

First report mentioning California

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,

[1849/50]

TRANSMITTED

WITH THE MESSAGE OF THE PRESIDENT

AT THE


OPENING OF THE SECOND SESSION OF THE THIRTY-SECOND CONGRESS,

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Our information in regard to the Indians in Oregon and California is extremely limited; but the deficiency, it is hoped, will shortly be supplied by the agents and commissioners provided for at the last session of Congress. Copies of the instructions given to these officers are herewith submitted, together with a report from General Lane, late governor and acting superintendent of Indian affairs in Oregon, containing the latest official information, in possession of the office, respecting the Indians in that far distant region, and received too late to accompany the annual report of last year.

After the three agents authorized by Congress for the Indians in California were appointed, it was found that no appropriation had been made for their salaries and the necessary expenses of their agencies. Their functions as agents were therefore suspended; but, as there was an appropriation for negotiating treaties with the Indians in that State, they were constituted commissioners for that purpose. They will thus have an opportunity of acquiring information useful to them as agents, and be on the spot to enter upon their duties in that capacity when the requisite appropriations shall have been made.

Commissioners have also been appointed for the highly important purpose of negotiating treaties with the various Indian tribes adjacent to the line between the United States and Mexico. They are expected to accompany the boundary commission, and are charged with the duty of collecting all such statistical and other information concerning those Indians, as may aid the Department in adopting the proper policy and measures for their government, and to carry out in good faith the stipulations of our recent treaty with the Mexican Republic.

The ruinous condition of our Indian affairs in New Mexico demands the immediate attention of Congress. In no section of the country are prompt and efficient measures for restraining the Indians more imperiously required than in this territory, where an extraordinary state of things exists, which, so long as it continues, will be a reproach to the government.

There are over thirty thousand Indians within its limits, the greater portion of which, having never been subjected to any salutary restraint, are extremely wild and intractable. For many years they have been in the constant habit of making extensive forays, not only within the territory itself, but in the adjoining provinces of Mexico—plundering and murdering the inhabitants, and carrying off large quantities of stock, besides numerous captives whom they have subjected to slavery and treated with great barbarity and cruelty. Humanity shudders in view of the horrible fate of such of their female captives as possess qualities to excite their fiendish and brutal passions. Our citizens have suffered severely from their outrages within the last two years, of which their attack last fall upon Mr. White's party, while travelling to Santa Fé, is one of many instances. They murdered the whole party, nine or ten in number, except his wife, child and servant, whom they carried off. Our only Indian agent in the territory, who is stationed at Santa Fé, on hearing of the lamentable occurrence, promptly made every effort in his power to rescue the captives and bring the Indians to punishment. The military officers in the territory also made commendable exertions for the same purpose; but, unfortunately, with no other result than the discovery of the dead body of Mrs. White, which was found by a military party in pursuit of some Indians supposed to have her in their possession. It was evident