

ROUND VALLEY.

A Large Reservation for a Small Band of Indians—The Settlers in the Northern Part of the Valley to be Removed—A Lease of the Reservation Applied For—An Appraisalment of the Improvements—Proposition to Assess the Expense of Removal on the Southern Part of the Valley—Vigilant Eyes Watching the Matter.

[FROM THE SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT OF THE ALTA.]

WASHINGTON, January 11th, 1874.

Official communcations in the various departments of Washington are not rare, though to the casual observer, or the negligent correspondent of the press, they may appear to be of the class that "no fellow can find out." The latest demerit of journalistic inquiry has been made apparent through the assiduous labor of the agent of the Pacific Press Association.

THE ROUND VALLEY RESERVATION.

How the officers of the Government have attempted, under the plea of establishing an Indian Reservation, to dispossess a large number of settlers in order to create and monopolize for one man a sheep ranch of 60,000 acres and more, making the actual settlers in other parts pay for the cost of doing it, is shown by the investigation of the papers in the office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The details of such a transaction are interesting, as showing to "Bill Nye" an answer to the question of "Truthful James"—

"Can such things be?"

This is all an official romance about the Round Valley Indian Reservation of Mendocino county, California.

A SMALL BAND OF INDIANS

Have for many years occupied Round Valley, a fertile piece of land, surrounded by high mountains, stock ranges and timber lands. White settlers mixed freely among these Indians and established productive farms with undisputed possession and prospects of prosperity and earthly comfort.

Under the management of Indian affairs this valley was set apart for the use and occupation of the Indians, and was denominated the Round Valley Indian Reservation. Finally J. L. Burchard was appointed Indian Agent, and still continues to hold that office. What use there was for an Indian Agent at that time is not shown.

In the course of time, however, it became apparent that the settlers would not always consent to

LIVING BY SUFFERANCE

Among the Indians. Their farms were well tilled, fenced and stocked. Disputes as to boundaries had arisen among them, and they had amicably adjusted their claims by purchasing from each other. To acquire absolute title they had not been permitted on account of the Reservation; but they lived on, confident that sooner or later the Government would restore the lands to the public domain, and provide for their rights as bona fide settlers. They were not a small community, preying upon the Indians, but a large community of practical and honestly-disposed farmers.

The Indians found occupation and the means of earning a living in working for the farmers and herding their stock.

Last Winter a change was made. A bill was passed in Congress

RESTORING TO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN

The southern half of the valley, on which most of the whites were settled, and granting these settlers the right of preferred preemption of the lands actually occupied and improved by them at the Government price of \$1 25 per acre. It provided also for the appointment of a Commission to proceed to the valley, appraise the value of the improvements of settlers on the portion of the Reservation not restored, with a view to removing them so as to leave the land free to the Indians, and to report on the proposition of extending the Reservation over a portion of the mountains to the north, so as to include a stock range and fishing grounds.

This Commission, consisting of General B. R. Cowen, Assistant Secretary of the Interior, and General J. P. C. Shanks, member of Congress from Indiana, visited the ground, looked about considerably, and have returned, making their report to the Secretary of the Interior last Friday.

Meanwhile, under the provisions of the Act of the last Congress, the settlers in the southern portion, which was restored to the public domain, have employed attorneys, and have prosecuted their claims in the Land Office. Many, or most of them, as your correspondent is informed, have actually paid their money into the hands of the officer of the Government, and are now legally and justly entitled to receive their patents for their homes, which they have occupied for so many years.

A few days ago it came to the ears of your correspondent that

THE AGENT OF THE RESERVATION HAD BEEN NEGOTIATING FOR A LEASE

Of the new Reservation, or a large portion of it, to a wealthy stock raiser, and that in order to give him the control of a large range of country a large number of settlers would be ousted; and that also the Commissioners would recommend an amendment to the Act of last Winter, so as to raise the price of the lands restored to the public domain, so as to create a fund for the extinguishment of settlers' titles on the new Reservation without asking an appropriation from Congress. It appeared that not only an act of bad faith toward the settlers was contemplated, but also the machinery of the despotic power of the Indian Department was to be manipulated for the benefit of one man. Nothing definite was known about it, and it was with some difficulty that your correspondent arrived at the facts, not knowing at first exactly how to proceed.

THE COMMISSIONER INVESTIGATES.

The Commissioner of Indian Affairs knew nothing of the proposed lease, and the report of the Commissioner had not been made. He, however, interested himself in looking the matter up, and found that there had been correspondence between his office and Burchard, the Indian Agent, relative to the proposed lease. The letters were submitted freely to your correspondent for his information. From them it appeared that Jacob Updegraff had proposed to lease the stock range of the new Reservation, to stock it with sheep and to give one-half of the increase to the Reservation, provided that the agency would provide for the care of the flocks with Indian herders, etc.

FIVE YEARS' LEASE.

In one of the letters from the Agent he writes for instructions as to how long a term he shall grant in the lease, adding that Updegraff desired five years, which he, the Agent, thought just, because Updegraff would be put to a great expense in purchasing sheep, and in less than five years he could not get his money back. It was suggested that at the beginning of the fourth year one-third of the sheep-range should be given up, at the beginning of the fifth another third, and at the expiration of the fifth the whole. It was suggested, however, that the contract could not be entered into until the settlers were dispossessed, so that possession might be given to Updegraff.

Further than this examination, the Commissioner was unable to throw any light on the transaction, which was being worked up without his knowledge. Your correspondent then broached the matter to Assistant Secretary Cowen, and stated what he had learned. Mr. Cowen acknowledged full cognizance of the matter and fully endorsed it; saying, however, that the contract had not yet been entered into because the settlers were not yet removed. He thought it was a fine opportunity to get the Reservation stocked, and said that Updegraff has one of the finest stock-ranches he ever saw, on the new Reservation—ranging a flock of over six thousand sheep. This statement somewhat differs from the idea conveyed to the Department by the Agent Burchard, who recommends a five-year lease in order to give Updegraff an opportunity to remunerate himself for the great outlay incident on purchasing stock, etc.

THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS.

These various reports and ideas caused your correspondent to watch for the forthcoming report of the Commissioners, which was soon to be filed. It was filed on the 8th Inst., and immediately examined thoroughly, the following being a careful abstract:

The Commissioners commenced their work on the 2d of June last. As a preliminary proceeding toward establishing a new Reservation, they declared the lines to be extended on the north, east and west, so as to include all the lands north of the southern boundary, as fixed by the Act of last Winter, and surrounded by the circuitous flow of Kel river and its North and Middle Fork, or an area of about 60,000 acres, though the same could only be estimated, the land being unsurveyed. The report does not mention, even approximately, the area of the land enclosed. The area of the old Reservation was 31,683 acres, of which about 14,000 acres only are included in the new Reservation, the extension being therefore made over

ABOUT FORTY-SIX THOUSAND ACRES.

This new area is described in the report as being mountainous on the north, some of which is 5,000 feet in altitude, and covered with heavy timber, suitable for lumber. The hills are a first-class range for stock, the report saying that it will provide grazing for at least 30,000 head of sheep, beside all the cattle and horses that the agent can manage. "If well stocked and cared for, the agency could be made self-sustaining in a very few years."

The report says nothing whatever of the proposition to lease the range to any person, and does not show any facts to determine the question as to how much land the Indians require for their support, not even giving the number of Indians to be provided for. There are no reasons for the adoption of the report in this respect except the authority of the Commissioners.

With the report is submitted

AN APPRAISEMENT OF THE IMPROVEMENTS

On the new Reservation, which the Government will have to pay before the settlers are ejected. It foots up, according to their figures, in the sum of \$32,669 78. To illustrate how this is made out, the following is a copy of the appraised value of the improvements of Jacob Updegraff, who, it appears, is an applicant for indemnity, as well as for the lease of the premises: "Shake shanty, \$250; small store house, \$150; shake stable, \$500; shake barn, \$500; fencing, \$100; corral, \$200; eight small cabins and corrals, \$1,200. Total, \$3,900."

Besides these improvements, the Commissioners, without stating the number of such settlers, say, in general terms, that in the portion of the new Reservation over which they have extended it, there may be, and probably are a number of parties, who have

BOUGHT THEIR LANDS FROM THE GOVERNMENT,

And have title therefor; also, others who are "only squatters" and have no title whatever. By "only squatters," they probably mean actual settlers on unsurveyed land, who have not yet had an opportunity to preempt their lands and thus protect themselves from speculators in Indian Reservations. But they show that the number must be considerable, when they add to the estimated expense of establishing the new Reservation \$20,000 for extinguishing the title of those who have such titles by purchase from the Government. Indeed, it appears, from a casual study, that there are as many whites as Indians interested in this matter, and certainly their rights should not be buried up in the parchments of the Indian Department. It is thus shown that it is estimated that, to clear the Reservation, so that Mr. Updegraff can have an undisturbed range of 60,000 acres,

IT WILL COST \$52,669,

Besides expenses of Commissioners, etc.

Now, to accomplish this, the Commissioners go outside of their duty and instructions, and propose to levy the expense on the lands which were returned to the public domain in the southern part of the valley, utterly disregarding rights that have accrued under the Act of last Winter. They submit with their report a copy of the assessment roll of Mendocino county, showing the areas and assessed valuations of the several claims of the occupants of the valley, who are entitled to enter their lands as preferred preemption as to the extent of their actual occupation. In general terms the Commissioners say that the lands are assessed generally at almost \$10 per acre, and deducting the value which tillage and the work of the farmers have given them, they are actually worth, for the most part, \$5 per acre.

They also complain because a number of the claims exceed one hundred and sixty acres.

LIST OF THOSE IN EXCESS OF 160 ACRES.

Your correspondent has copied the following list of the names of those whose claims, as assessed by the Assessor, are more than 160 acres, together with the assessed value of the land, without the improvements:

Names.	Acres.	Value.
F. M. and D. Asbell.....	320	\$ 3,300
Benj. Bishop.....	320	1,320
M. C. Barnes.....	320	750
W. T. Brown.....	240	2,000
D. C. Dorman.....	640	4,478
Phil & Dewell.....	320	3,300

Dingman & Squires.....	320	320
C. A. Edsall.....	640	800
J. M. Griffin.....	320	8,100
Isaac Grist.....	320	1,400
E. B. Gibson.....	320	3,200
Andrew Gray.....	640	1,280
Whit. Henly and G. W. Henly....	1,680	17,300
S. Housbrook.....	320	2,800
Hardy & Sheppard.....	320	1,075
G. W. & F. M. Hughes.....	480	1,840
C. Hendrick.....	320	3,200
Antoine Leger.....	800	1,000
D. Lacock.....	320	400
G. W. Morrison.....	320	2,900
Moore & Lockhart.....	640	800
T. O. Moore.....	640	800
A. E. McComb.....	200	725
W. P. Melander.....	320	8,800
Wm. Pullen.....	200	2,600
Moses Pannell.....	400	500
Nathan Parrington.....	460	250
F. A. Redwine.....	320	400
L. W. Redwine.....	320	400
J. G. Short.....	240	2,250
Saml. Simmerly.....	320	3,200
J. Sullivan.....	640	800

This statement shows

ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF THE CLAIMANTS ONLY.

The rest holding claims of 160 acres or less, down to 45 acres. The total number of the above list of individuals is thirty-eight, holding an aggregate of 14,540 acres, valued at an aggregate of \$77,385, which will be an average of about 380 acres each, valued at a little more than \$5 per acre. Analyzing the report still further, it is seen that a large portion of these claims, as assessed, must be for grazing lands outside the limits of the old Reservation, as, in the aggregate, they sum up more land than is to be disposed of under the Act. Also deducting the value which they have added to the land, and, for those holding in-excess of 160 acres, the value would be reduced to about Government price, on the average.

Again, the Commissioners offer or suggest

A VOLUNTARY APPRAISEMENT

Of the value of the lands to be disposed of, recommending that the law be amended so as to raise the price accordingly. They appraise as follows:

Sections 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 29, 30, of Townships 22, North Range, 12 West, or 8,960 acres, at \$5 per acre—\$44,800.

East half Section 1. Section 12. East half Section 13. East half Section 24, Township 23, North Range, 13 West., 1,600 acres at \$5 per acre—\$8,000.

West half Section 13. West half Section 24, Township 23, North Range, 13 W., 640 acres at \$2 50 per acre—\$1,600.

Total, 11,200 acres—\$54,400.

This shows, itself, that the amount to be disposed of is much less than the amount exhibited from the assessment roll, the above thirty-eight parties alone claiming over 14,000 acres; and yet they assume to base further legislative action on their exhibit of facts, deducing arguments from a false exhibit, which they have evidently failed to study themselves.

HOW COMES THE MOST UNJUST PROPOSITION:

They submit the draft of a bill to authorize the Secretary of the Interior (Assistant Secretary Cowen?) to appraise the lands restored to the public domain at their actual value, and to so amend the present law that actual settlers shall have the preferred right to purchase at such appraised value, not exceeding 160 acres, that of the rest of the land, the settlers on the new Reservation, who are to be dispossessed for the benefit of Mr. Updegraff, shall have the second preferred right of preemption of not exceeding 160 acres; the balance after that to be publicly sold. In this way it is proposed to rob Peter to pay Paul, and get a friend to purchase a stock ranch for Mr. Updegraff under the plea of protecting the "poor Indian," who will be farmed out to take care of Mr. Updegraff's sheep!

It is proposed, also, in the new bill, to continue this farce of a Commission by leaving the exterior boundaries of the new Reservation still unsettled, and

APPOINTING A NEW COMMISSION,

(Expenses \$5,000,) to fix definitely the northern boundary. Meanwhile, the President is to be asked to withdraw the 60,000 acres from the public domain; and the work of dispossessing the settlers is to go on as rapidly as possible, so that Mr. Updegraff can get possession.

However, this whole matter has been thoroughly ventilated by your correspondent, and called to the attention of the delegation from California, who will act promptly in the matter, and the settlers may be assured that

THEIR RIGHTS WILL NOT BE SUFFERED TO BE IGNORED

As long as the journalist's eyes are open and his quill is sharpened to command public attention and prick the official conscience. Mr. Cowen and General Shanks, who make this ill-advised report, must have been grossly deceived, for they are undoubtedly men of high character and honesty of purpose. It is evident that they have suffered some one else to dictate their report, trusting in his judgment. The tenor of these facts must show that the Agent, Burchard, has some explanation to make for his connection in the matter.

The plain facts are that

THE INDIANS DO NOT REQUIRE A LARGE RESERVATION.

That the portion of the old Reservation still retained is sufficient for them, that the settlers have acquired legal rights under the law of last Winter, and that the leasing of the Reservation as proposed would only open the way for possible fraud and mismanagement, besides establishing a bad precedent for the future. It is not necessary to show how easily Mr. Updegraff could, after obtaining possession of a large

GOVERNMENT SHEEP RANGE.

Evide the apparent intention of his contract by keeping a small band of sheep himself, the increase of which he could account for, and suffer the range to be used by others, who, unless objection were made, would enjoy the benefits without accounting at all. It is not assumed that such would be the case, yet there are few stockmen who would not jump at the chance to get into Updegraff's proposed plan, which your correspondent predicts will now fail of accomplishment.

C. A. W.