

DISBURSING AGENCY, INDIAN DEPARTMENT, IN CALIFORNIA, }
 San Francisco, April 5, 1852. }

His Excellency JOHN BIGLER,
 Governor of California, Sacramento City,

SIR:—I have the honor to inform you, by the arrival of a vessel from Humboldt Bay, and of Gregory's Express, per Shasta Butte City, I have received letters from Capt. Walter McDonald of the former, and Mr. John McKee, Special Indian Agent for Shasta and Scott Valleys, announcing the existence of alarming difficulties between the whites and Indians on Eel River and on the Klamath. It appears that, sometime in February, two men living on the north side of Eel River, some fifteen or twenty miles from Humboldt, in a retired out-of-the-way place, were murdered and their house robbed. As the river was unusually high, and canoes scarce, the fact did not become known to the settlers on the east side of the river for several weeks. It was then concluded, as a matter of course, that the Indians had killed them; and meetings were immediately held at the towns on the bay, and parties organized to hunt up and punish the guilty; but, no sooner were these brave warriors clothed with authority to represent and defend the country, than they commenced an indiscriminate attack upon the poor, defenceless, and wholly unsuspecting Indian settlements on about the bay, near Eureka and the mouth of Elk river, killing several; then proceeding out to Eel river, renewed the work of death, and finally succeeded in destroying the lives of fifteen or twenty naked and defenceless natives, without finding even one of those generally suspected as being most likely to be concerned in the murder. A week or two later, some three or four other Indians who *were suspected* of being concerned in the murder, (*if committed by Indians at all,*) were overtaken on Eel river, and summarily shot down. A gentleman from the bay informs me that these rash, cruel, blood-thirsty proceedings, were wholly disapproved by many of the best men in the country; but they could not arrest them, and were indeed almost afraid to let their disapprobation be known.

From the temporary Agent at Shasta Butte city, I learn by letters dated 21st ultimo, that some time in February, an Indian boy of 18 or 19 years, whom I recollect seeing at a place on the Klamath, named "Happy Camp," was deliberately shot as he was leaving that camp, wading the creek which puts in there, by a man from Missouri, called Capt. G. R. Tompkins. The body of the Indian floated out into the river, and was carried off. This boy, it seems, was connected with the Indian Rancheria at the ferry, or upper crossing, some distance above. A white man who was at Happy Camp when the boy was killed, having returned to his work near the ferry, was charged by the Indians as being cognizant of, or concerned in, the murder; and finding the Indians exasperated, became alarmed about his own safety, returned to Happy Camp, collected a party there and at the other diggings on the river, then returned to the ferry, surrounded the village, *shot every man and a number of women*, and burnt their houses. Then proceeding up

the river some two miles to a place called Indian Flat, surrounded another little village, and with the same results, except that in this case one man escaped to tell the Agent and the whites in Scott's Valley the story of their wrongs.

In all, between thirty and forty were killed in cold blood; the women and children left, fled into Scott's Valley—were loudly mourning the loss of their friends, and mainly dependent on the Agent and the liberality of the whites for provisions to keep themselves alive. Such, in substance, is the report sent me as obtained by the Agent from the man who returned to Happy Camp and raised the party. If instead of doing so, he had gone up into the Valley and applied to the Agent, he with his interpreter could have explained the matter to the Indians satisfactorily, and saved this wanton sacrifice of human life, which, if it does not endanger the peace of that frontier for months, has at all events brought lasting disgrace upon the American name. The Agent writes further, that the parties attempt to justify their disregard of the solemn treaty arrangements made with those Indians in November last, among other things, by the opposition which they understood the Legislature was making to the treaties; that if the treaties were to be disavowed by the authorities, they might just as well take the matter into their own hands at once, and rid the country of the whole race! This is a very sad state of things, and I am fearful will cause much trouble in that quarter when known, as it will be throughout the Indian country. It will throw obstacles in the way of our proposed arrangements with the Salmon and Trinity River Indians, which I cannot at present see how I can overcome. The Indians do not understand our distinctions; they look upon a treaty as *bargain* between *all the Indians* on the one side, and *all the whites* on the other. And previous to this brutal outrage on our part, every account from that quarter of the State went to show that the Indians were quiet, and disposed to act peaceably and in good faith.

And I beg to submit to your Excellency, whether, as the chief Executive officer of the State, some measures cannot be taken to vindicate the laws of the country as well as of humanity; and, if possible, bring some of those desperadoes to punishment?

Without pretending to advise as to what may be proper, I have thought that possibly much good might result from your issuing a proclamation, in handbill form, for the frontier settlements, calling upon all who have the true interests of California at heart, to frown upon such attempts to imbrue the frontier in blood, by exciting in the Indian the spirit of revenge and retaliation—so consonant to his education and habits—urging the great importance of preserving good faith with the tribes, and when treaties have been made, and *intimating* that those who act differently will be held amenable to the laws. In addition, I would respectfully suggest, that orders be sent to the District State Attorneys to investigate the cases referred to in this communication, and if the facts have been truly reported, have the guilty indicted and tried for murder.

I am aware that such proceedings will involve considerable expense of

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