

The California Star.

1-15-1848

SONOMA, January, 1848.

Sir,—In a late letter I promised some remarks on the subject of our Indian relations. 'Tis not probable I shall have every body to agree with me in my ideas of Indian character, and the best mode of treating those in our midst. But let true history correct if I err, and men study the question and reason a little before they too hastily condemn.

Indians, and particularly those in California, are, as we all know, mentally, and morally, an inferior order of our race; are unfit and incapable of being associated with whites on any terms of equality, or of being governed by the same laws; and if retained among us, must necessarily have a code and treatment applicable to their peculiar character and condition.

Were it possible to have all masters just, mild, and good, I would—I say it for the benefit of the Indians themselves—make slaves of them. But since this cannot be so, and besides, the word grating so harshly on the ears of our modern philanthropists, Christians, and envious non-slaveholders; I would suggest the propriety of some sort of an apprentice system being established, and Indians prohibited from passing through the inhabited parts of the country without passes. This may seem severe and anti-democratical advice, but necessity compels such a course, or else, we whites must abide the consequences of the present state of affairs, while the Indians themselves will in time be the greater sufferers.

Either this plan must soon be adopted, or else they be driven out of the settlement—already educated, Christianized, border robbers—against whom a continual war will necessarily be waged, for depredations committed, till all are exterminated.

Under the late order of things in California, as indeed, in most parts of the Republic of Mexico, the Indians, if not in name, were *aps de facto*, slaves, and ruled and treated accordingly.

The drunken, roving, vagabond life most have led in California since our flag went up, added to the greater facilities, and even encouragement for robbing and murdering, shows the impolicy of having removed all restraints, formerly held over them.

I will mention one instance out of several I could state, where such encouragement has been given. General V. of this place, had an Indian boy in his family, who attempted the life of his lady, last winter, by poisoning her. He was arrested, confessed the fact, sent to San Francisco, where after being detained prisoner awhile, was suffered to go loose, without any further notice taken of the affair. By the laws of Mexico, which are pretended to be administered here, this Indian should have died.

The very impolitic and pernicious course pursued by some, in hiring Indians to work, is fast giving them a much worse character than they would otherwise acquire, and will render them, in time, perfectly useless as such assistants. That is for a farmer, or others, wishing their services, to try and entice them away from such in whose employ they may be, by offers of higher wages or other inducements. This has a strong tendency to make the Indians so treated, much more idle, roving, and dissolute; besides being a mean and unfair act towards the persons whose plans and work are thus deranged and injured, by their hirelings abruptly and secretly leaving them, which in most instances is the case, as they are generally indebted to their employers.

Should the Governor think it beyond the pale of his powers to adopt the system proposed, he might with all propriety order the following;—That a man hiring an Indian for any length of time, shall have a written bargain to that effect, made before an Indian Agent or Alcalde, and the latter be compelled to serve out his voluntarily made time. And also, that any person who shall harbor, or attempt to entice such off during this period, be liable to a criminal prosecution.

The late proclamation, relative to selling and giving Indians ardent spirits, is a good one, and it will be supported by all the order loving portion of our citizens.

This hasty production has merely been penned with a view of calling the attention of those in authority, as well as others, to some discussion, and action, upon this important case.

Yours, &c.
PACIFIC.

A TRIP ACROSS THE BAY.

No. III.

As we rode on together, now toiling up hillock—now plunging, warily as permitted by our restive beasts, down rough steeps, of sometimes uncertain length, we could discern nothing but the continuation of whitish loam in advance, which might be the road, for as to seeing, the very best that could be done at it was to look on shadows, and sometimes rather dark ones; it would require better eyes than ours to have penetrated the darkness of that night. Nowhere could we perceive any object whereby to shape our course, and G. too, our remaining companion, was growing unpleasantly quiet. For an oppressive, though brief space of time, beside the clumsy clattering of our horses' feet and ring and jingle of spur and bridle bit, all else was quiet around. "How far did you call it to Y's," asked we, anxious to hear the sweet music of speech. "About five leagues," said G. "Then they must be of india rubber, for here is the ranch of Gen. V., only, distant from Sonoma, less than two," and again silence sat with us upon horse. Descending a long stretch of hill-side, at its base we marked the moon rise above another on our way, and never was her mellow light more welcome. Under its inspiring influence we together grew uproarious in merriment. "The owl awakened from the dell," and we paused an instant to listen to its doleful melody. The sharp quick bark of the coyote came clear and piercing on the night air from the thicket just ahead, and we shouted, only to awaken a thousand ringing echoes, and listen the effect of a pack of noisy mouths in full cry.

Leaving the grounds of the desolate, time-worn tenement of Gen. V. and "charging" through the caral, we emerged, in full moonlight, upon a large level country, and entered a scattering growth of timber of good proportions. We were in Napa Valley, and without accident, or even incident, and within an hour from leaving the ranch, we alighted at the door of the aged and hospitable farmer Y. and were instantly welcomed in.

With 'appetites keen drawn,' it is quite unnecessary to tell how we gathered around the old family board, and with impetuosity, gratifying to your genuine hospitality, assailed in divers ways, the different dishes before us. And now it was that we meditated further travel. Earnestly were we pressed by the kind old farmer to rest for the night there. No, we were grateful for the offer—we will ride yet further. Day could scarce be brighter, the atmosphere no inducement to linger. We gathered our serapas about us, took again the saddle, and riding hard, over broken ground and principally through fine large timber, reached the ranch of Dr. B. Time consumed, thirty-five minutes.

NAPA VALLEY, in length, is about 35 miles, and will average in width, probably less than two leagues. Extending N. E. its boundary is the "Devil's Mount," and S. W. the land opens to the bay. East, the Sonoma Mountains range a boundary, and its western confines are the Wahackamet line of hills, rearing masses of gigantic red wood timber for leagues in length. Mr. G. Yount visited this valley in the summer of 1832, and shortly after settled here. This, years ago, when Indians were plenty, and white men were not, was a single-handed act of hazardous enterprise, peculiar, only, to the early race of settlers. Many darker hours than may ever dawn upon the lives of "common men," they have witnessed, and many strange, and really startling tales of early life in this wild country, were related us, and may be cited again and again and never lack the interest first imparted, or embraced in every act of the fearful drama.

The valley of which we speak, presents over its surface, scarce a rise of ground deserving the name of hill, and is of superior value as a woodland. The oak, (better than we had seen in the country,) the pine, fir, a scattering growth of maple, laurel, alder, &c. The soil is of richest quality, and yields, as we shall in a little time show, immensely, and with comparative slight labor. Delicious water may be found within ten or twelve feet of the surface, in any part of the valley. Several large

springs of coldest water are to be found at distances apart. The "Arroya of Napa" (a small stream) supplied by these, makes along the base of the western range of mountains, moves a half dozen mills, and can, we are told, move as many more in its downward flight. This stream, flowing southwesterly, strikes Suisun Bay near Carquinez straits. Three very serviceable saw mills are erected in Napa valley, and two or three grist mills in constant employment, during the season of our visit.

Of white residents, the valley contains seventy or eighty souls, and these would turn their attention to agricultural pursuits, an Eden in fairness and fertility is theirs' to cultivate. Between two or three hundred acres of this lovely region, subjected to the cultivation of grain, produced over three thousand fanagas, or six thousand bushels, the past season. Dr. E. Bayle, an early settler, from his lands gathered one thousand bushels of wheat alone.—Two hundred and eighty bushels of good Indian corn were produced from ten acres of land, by the same gentlemen, and with the slightest attention bestowed upon its culture. With these facts before us, we will believe what MAY be accomplished, has never yet been attempted; let culpably ignorant or base minded men, wilfully couple such a land with the unproductive globe.

Notes upon Napa, and continued travel, next week.

MR. EDITOR,—Having observed a communication in a late number of your valuable periodical, (signed Pacific,) eulogizing, and setting forth the advantages to be derived from the employment of Indians, wherein is stated that nature appears to have ordained that they should be made subservient to the will and pleasure of us whites, being an inferior order of beings—I propose to take a different view of the matter, and set aright your correspondent in one or more instances.

They should be enslaved, I think he says, and to all intents and purposes, (from my definition of his doctrine,) be made a subject of traffic in the hands of a few. Now, sir, I am of opinion that the writer of such an article has but a very feeble idea of the human family, and none whatever of the particular portion of which he treats. In the first instance, every body knows that it is almost as impossible for the white man to enslave the Indian, as it is for either to avert our common destiny. We are told it has been an old practice among the remnants of Castillian pomposity, or audacity if you will, in this country, to make annual sallies on these defenceless people, and drive them in herds to Christianize or rather to brutalize them. Now has this system of slavery improved their condition? I think not; and it followed that after a series of annual incursions upon them, the attempt to subjugate them was abandoned, finding they could not succeed in detaining any other than a few old women or children for any length of time; for like

"The Lark abroad that soars on high,
Through winter frosts and cold,
Would rather be at its liberty
Than in a cage of gold."

But of the Indian race in general. Cannot every American among us adduce instances innumerable, of heroism, and particularly to the North American Indian, reflecting lustre on the very name. They are by nature heroes and orators, as history proves; and what race of human beings are more susceptible? Render one of them a service and it is never to be obliterated from his memory; on the contrary, treat him roughly, and his thirst after revenge is almost infinite, terminating only with his existence,—witness the Sonoma tragedy. It may be said that they are an inferior race of beings to our northern Indians; as well may the polished Parisian assert that our rough-coated farmers are an inferior order of beings to themselves, when physically, morally, and patriotically, speaking, the superiority is in the latter.

What may have been Mr Pacific's object in referring to the Indian boy, I will leave the public to judge. Whether it is the mere gratification of coming down upon the administrators of the law in this country or not, I will not undertake to say; but from the fact, that the boy in question not only has been since the date of his incarceration, but is still detained as a close prisoner, with this exception, that instead of being permitted to wallow in filth and idleness, he is compelled to labor hard, and only within a very short period permitted to proceed three paces from the prison without a loaded musket and a glittering bayonet, on the shoulder of a sturdy volunteer following close at his heels. So much for his information on that point. Again, if we want to ameliorate the condition of the Indian population of the territory, I say let it be in honorable fashion as becomes Americans. Prove to them the fact, by acts of kindness towards them. Let me tell you that, degraded as their present situation appears, it is far better than what it has been heretofore, and they are fast improving. But to have done with this. The policy of our government towards them is leniency, the basis of which is the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, remembering they are the children of nature, the owners and occupants of the soil we inherit: and if we want their labor, let it be conditional, that they be permitted to change employers at their discretion. For the promotion of their interest inculcate principles of morality amongst, or, in a word, —cultivate them. HUMANITAS.

PLACER TIMES.

SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 1848.

The Indian difficulties—Considerable excitement is manifest in several of the mining districts, in consequence of the recent Indian outrages, to be reported in our next, and while we, in common with a community, deplore these unhappy events, and feel truly and justly indignant at the perfidy and barbarity exhibited, there are yet motives, the best of motives, based upon the soundest philanthropy, as we shall prove, that have induced us to reserve for ourself space for a few words upon the subject of our Indian difficulties.

Seven of our most worthy and inoffensive citizens have been suddenly murdered—treacherously and brutally murdered, by a party of Indians belonging to a degraded, ignorant and depraved tribe; murdered, too, without apparent cause, by a people whose well-known thievish propensities have upon more than one previous occasion brought their backs to the lash. Of course our countrymen are greatly exasperated against their Indian neighbors, and in the absence of all law, civil and military, to procure retributive justice, nothing remains but to hunt down the offenders and deal with them as common law or usage directs. In this coolly-drawn and correct determination it is, perhaps, unnecessary to say they were sustained by every intelligent and sober minded man in the mining region. But how are the perpetrators of the outrages to be apprehended? Their own people will not deliver them over to justice. The whites daily become more incensed, and the Indian Agent of this Department to whom an appeal is made, declares himself powerless, through the negligence of our government in furnishing means for exercising the functions of his office. It is now that the cry of extermination is raised—a thirst for indiscriminate slaughter rages, and men, women and children, old and young, vicious and well-disposed, of the Indian race, wherever met with, are to be straightway shot down or knocked on the head, their villages plundered and burned and the frightened fugitives forced deeper in to the mountains, to starve—or to steal and plunder as shall henceforth appear.

In all this we have but a display of natural passions, says one; blood for blood, exclaims another; 'human nature,' says a Stapleton—but let us perfect the picture; let us make appariant with its lights, its shades—in a word, let us hear another story of our Indian difficulties.

It is not long since an Indian rancheria near Bear Creek was pounced upon by a small party of whites, and twenty-five of the unsuspecting inmates, of both sexes, taken and cruelly murdered. Why was this? It was because numerous thefts had been committed by Indians in that vicinity, and it was necessary to make an "example." But traced to cause more remote, a murder had been committed last fall by Indians in that neighborhood. (though still anterior to this, a fact scarcely worth mentioning however, several Indians had been killed by whites coming through from Oregon.) In connection with the above we hear that a man residing near the mouth of Feather River imperilled his life, in endeavoring to preserve that of a valuable Indian boy attached to the rancheria of his grounds. The reason assigned for the act, was that he had been suspected of crime, and "must be a great scoundrel." Three Indians were shortly afterwards hung, in justification of which act we are sorry to say we know nothing.

From these instances—facts fresh in mind, for we have not sought after argument—it

may be readily believed the Indians have wreaked vengeance for deeds of blood, the bloody and cruel murders recently committed on the American River. And having witnessed the shedding of blood of either race, it now rests with our countrymen to determine whether security for life or property can hereafter exist among the Gold washers of the mountains in which these events have transpired. To talk of extermination, is to reckon without the host, for all who are intimate with the Indian character, and acquainted with the mountainous country inhabited by these tribes, can attest the extravagance of this idea. If, as is insisted upon by many, they are to be destroyed wherever met with, they will seek refuge in the mountain fastnesses, from which their frequent descents upon small parties of miners, for purposes of plunder and revenge, will be more to be dreaded than their continual presence and intercourse with our people.

They will cut off the wanderer from his camp, and attack the camps by night, destroy and drive off animals, and in short create more mischief and become a source of greater annoyance to the miner than if their despicable arts were practiced in our midst and under the eye of the Law. What we most desire to impress upon the minds of our countrymen, however, is a more humane and christianized course of action. It does not become us, enlightened Americans of the nineteenth century, to sally forth against a weak and ignorant people, burn their villages, butcher women and children and return at night with our saddl'e horns *loaded with scalps!* Let us ferret out the perpetrators of crime, by ingenuous endeavours, as will suggest themselves to intelligent active minds, and thereupon visit the severest penalty the Law affords. Let it be borne in mind we do not render ourselves a whit more secure from Indian depredation by *indiscriminate slaughter*, than by pursuing a humane method of treatment. A check upon the vicious inclinations of the worst, will arise with the rapid growth of society, and gradually they will recede before the advances of the white man, as is destined the Indian race in general. Thus shall a degraded and worthless people vanish from the face of the land; it is in vain to attempt their extermination by other means—let us not think of it.
