is accessible.

Lieut. Williamson is getting along remarkably well with his survey. He has completed his reconnoissance of all that portion of the Sierra Nevada, from the head of Kern river to the Coast Range, and a most thorough one he has made. Walker's Pass is of no account at all. He will proceed as soon as the wagons arrive from Fort Miller with the subsistence stores, to run several lines of levels thro' the different passes in the Tejon. Nothing as yet has been heard from Beal. The body of the man who strayed from

Lieut. McClane's party was found on the Plains, between Kern river and the Tejon. The weather is quite warm, varying from 98 to 105 degrees at midday, and in the cool shade from 40 to 60 degrees, at sunrise in the morning. Although the difference of temperature during 12 hours has been as great as 56 degrees, yet this great change is hardly felt. It has been raining for the last ten days or a fortnight over in the basin or plain beyond the mountains, some days quite hard. Should the communication contain any ideas you may think worthy of attention, you can make what use of them you may think proper.

GEORGE STONEMAN,
Lieut. 1st Dragoons.

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