

# Shasta Courier, Volume 3, Number 34, 28 October 1854 — 'Che I\*ill Kivrr Intliiins. [ARTICLE]

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## **The Pitt River Indians.**

We desire to call the attention of Col. Henly, Superintendent of Indian affairs in California, to the present condition of the Indians in this portion of the State. It is perhaps necessary, in order to consider this subject intelligently, that we first know something of the character of these Indians—their numbers and ability to commit injury when impelled by hunger—their probable supply of food for the winter, by which, as it is abundant or scarce, their actions towards the whites will of course be regulated.

From reliable data, furnished us by several gentlemen who have had every opportunity to obtain correct information, we are satisfied that the Indians commonly known as the Pitt River Indians—embracing all those tribes living on Pitt and McCloud rivers and their various tributaries—number not less than three thousand.

They are superior, both physically and intellectually, to the great body of California Indians. This opinion is borne out by the superior strategy and remarkable prowess so frequently displayed in their prosecution of hostilities against the whites. The history of this County since '49 places beyond the reach of successful contradiction the assertion that their men are the most daring and intrepid warriors in California. Without professing to absolute accuracy, but intending to be considerably within bounds, we do not hesitate to express the belief that the files of the *Courier* will show that they have

killed more than fifty whites within the past three years. And the instances are on record of their having made the most desperate fights, hand to hand, with white men.

They are also the most enterprising Indians in the State. This is evidenced by the fact that they have not, in their war and plundering excursions, confined themselves strictly to those settlements immediately adjoining the district of country which they inhabit, the usual custom with other tribes; but, with remarkable boldness and success, have made excursions into Trinity and Siskiyou on the North, and Colusa and Butte on the South—thus ranging over a country at least one hundred and fifty miles in extent.

So much for the character of these Indians, and their power, if so disposed, to injure the whites. Now let us inquire as to their present and prospective condition in regard to a supply of food for the winter. In the first place, then, the mansineta crop has failed—the acorn crop has failed—to a great extent the Salmon crop has failed—in short the past has been a most unfortunate season to them for laying up supplies for the winter. Their destitution long before the arrival of spring must follow as the inevitable consequence. They will then be compelled to steal or starve, for the white settlers are not able to supply them with food. Which alternative they will adopt may be readily imagined. Even a follower of the meek and lowly Saylor would take food from another man's field rather than starve. We cannot expect the untutored savage to do less. The result of this will of course be war to the knife, and the knife to the hilt.

Now the important question arises: How may this state of things be prevented? This is a matter for the immediate consideration of Col. Henly and his sub-agents. We trust, for the sake of the Indians as well as the whites, that they will give the matter their earnest attention at once. There is no time to spare. It is too late to endeavor to get them on the reservation in Colusa the present season, even if that plan was practicable or desirable—neither of which we believe it to be. The only feasible plan to be adopted under the circumstances, that we can see, is the establishment of a post somewhere in their vicinity, or even at Fort Reading, and from thence supply them with sufficient flour and meat to keep them from either stealing or starving. It is believed that in this way alone may a recurrence of the dreadful scenes of previous winters be prevented.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.—Alas, “Adobe,” where art thou? Hast gone in? hast caved? hast vamosed the ranch? And thou, “Joshua,” why sleep ye all the day? Thy great progenitor spoke and the sun stood still—and thou (remarkable coincidence) speakest not but standest still thyself. And, grievous reflection, “Karl,” he too hath deserted us. As Rachael wept for her children, so do we for our correspondents, because they are not. Flow on ye unbidden tears! Howl ye winds and crack your cheeks, for ye make music in sympathy with our desolate feelings. *Verbum sat.*

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