3. INDIAN TRIBES OF THE SOUTH PASS OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS; THE SALT LAKE BASIN; THE VALLEY OF THE GREAT SÄAPTIN, OR LEWIS' RIVER, AND THE PACIFIC COASTS OF OREGON.

BY NATHANIEL J. WYETH, ESQ.

SYNOPSIS.

LETTER I. — Object of Inquiry. — Period of Residence.

LETTER II. — Question of Affinity of the Shoshonees by Language. — Means of Subsistence. — True Name — Bonacks. — Scarcity of Game. — Game and Trapping. — No social Organization among the Tribes. — Utter Ignorance. — Introduction of the Horse an Era. — No Cultivation whatever. — No Laws. — No Ideas of Rights of Property. — Foot Tribes cannot cope with Tribes possessing Horses. — The Horse, therefore, the Cause of Division, and Tribal Organization.

LETTER III. — Influence of the Introduction of the Horse on the American Tribes.

LETTER IV. — Geography of the Säaptin River. — Hydrographic Power. — Salmon. — Hot Springs abundant. — Fossil Wood. — Blue Limestone. — Reddish Sandstone. — Bitumen. — Coal. — Glauber, Epsom, and Common Salts. — Obsidian. — Very dry Atmosphere; consequent danger of handling Fire Arms. — Extraordinary range of the Thermometer. — Grazing. — Scarcity of Fuel. — Wood alone on the Mountains.

LETTER V. — Implements of the Shoshonees. — Root-Pot. — Bows of Horn artistically made. — Obsidian Arrow-Heads; their shape. — Obsidian Knife. — Graining Tools. — Bone Awls. — Fish Spears. — Fish Nets. — Boats or Rafts. — Pipes of Fuller's Earth and Soapstone. — Mats resembling the Chinese. — Implement for obtaining Fire by Percussion.

LETTER VI. — Transmitting Remarks on the Snake River Valley, &c.

LETTER VII. — Language of the Shoshonees. — Destitution; eat pounded Bones. — Mildness, and unaccountable want of Moral Sense or Accountability. — Murder of Abbot and De Forest. — Submissive under Discipline. — Origin at different Eras and from different Parts. — Resemblance to Japanese.

LETTER VIII. — Reason for not beginning Geographically. — Breadth of the Inquiry. — A few more Shoshonee Words.

LETTER IX. — Valley of the Colorado: its waste Character immediately South of the Salt Lake Basin — lying in a Fissure of Basaltic Rock — then barren Sands. — South of Snake River, Lignite, Gypsum, Marine Shells. — Coal in North Latitude 40° 30′ to 40° 40′. — Geographical Data favorable to Settlements in the Mountain Basin. — Grand River Valley favorable to grazing, &c.

LETTER X. — Transmitting Accounts of the Bear River Valley, Utah, and the Valley between the Blue and Cascade Mountains, Oregon.

LETTER I.

Cambridge, Mass.
March 27, 1848.

SIR:

Your letter of 21st February ult. was received while I was wholly occupied by the operations of business. I beg you will accept this as an apology for so late an answer.

I observe that the information to be elicited was to have been used by the 1st February or during the present session of Congress — can it still be useful? if so, I will furnish a few remarks in answer, premising that I commenced the Indian trade in 1832, and left it in 1836, that my travels were from 40° to 49° north, and from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific, having my chief establishments at Fort Hall and Wapato Island, and that it will take some little time to collect the facts from the original memorandums.

Very respectfully,
Your Obedient Servant,
NATHANIEL J. WYETH.

HENRY R. SCHOOLCRAFT, ESQ.,
Office Indian Affairs.

Letter II.

April 3d, 1848.

Sir:

I have received your ethnological questions, accompanied by your letter of the 21st of February last. Circumstances have prevented my attention to the subject until this time.

In imparting what little I know, I shall follow the order in which the questions are proposed; omitting those on which my information is deficient. No. 13, "Causes of the Multiplication of Tribes."

In my intercourse with the bands of Snake Indians at Fort Hall, which I built in 1834, and while endeavoring to communicate with them for the purposes of trade, my attention was struck by the diversity of dialect; not great enough to lead to the supposition of a very ancient separation, and yet too great to exist between tribes inhabiting the same region. The very limited inquiries that I was able to make, led to the belief that the tribes or bands of Snakes recognised a less difference between each other, than between themselves and the Blackfeet and Crows, with whom they are always at war.

During these years, the few whites then in that region called the more miserable bands Diggers, or Shoshonees. They differ from the other Snakes somewhat in language; their condition is much poorer, having no horses, and living chiefly on roots and fish from the brooks, with what small game that region affords. I am not quite certain, but think their distinctive name among the natives is Sohoshonee; another division of the Snakes are called by themselves and others, Bonacks, or Paunaques. They do not seem, radically, to differ from the former; they are more intelligent, and better supplied with all the means of Indian independence; horses, lodges, guns, knives, &c. &c., and form bands annually to hunt in the buffalo country.

The region which both these descriptions of Snakes inhabit, extends south from the Säaptin or Snake River, as far as the southern end of the Great Salt Lake, and from the Rocky to the Blue Mountains, and is nearly a desert; although there are a few spots of good soil, it produces the least possible quantity of game. There are no buffaloes; elk and deer are very scarce and unknown, except in the mountains. Antelope and big-horn are rare, as also the bear; there are two kinds of rabbits, but they are also scarce. In 1832, when I first visited this country, perhaps the beaver and otter exceeded all the other game, and they were by no means abundant; at that time the Indians had no traps, and therefore could obtain little food from the beaver. All the skins of animals killed were used as clothing, even the beaver and otter, and furnished so little, that perhaps not more than one-half of their bodies were covered, even during the winter, and but few even of those who visited annually the buffalo region had skins enough to erect lodges.

The paucity of game in this region is, I have little doubt, the cause of the almost entire absence of social organization among its inhabitants; no trace of it is ordinarily seen among them, except during salmon-time, when a large number of the Snakes resort to the rivers, chiefly to the Fishing Falls, and at such places there seems some little organization; some person called a chief usually opens a trade or talk, and occasionally gives directions as to times and modes of fishing; and the same is the case with the bands who go into the buffalo region. Other than this, I have perceived no vestiges of government among them; I have never known other punishment inflicted than personal satisfaction by murder or theft.

At the time I allude to, our means of communicating with them were very imperfect, and mistakes of their meaning might occur. Their first answer to the question of "What is the difference between the Bonacks and Shoshonees?" if addressed to one separate from the other, was, that they were good and the other bad, meaning that they would trade beaver with the Whites, while the other would steal from and murder them. When they were addressed together they did not, generally, implicate each other, but in all cases it was difficult for them to conceive that we were searching for the distinctive difference between themselves; and, after making this understood, I could never obtain any further information than that the Bonacks had horses, and went to hunt buffalo, while the Shoshonees had no horses, and lived on roots and fish.

In examining the cause of separation into tribes of a people so little removed from the lowest state of existence, we should examine the original necessities which must have produced all social organization. The collection of a family, which may be considered coeval with individual existence, is of no importance in this instance. The combination for the defence of person and property is the point to be examined in this case, and beyond this stage the Snakes have not reached.

Previous to the introduction of the Horse among them, they could have had no interest of property requiring organization to protect it, except that of the Salmon fisheries, which must have been nearly coeval with their first settlement in the country, and which, naturally, would call for some kind of law to render it available. That this was their only motive to institute government, I infer from the nature of their country, which is too poor to produce any considerable quantity of game, and that no cultivation had ever been attempted. It is not probable they would have combined to protect property they did not possess, or to secure themselves against enemies who could not penetrate into their country for want of subsistence, and also because themselves could not remain together in any considerable numbers from the same cause.

These reasons show a want of motive and power of combination, except in the single interest of the Salmon fishery, and convince me that prior to the introduction of the horse no other tribal arrangement existed than such as is now seen in the management of the Salmon fishery.

Since the introduction of horses, the Snakes have probably been in the progress of separating into two tribes, those who had most intelligence would obtain them first, by the mode of all Indian acquisition, stealing, gambling, and trading.

It is a well-established fact that men on foot cannot live, even in the best game countries, in the same camp with those who have horses. The latter reach the game, secure what they want, and drive it beyond the reach of the former. Thus the Snakes, while they had no horses, would form but one people, because they would be collected once a year, in Salmon time; but the organization would be very imperfect, because the remainder of the year would be spent by them in families widely spread apart, to eke out the year's subsistence on the roots and limited game of their country.

After a portion of them, who are now called Bonacks, had obtained horses, they would naturally form bands and resort to the Buffalo region to gain their subsistence, retiring to the most fertile places in their own, to avoid the snows of the mountains and feed their horses. Having food from the proceeds of the Buffalo hunt, to enable them to live together, they would annually do so, for the protection of their horses, lodges, &c., &c. These interests have caused an organization among the Bonacks, which continues the year through, because the interests which produce it continue; and it is more advanced than that of the other Snakes.

Letter III.

April 6th, 1848.

Sir:

The few observations on the "multiplication of tribes," accompanying this, are not satisfactory to myself, and if not so to you, please throw them aside.

I regret not being able to supply more facts to support a view, very strongly impressed on my mind, that the condition of the Indians of this continent has been much influenced by the introduction of the Horse.

I shall notice the other questions, and, with your leave, communicate such views and facts as I may possess in regard to any of them.

Letter IV.

April 18th, 1848.

Sir:

These remarks relate to the geography, &c., of the Snake country, which is drained by the Säaptin or Snake River.

This country, with small exceptions, is volcanic. The action of fire is extensively perceptible. Columns of basalt generally form the barriers of the streams.

The streams almost invariably diminish toward their outlets, and many of them discharge no water, except at high flood, and some of them sink in the rocks and sands at all seasons, between Henry's fork and the River Malad, a distance of about 150 miles. On the north side of Snake River, all the streams are lost in this manner.

although the streams issuing from the contiguous mountains are as abundant and large as on the eastern side of the same range. The streams of this region are unfit for navigation of any kind, with the exception of the Main Snake and Salmon Rivers, both of which afford the worst kind of canoe navigation, rapids being frequent, and portages necessary at different places, according to the stage of the water.

All the streams of any considerable magnitude afford abundance of mill-power. At a place about 70 miles from the mouth of Bruneau a jet of hot water issuing from the basaltic rock, about 40 feet above the bed of the stream, is sufficient to carry the largest mills, and many jets of hot or cold water, at different heights above the stream, are thrown into Snake River between Malad and Henry's Fork.

Salmon ascend the main river to the Fishing Valley, and by Salmon River nearly to the Rocky Mountains, and by the other lateral branches to their sources.

The rivers of this country, which come from the South and West, rise in April and May, and those of the North and East, in June and July. From August to April the waters are low in the main river. I have forded Snake River at the mouth of Big Wood in August, 1834, and in December, 1835, without wetting packs. The streams are divided on the East and North from the Rocky Mountains, on the North-west from the dividing mountains between them and the Flathead River, on the West from the Blue Mountains, on the South from a range which divides them from the waters of the Valley of the Salt Lake. Hot springs are common all over this region, but there are no lakes or ponds.

I have observed fossil-wood on the Oyhee, which discharges into Snake River nearly opposite the Big Wood. On the heads of Goding Fork, which loses itself in the plain of the Three Butes; in Pierre's Hole, at the base of the Three Titons, about thirty miles up the Brulè; and on the heads of Salmon River, I have observed blue limestone and reddish sandstone, but have not observed the remains of shells in either. On Bruneau I found asphaltum in a solid form, and on one occasion made camp-fires with it. I have found good bituminous coal on the west side of the Rocky Mountains. On a branch of the Colorado, and on the east side on a branch of Wind River, which locations are immediately South and North of the heads of the Snake River, I have little doubt of its existence at the heads of the streams issuing into this valley from the mountains.

Glauber, Epsom, and common salt are found, occasionally, where waters have evaporated, and rock salt is found in the mountains which divide the valley from that of the Salt Lake. Crystals of salt were shown me by one of my men, which he said he picked up on Big Wood River, where it issues from the Basaltic Rock, but, from the appearance of that place, I judge it was not near the place of its formation. At Fort Hall, salt was traded from the Indians sufficient for seasoning the meats eaten there, and by the trappers and traders sent from the post. Obsidian, of which the Indians make knives and arrow-heads, is common.

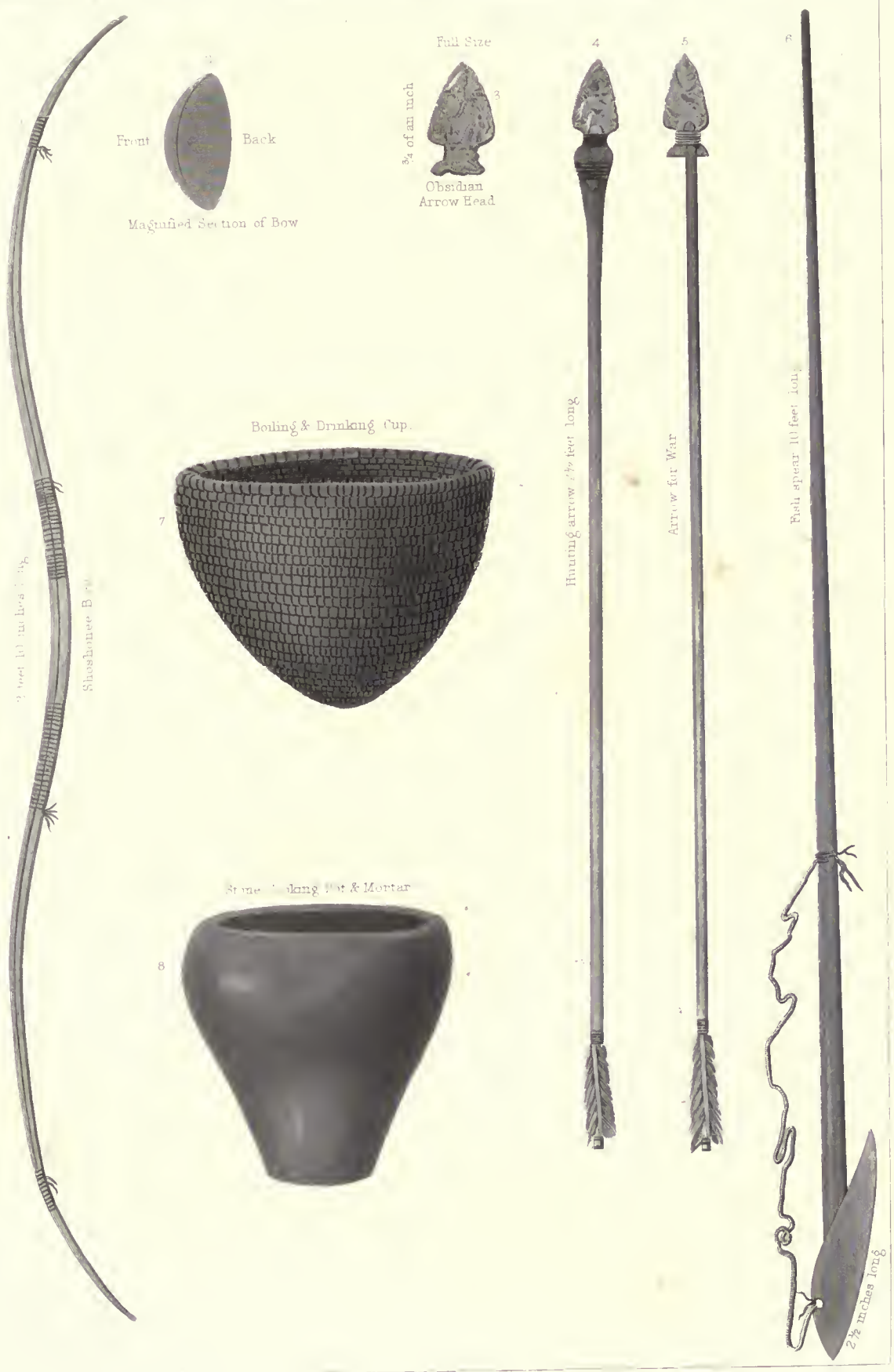
While travelling from Pierre's Hole to Powder River by the trail on the south side of Snake River, from the 24th day of July to the 4th day of October, 1832, rain fell but twice, and probably not more than one-eighth of an inch each time. The dryness of the atmosphere, at this time, was so great that on Raft River, on the 15th of August, I could not discharge one barrel of my double percussion gun without causing the other to explode from the slightly increased heat. One man was wounded in this way, and guns several times exploded, and I was obliged to discontinue the practice of placing caps on the guns, in the day-time, until immediately wanted for use.

On the heads of Portneuf, on the 10th of August, 1832, I noted the thermometer, at sunrise, at 18° above zero, and the noon following, at 92°. In the immediate valley of Snake River the variation is less, but still much greater than in any part of the United States. I find noted in my journal, 11th of September, 1832, being then at the mouth of Bruneau, that the average difference between sunrise and noon was as much as 40°. In 1835, while travelling from Big Wood to Fort Hall, by the trail on the north side of Snake River, from the 18th of November to the 5th of December, it rained two days and snowed one, at both times heavily, and during this time the average of the thermometer, at sunrise, was 8½° above zero. Its greatest variation was from 7° below to 38° above zero.

This country has ragged mountains for the boundary of its valley, the higher points of which retain their snow most of the year. There are high and extensive barren plains or table-lands, covered with artemisia, prickly-pear, and some other plants common to excessively dry and barren regions, with a little grass. These table-lands are nearly destitute of water. They are bounded by the mountains on all sides, being intersected by these streams, which appear to occupy fissures formed by the shrinkage when an immense sea of lava cooled down to basalt. These table-lands might sustain sheep and goats to a limited extent. They are unfeasible for any kind of cultivation near their mountain border, from the extreme coldness of the nights; and elsewhere, from the same cause, superadded to extreme dryness and poverty of soil. The bounds between the table-land and the river or bottom land, are generally very precipitous, and mostly of columnar basalt. The bottoms are generally confined, sometimes of good soil, but almost always too dry to produce strong vegetation, except near springs and other moist places, which are rare, or of small extent; frequently salts cover the soil and render it barren, but with irrigation, for which there are great facilities, agriculture might be conducted so as to supply military posts and emigrants, together with what would be required for a sparse population.

The valley of Fort Hall is the best portion of the country for attempting agricultural operations for the supply of its eastern part.

The valleys of the streams from Brulè to Grand Ronde are fertile, and adequate to supply, with slight irrigation, a large quantity of agricultural products, and in some



Drawn by Capt. Eastman, U.S.A.

SHOSHONEE IMPLEMENTS

places no irrigation would be required; and the neighboring plains and mountains afford fine grazing for horses, cattle, sheep, and goats.

The mountains of this valley alone produce wood; elsewhere it is rare to find timber large enough to make a gun-stock; but there is a little cotton-wood on the borders and islands of Snake River, at and above Fort Hall, and some on Big Wood River. The Blue Mountains have abundance of good building timber in the vicinity of good land. One great want of this region will be fuel.

The Indians, so far as can be ascertained, have never planted a seed; nor is it known that they ever had any kind of metal before they were visited by the whites, or that metals exist in the country.

Letter V.

April 23d, 1848.

Sir:

The utensils, originally used by the Indians of the valley of the Säaptin or Snake River, were wholly of stone, clay, bone, or wood. So far as I observed, they possessed no metals. Their implements were the pot, bow and arrow, knives, graining tools, awls, root-diggers, fish-spears, nets, a kind of boat or raft, the pipe, mats for shelter, and implements to produce fire.

The pot most commonly used was formed of some kind of long tough roots, wound in plies around a centre, shortening the circumference of the outer plies so as to form a vessel in the shape of an inverted bee-hive. (See Plate 76.) These plies are held together by a small tough root passed through a space made by forcing an awl between the two last plies, and winding the root under the last, and over the one to be added in the progress of formation, being careful to force enough of these thread-like roots between the two last plies to make the vessel water-tight. This pot is used for a drinking-vessel, as well as a boiling implement. With it, the latter operation is performed by heating stones and immersing them in the water contained in it, until the required heat is attained, and the contents, chiefly fish, cooked, producing a mess mixed with soot, ashes, and dirt. The Squaws, when moving camp, generally put these pots on their heads, probably more for the convenience of carrying, than with the idea of a hat, which was an article otherwise unknown to them. I have also seen among these Indians a stone pot, holding about two quarts, made of pure lava, and shaped much like the black-lead pot used in melting metals, (See Plate 76,) and think it would stand fire to be used as a boiling-pot, but have never seen it so used, or in any other way. It might have been used to pound seeds, hawthorns, choke-cherries, and service-berries, which these Indians, after pounding, make into cakes and dry for food. These last pots are very rare, and it must have been a great labor to make one. The first kind of pots were common to the Indians at the mouth of the Columbia, as well as the mats.

The bows which I have seen were made of the horns of the mountain sheep and elk, and of wood, and are the best specimen of the skill of these Indians. When of horn, they are about two feet ten inches long, and when unstrained have a curve backwards. They are of two parts, spliced in the centre by sturgeon glue, and deer-sinews, wound around a splice. The horn is brought into shape by heating and wetting, and worked smooth by scraping with sharp stones, and being drawn between two rough stones. A cross section of the bow would show the back side less convex than the front. (See Plate 76.) At the centre, where the bow is spliced, before winding the splice, two deer-sinews, nearly entire, are strongly glued and secured by their butt-ends; the small ends of them being outward at the ends of the bow. Where they are strongly wound and secured, these sinews cover the whole width of the back of the bow. As a matter of ornament, the skin of a snake, commonly that of the rattlesnake, is glued externally on the back of the bow. The string is of twisted sinew, and is used loose, and those using this bow require a guard to protect the hand which holds it. Altogether, it is one of the most efficient and beautiful bows I have seen.

The head of the arrow is formed by breaking pieces of obsidian in small parts, and selecting those nearest the desired form. In this selection, those of the right thickness are taken. In finishing them, every edge of such a piece is laid upon a hard stone, and the other struck with another hard stone, varying the direction and force of the blow, to produce the desired result. It is an operation which requires skill, and many are broken when nearly finished, and thrown away. When formed, it is about three-fourths of an inch long and half an inch wide, and quite thin, and for hunting purposes formed as is shown in Plate 76. It is attached by inserting its near or shaft end in a split in the front arrow-end of the shaft, and wound with sinews in such a manner as when the shaft is drawn from an animal, the head is withdrawn also, and the increased width just at the near end of it, is intended to secure this result. The arrow-heads used for warlike purposes, are formed without this increased width, so that when the shaft is drawn out the head will be left, to increase the mischief. It is said they poison these arrows, but I do not know the fact. They sometimes appear to have been dipped in some dark-colored fluid, which has dried on them.

The shaft is about two and a half feet long, and generally made of a shrub which the hunters call grease-bush. This is a small bush like the currant, and is nearly as hard as box-wood. It is very applicable to the steaming process, and is made straight by wetting and immersing in hot sand and ashes, and brought into shape by the hand and eye. To reduce the short crooks and knobs, it is drawn between two rough grit stones, each of which has a slight groove in it, and coarse sand is also used to increase the friction. An arrow-shaft, finished, appears as though it had been nicely turned. The arrow is used without a notch, and is feathered for about five inches near its rear

end, leaving space behind, just enough for the operator to grasp it in drawing the bow. These feathers are stripped from the sides of a suitable quill, and placed on the shaft in a form a little winding, but quite similar to the position they occupied on the quill. It produces the effect of keeping the tail of the shaft exactly in rear of the head, and also a rotary motion on its axis, whereby the exactitude of its course is maintained.

The knives I have seen are rude instruments produced by breaking pieces of obsidian, which has a tendency to form sharp edges, like glass, and is common in the country; and selecting those pieces which approach the desired form, and having a sharp edge, this implement is often used without any other preparation, but sometimes a wooden or horn handle is attached, in the same manner as the shafts of the arrows.

The graining tools for preparing skins, were ordinarily made of bone, using such as had a hard enamel outside, and were softer within. Sometimes obsidian was used for this purpose secured to the staff.

Awls were made of bone rubbed to a sharp point, and also large thorns.

Root-diggers are crooked sticks, the end used in the earth being curved and sharpened by putting it in the fire and rubbing against a rough stone, which both points and hardens them; they are also made of elk and deer horn, attached to a stick. They are used to obtain some small roots which the country produces, such as kama, souk, yampas, onions, tobacco-root, &c.

The fish-spear is a beautiful adaptation of an idea to a purpose. The head of it is formed thus, (See Plate 76); and is of bone, to which a small strong line is attached near the middle, connecting it with the shaft, about two feet from the point. Somewhat toward the forward end of this head, there is a small hole, which enters it ranging acutely toward the point of the head; it is quite shallow. In this hole the front end of the shaft is placed. This head is about two and a half inches long, the shaft about ten feet, and of light willow. When a salmon or sturgeon is struck, the head is at once detached by the withdrawal of the shaft, and being constrained by the string, which still connects it with the operator, turns its position to one crosswise of its direction while entering. If the fish is strong, the staff is relinquished, and operates as a buoy to obtain the fish when he has tired down by struggling. These Indians are very expert in the use of this instrument, and take many fish at all the falls and rapid waters, and construct, on small streams, barriers of stones or brush, to force the fish into certain places, where they watch for them, often at night with a light.

Fish-nets are made with the outer bark of some weed which grows in the country, but I took no particular note of what it was, or how separated from the stalk. It makes a line stronger than any of those I had among my outfit, although they were selected from the best materials of an angling warehouse by myself, who profess to be a judge of such articles. The twine is formed by laying the fibre doubled across the knee, the bight towards the left, and held between the thumb and finger of that hand,

with the two parts which are to form the twine toward the right and a little separated; rolling these two parts between the knee and right hand, outwardly from the operator, and twisting the bight between the thumb and finger of the left hand, forms the thread. More fibre is added as that first commenced on diminishes in size, so as to make a continuous and equal line. In this way, excellent twine is made much more rapidly than could be expected. The nets are of two kinds: the scoop, which is precisely the same as is used in the United States; and the seine, which is also in principle exactly the same; and the knot used in netting also appears to me exactly the same: but in this I may be mistaken, as I have never seen the operation performed. The leaded line is formed by attaching oblong rounded stones, with a sunken groove near the middle in which to wind the attaching ligature. Reeds are used for floats.

Boats or Rafts.—The navigation of this region appears to have been confined to crossing the streams when the water was too cold for comfortable swimming. The only apparatus used was little more than a good raft, made of reeds which abound on many of the streams. They are about eight feet long, and formed by placing small bundles of reeds, with the butt-ends introduced and lashed together, with their small ends outwards. Several of these bundles are lashed together beside each other, and in such a manner as to form a cavity on top. There is no attempt to make it tight; the only dependence is on the great buoyancy of the materials used. It is navigated with a stick, and almost entirely by pushing. This rude form of navigation, apparently, is the only one ever used in the country, in which, in fact, there is hardly timber enough for a more improved form.

Pipes are used with a stem, usually about two feet long. The bowl is sometimes made of fuller's earth, and also of soapstone.

Mats are made from large rushes, in a manner which appears to me to be the same by which the Chinese make similar fabrics. They are used to sleep on, and to construct lodges. They are about four feet wide, and when carried are rolled up like a scroll.

These Indians produce fire by using a shaft similar to that of an arrow, about three-eighths of an inch in diameter, and two feet long; one end of which is bluntly pointed, and placed in a shallow hole in a hard, dry piece of wood. One of the operators takes it between his opened hands, near the top, and rolls it between them back and forth, forcing downwards, and when his hands approach the lower end, another seizes it in the same manner; and thus the attrition is maintained until fire is produced. It is performed with great quickness and dexterity; but it is hard work, and few whites could perform the feat.

Letter VI.

May 1st, 1848.

Sir:

Yesterday I received your letter of the 25th of April.

Herewith is my fourth and last communication relating to that portion of the continent drained by Snake River; unless you deem it proper in me to suggest measures for the improvement of the Indians in connection with establishing a suitable route to the more important regions beyond, which are to be controlled by this government.

I may find in my records some small matters relating to the valley of the Salt Lake, that of the Colorado, Spokan, or Flathead Rivers, or the region enclosed between the Blue and California Mountains, and between the latter and the sea. Will you please advise me as regards the above.

I have attached much importance to the Snake country, as being the road to Oregon and California.

Letter VII.

May 1st, 1848.

Sir:

I know very little of the language of the Shoshonees, and the following very limited list may not be correct; for instance, it seems impossible that the meat and fish knife could have the same name, as, in a rude form, they were both in use among them; and the name of the mule looks as if it were derived from Mexico; and the word for pantaloons and buffalo robe is the same. Probably they could have had no original name for an article they did not possess.

It is difficult for persons not better educated than Indian traders usually are, to represent by English letters the true sound of Indian words; beside which, the Indians differ much in the pronunciation of the same word. Another difficulty is, that when interrogated, Indians almost always answer "yes" to a leading question, which deceives those who are unused to them and the proper method of examination.

In 1832, when I first went among the Shoshonees, we wished to know the name of the beaver, but could not succeed for several days. At last one of my trappers said he had learned it from an Indian, and that it was "bonaque." Subsequently we learned that this was a tribal name for a division of the Snakes. A writer calls one of the streams entering the Willamette the "Claxter," but I could never find a stream by that name, and came to the conclusion that the person who obtained it asked a question which was not understood, and the Indian very naturally said "Claxter," or "What?" or "What do you mean?" which is the meaning of the word in the country referred to.

Beaver	Harnitze.
Muskrat	Pauitze.
Salmon	Arki.
Mule	Mourah.
Horse	Tohuech.
White Men	Tarbabo.
Bear	Wearabze.
Fish-hook	Natzoon.
Clasp-knife	Harbeteze.
Awl, or Fish-knife	Wehe.
Beaver-trap	Harnitzeoon.
Tin Basin, or Pot	Wetour.
Pipe	Parm.
Bridle	Auke-wa-nuss.
Gun	Peait.
Saddle	Narrino.
Whip	Neutequar.
Powder	Nargotouche.
Beads	Puetzo-mo.[1]
Long Shells	Tawacar.
Hatchet	Hohanic.
Grass	Shawneep.
Tobacco	Too-parm.
River, or Water	Paah.
Sun	Tarpe.
Moon	Uphuie.
Shirt	Wanup.[2]
Waistcoat	Too-wa-nup.
Buffalo Robe	Cootche.
Trowsers	Cootche.
Great-coat	Toshi-wanup.
Moccasins	Maunep.

These Indians nearly starve to death annually, and in winter and spring are emaciated to the last degree; the trappers used to think they all eventually died from starvation, as they became old and feeble. In salmon-time they get fat. In my wanderings I have never seen any of them remaining, and do not know how they

[1] These are called Hiaguoio on the North-west Coast, and are there a medium of trade.

[2] Probably the word for clothing.

dispose of their dead; many believed they were cannibals, but I have no evidence of this fact.

In the portion of this country which is not destitute of game, they pound the bones of the animals they kill fine, and after they are boiled, eat a large portion of them.

These Indians, according to my experience, do not possess the feelings of revenge or gratitude in as great a degree as the English race, and have almost none, as compared with the conceived notions of the original inhabitants of this continent. This discrepancy struck me forcibly when I first visited them, with no other knowledge of their character than I had derived from books. For anything I could see, they treated those best whom they most feared. A band of them who had wintered at Fort Hall and received much food and many presents, particularly from two hunters named Abbot and Deforest, who afterwards accompanied them on the spring hunt, murdered them for their equipment of horses, guns, traps, &c., although no quarrel was alleged to exist. At another time, for stealing some horses and traps, I gave one of them two dozen lashes at the flag-staff, and also took horses enough to pay for the property stolen; and he became afterwards a serviceable hunter, and brought many skins to the Fort.

Near Fort Hall, in 1834, there were plenty of buffalo, but soon after the Fort was established they disappeared from its neighborhood. The beaver disappeared next.

The origin of the Indians has employed so much ingenuity and learning, that it is almost useless on my part to make any suggestions. The difference of language and physical appearance leaves little doubt that they have come at several widely separated periods of time, and perhaps also from very different regions. Some of the Indians of the Valley of the Snake River have the aquiline countenance so common among the Crows, but a greater portion of them have the features of the Chinnooks and other Indians about the mouth of the Columbia.

In the winter of 1833 I saw two Japanese who had been wrecked in a Junk near the entrance to the Straits of de Fuca; and if they had been dressed in the same manner, and placed with the Chinnook slaves whose heads are not flattened, I could not have discovered the difference.

Letter VIII.

May 20th, 1848.

Sir:

I have received your favor of the 12th inst. I shall not be able to give much information on any of the subjects you propose.

I did not commence with the valley of the Colorado, which is the first in the tramontane series, because I understood the inquiry to relate almost entirely to Indians, and this valley being decidedly a den of thieves, where every one keeps every other

at arms-length, I had no knowledge of its inhabitants, if those who infest it can be so called.

I now understand that the inquiry extends to the whole subject. What *has*, what *does*, and what *will* affect the Indian race or our own? To deduce a policy suitable to both, would it not be well to place my communications in the same order as the regions to which they relate are on the route to the Pacific?

I can only add a few words used by the Shoshonees.

Kay, or Tkay	No.
Kaywut	None.
Kayshaunt	Bad, or not good.
Shaunt	Good, or, perhaps, many: it commonly expresses good.

Letter IX.

May 20th, 1848.

Sir:

I have passed several times through the country drained by the mountain branches of the Colorado of the West. Of that portion which is south of Brown's Hole, in about 41° north latitude, I know nothing from personal observation. The river below is said to be impassible, being filled with rapids, and occupying a mere crevice in the basaltic rocks, and the country a waste of sand and rocks.

The valley northward of Brown's Hole is occupied by the two main forks of the Colorado. Green River, in six branches, heads in the Rocky Mountains to the north of the South Pass, and near the Sweet-water of the Platte; and Grand River, which is the larger branch, heads in the mountains south of the South Pass, and with the Arkansas. These branches rise in the primitive and transition regions of the Rocky Mountains, but at the immediate base of these mountains the country becomes volcanic, and remains so as far south as I have visited it. These waters are in flood in June and July. There are runs of salt water, but whether there is any body of common salt was not known in the year 1836, but I have obtained it by boiling down a solution of the salts which whiten the earth in many places. I met with lignite in small veins, gypsum, and ancient marine shells, about 40 miles west of South Snake River, in latitude 40° 30′ north, longitude 108° west. On Elk and Metols Forks of Grand River, in latitude 40° 40′ north, longitude 107° west, I saw good bituminous coal in blocks in the streams, and cropping out from the sandstone on their banks. These positions were derived from dead reckoning from Fort Hall, the position of which had been previously ascertained.

While travelling from Sweet-water to Lewis' River, from the 23d June to 6th July, 1832, there was frost every night and snow several times.

Horses can be wintered at the Forks of Sandy, and on all the branches of Grand River, near the foot of the mountains, and at Brown's Hole, which last is a favorite spot.

This valley may be said to produce no timber, except in the verge of the mountains. On the heads of Green River, quaking asp, a kind of pine, and a kind of spruce, is found: on the heads of Grand River, in addition to these, pitch pine, box, alder, and scrub oak. Grass is barely tolerable on the heads of Green River, but is very fine on those of Grand River.

When I first visited this region in 1832, it was a fine game country. Besides Buffalo in the greatest abundance, there were Elk, Bear, Deer, Sheep, Antelope, and Beaver in great numbers. This abundance of game I attributed to its having always been a war-ground for the surrounding tribes. Neither the Indians, nor the whites, dared visit it openly, except in large camps, and the small marauding parties of Indians were in the habit of skulking in the high mountains, watching the country, to strike on any they might find unprepared, and their movements caused little disturbance to the game. From these causes the country could never have been closely hunted. I am uncertain if any Indians inhabit any portion of this valley, as being particularly their own, above Brown's Hole. If so, it is the Green River Snakes, whose village of 152 lodges, I met on the main fork of Grand River, on the 18th July, 1836. These Snakes appear to me to be of the same stock as those of Lewis River. They resemble them in physical appearance, but living in a better country, they are larger and better looking men, and appear more intelligent. Of their language I know nothing. I had no intimate intercourse with them. They were then mischievous, and would rob and murder if they had a safe opportunity. If they have any permanent home in this valley, it must be on the extreme south-eastern edge, where I have not been.

I have also met in this valley the Araphahoe village, and bands, or war-parties, of the Youta's, Crows, and Blackfeet, all of whom were bad neighbors.

The northern or Green River division of this valley, is unfit to produce anything, that I know of, for human sustenance, except such as may be derived from grazing. Horses, kine, sheep, and goats, may be sustained during the year, using the vicinity of the mountains in the warm months, and retiring south at the approach of cold weather.

The many fertile and warm valleys of Grand River would sustain, at all seasons, the same animals, and also produce wheat and many other articles suitable for food, and could be brought to sustain a considerable population.

Letter X.

May 26th, 1848.

Sir:

I now send you a short notice of the valley of the Bear River. The recent information from Captain Frémont, obtained under more favorable circumstances,

renders what I might convey obsolete, and I allude to it only as an important position in the route to Oregon.

Of the valley between the Blue and Cascade Mountains, I speak more fully, because I think the importance of this section has not been properly stated.

In my next, I will indicate the means which I think should be used in establishing the route between the east and the west, and how it may be connected with the improvement of the Indian races who frequent or dwell in the countries through which it may pass.

I have no published map of these regions, except one by Colonel J. J. Abert, in 1838. If there is any, more recent, published by the government, I should be pleased to receive one. There have been so many names given to the streams of these remote countries, and so often the same name to different streams, that a map is necessary to identify them.

Letter XI.

May 26th, 1848.

Sir:

The more recent exploration of the valley of Bear River, the main tributary of the Salt Lake, by Captain Frémont, with superior means, renders any extended notice of it, on my part, superfluous. It is one of the most important points in the route from the Atlantic, by the Platte, to the Pacific, by Lewis' River. The valley, a little above or below the Soda Springs, is eminently fitted for a military post. It is the most eastern residence of the "Diggers," who are the most likely, of the Indians in those regions, to form a nucleus in the social organization of their race; and the valley itself is well fitted for grazing and cultivation, and would produce abundance of horses, kine, sheep, and goats, and also abundance of salt to cure meats.

This valley is peculiar in one respect. Its outlet in the Salt Lake is remote from the most hostile and formidable tribes, while its southern and northern sides are defined by mountains impassable a considerable portion of the year, from snows, and at all seasons affording small facilities for the passage of cattle or horses. At the north-eastern extreme of its great bend, there are passes, but they are easily watched. A settlement here would be made secure from the inroads of all hostile Indians, and would have great facilities for producing the supplies most required in the neighboring regions.[1]

Buffalo were in great numbers in this valley in 1836, but must have disappeared, as well as the beaver, by this time. The mountain sheep were then plenty in the hills, and I presume are so now, as they breed where they cannot be easily disturbed. They were formerly taken in considerable numbers, where the deep snows of the mountains compelled them to visit the subordinate cliffs.

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[1] This opinion has been remarkably verified by the success of the Mormon settlement, near that point.

Rain is frequent in this valley, but irrigation, for which there is abundant means, would be required for an extended agriculture. Formerly, I have seen the Utahs, Crows, and Blackfeet in this valley, but the Shoshonees are its true occupants. They live in the caves and mountains, and retire to their inaccessible haunts on the appearance of their enemies. Horses, kine, sheep, and goats could be grazed the year round, without other care than that of the herdsman, and the protection of a small military force.

I confine my remarks on the valley lying between the Blue and Cascade Mountains, to that part of it which lies between the Columbia and the heads of the small streams that enter it from the south. The Snake, or Digger Indians inhabit this region near the heads of these small waters; in winter living on the deer and other animals driven, by the snows of the mountains, within their reach; in more genial seasons, on roots and fish. Besides these, the Nézperces, Walla-Wallahs, and Cayouses visit this region. The latter I have met in large camps, in the winter, hunting deer, &c. These Indians, having plenty of horses, make an extensive surround,[1] within which the animals are retained by expert horsemen. Others are sent within the space to keep the game on the run; and after they are well tired down, the Indians commence the slaughter, for it is nothing else. In this manner I have seen many hundreds of animals killed at a single surround. The game is elk, bear, black and white-tailed, and big-horned deer, and a few antelopes. Beaver and otter were found in 1835, but may now be extinct.

The country is mostly a high, open, rolling prairie. Some of the streams have oak, alder, and cotton-wood; in the mountains there is red and white cedar, and three kinds of pine; some of the latter quite large, and for canoes I was obliged to select the smaller size of them.

The formation is volcanic; and where conglomerate sandstone is found, it is partly formed by the wreck of volcanic rocks. Pumice-stone is frequent. Columnar basalt bounds the streams, which appear to occupy chasms. The upper waters of the Des Schutes, or Fall River, runs, for miles, over a smooth bottom of white, soft stone, or indurated clay, which I have called "fullers' earth." Near this river are hot and warm springs in many places, and on a large scale at a place which I suppose to be the same as Captain Frémont's camp of November 29th, 1843. There, I observed the thermometer at 191° in one spring, and 134° in another; and at this camp I found, projecting from the perpendicular face of the conglomerate rock, underlying many hundred feet of solid basalt, two bones about the size of the thigh-bone of the horse. They were white and mineralized by flinty matter, which produced fire when stricken by the steel. These were the only remains of ancient animal life I ever saw on the waters of the Columbia, except a few shells on the heads of Salmon River.

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[1] For using this word as a noun, local usage in the Indian country must, we fancy, be plead.

This valley abounds in fossil wood. In a slide from the mountain near the Cascades, I found a log of wood, one end of which had been mineralized so fully by some flinty matter that I produced fire from it with a steel. The other end was burnt in the fire so made.

The climate of this valley is warm in winter. On the 4th of February, 1835, frogs were croaking. Blackbirds remain through the year; and flowers may be found, in some part of it, during every month. Snows and rains alternate from September to March, in the plains, but the former are light, and do not remain more than one or two days; but in the immediate verge of the Cascade Mountains they are heavy. I was once subjected to a snow-storm on the heads of the Des Schuts, during which we judged six feet in depth to have fallen, and escaped only by building canoes and descending the river, the main stream of which does not freeze at any time.

The thermometer in the lower valleys of this region cannot range much, if any, below freezing, during any portion of the year; but I was not careful enough to note its indication.

This valley, throughout its whole extent, produces, generally, "bunch grass," which stands with the autumn rains, and remains green during the winter, drying like made hay in the dry season. It is in the highest degree nutritive.

There is a waste of rocks and sand near the Columbia, and on its immediate banks.

In this valley are chiefly reared the horses required in the immense region north of California, and west of the Rocky Mountains, and many of those used on the heads of the rivers this side of the mountains, which is sufficient proof of its grazing facilities. These animals are raised without shelter, and on the natural products of the country. The number must have been very great to supply the entire wants of the Hudson Bay Company, including food; that of the American Company in and about the mountains of the Independent Trappers; that of the Indians going to hunt buffalo, many being lost by abuse and hardship, and more stolen by the Blackfeet, Crows, Youtas, Snakes, and other tribes. It was not uncommon that a single Indian owned a hundred or more of them.

This valley is capable of producing large quantities of hides, tallow, beef, and wool. It has all the advantages of California for grazing, without its defects: droughts do not occur to injure it for this purpose. The slopes of the mountains or the bottom of the valleys are a green pasture at all seasons. The winters are cold enough to salt meats, which is not the case in California. This valley is pre-eminent for its pastoral advantages.

Its agricultural facilities are not so great: still, some of the bottoms of the rivers are good soil, and the lower slopes of the mountains generally so; in both, irrigation could be easily applied, and the agricultural wants of a pastoral people abundantly supplied.

No country affords better streams for manufacturing purposes. The waters are

very equal, being supplied, in the cold season, by the rains and melting snows of the lower parts, and in the warm season by that of the mountains.

The routes of this country are not deficient, and a point below the Great Dalles may be easily reached, where there is a fine and deep river to the Cascades, where is a portage of about two miles, which might be improved, and from that to the sea is good navigation.

This region may be called perfectly healthy. In it the epidemic fever, which broke out on the lower Columbia, in 1829, and continued its ravages until 1836, and nearly exterminated the native races there, has not been known, except in cases of persons who had been previously in the infected region. These sometimes suffered from it, but none others.

Letter XII.

June 2d, 1848.

Sir:

I now send you a few remarks on the route to Oregon, and the improvements of the Indians.

I have confined myself to their physical condition, which I consider preliminary to moral or natural development in most cases, and more particularly among a people who are starving for food, and freezing for want of clothes and shelter, at least half the year.

Letter XIII.

June 2d, 1848.

Sir:

A line of communication across the continent, and the improvement of the condition of the Indians through whose countries it may pass, involves the consideration of several important facts.

1st. The policy of this government, which has had the effect to concentrate the Indians toward the Rocky Mountains, and in the neighborhood of this route.

2d. That the increased number of the Indians is fast destroying the game on which they mainly subsist.

3d. That the stream of white population passing through these countries, and more particularly the introduction of the Robe Trade, is rapidly hastening the decrease of the game.

4th. That, notwithstanding the Indians east of the mountains have a country well fitted for agriculture, yet they have never depended much on it, for their subsistence, and appear unfitted for its steady labors. This renders it wholly improbable that those west of the mountains, with a soil and climate generally unfitted for agriculture, and who have never planted a seed, will ever devote themselves to its pursuit.

5th. In the natural progress of the improvement of man, the pastoral condition is the second stage, and succeeds that of the hunter.

6th. That some of the Indians, in the region under consideration, have already reached this second condition, having introduced and reared horses, and more recently by obtaining cattle, and appear well disposed to commence such pursuits.

7th. That peace cannot be maintained among numerous and various tribes of Indians, unless means of subsistence can be provided to prevent the necessity of one preying on another, and all, on our citizens, who may be located in those regions, or on their way through them.

The following remarks should be confined to the countries I have heretofore partially described, viz., from the summit of the South Pass by the Colorado, Bear, Snake, and Columbia Rivers to the Great Dalles, being the route through which our communications will be made with the settlements in Oregon, and by which the great mass of emigration to that region must pass.

This country is essentially different from any which this government has heretofore controlled, but is of the same character as the great mass of that which is soon to be placed under its protection. It resembles the interior of Asia. None of the roving tribes who infest it claim the ownership of its soil; they visit it only to hunt game, and murder and plunder those they meet, if they are strong or cunning enough to do so. The different bands of Shoshonees are its true inhabitants, except below the Blue Mountains, where the Cayouses and Walla-Wallahs dwell. These Indians plant nothing, and live only by the indigenous productions, on fish, game, and roots. I do not know that they ever claimed the ownership of the soil in a single instance.

The treaty system, which has been pursued, as regards the Indians and their lands, this side of the mountains, appears to me inapplicable to this region. First, Because, in a large portion of the country, there is no resident Indian government with whom to treat. Government has not been introduced among them to a sufficient extent for this purpose. They exist in small detached bodies and single families, and change their locations so widely that they seem to have no particular claim to any portion. Second, There is no distinct property to be treated for, as no considerable body of these Indians, except between the Cascade and Blue Mountains, can be found whose lines of wandering have not continually interlocked with those of similar bands. Third, If there were distinct ideas of ownership in the soil, the case would still be the same, as an immense proportion of it would be entirely valueless, if distributed in distinct properties. It is only valuable as a commonalty, and for grazing purposes, except in locations which are of very limited extent.

I coincide with the opinion, so often expressed by those best acquainted with this region, that posts should be established at suitable points on the route through it; but I would not confine the use of them to the protection and aid of emigrants, but extend it to the improvement of the condition of the Indians, together with fostering a white

pastoral population. For which purpose I would propose the establishment of posts, say one each, at the "Red Butes" of the Platte; the mouth of the "Sandy," on Green River; at "Bear River," near the Soda Springs; in the valley of "Fort Hall;" in the valley of "Bruneau;" in the valley of "Powder River," near the Lone Pine; at the mouth of the "Umatullah," about fifteen miles below Walla-Wallah; and at the "Great Dalles" of the Columbia. These points are about seven camps distant from each other, for packed animals, except that Bear River is five camps from Sandy, and two from Fort Hall; and they are all on the immediate line of the Oregon trail, within that which passes north, if Snake River bend is followed, or that which passes on the south.

These posts should have a military force appointed to each, of from 20 to 100 men. The two nearest the south Pass should be more strongly garrisoned than the intermediate ones between them and those on the Columbia, where the Indians are more effectively organized. A disposable force would also be required, of perhaps 100 men, to support any point which might require it, and supply convoys and expresses, &c. These posts should also have a sufficient number of white laborers for the operations of agriculture, for their subsistence, and to superintend the herding of animals, but the main body of the herdsmen should be selected, in preference, from the Indians. Horses, cattle, sheep, and goats, whichever might suit the particular location, should also be provided for these establishments, taking care to select good breeds.

All these posts would produce wheat and many other articles required for their support, except, perhaps, those of Sandy and the Red Butes, where it would be uncertain.

These positions might probably be kept up with a less force than stated above, but as the game decreases rapidly, and in most of this region is now nearly extinct, the Indians may become more troublesome; besides, it is always best to show them an imposing force in the beginning. It will probably be some time before the Indians will be induced to respect property from any motive but fear; eventually, the fact of possessing it themselves may furnish another motive.

Indians should be employed for all services which they can be induced to perform; particularly such as are required in managing the animals which may be reared, and their services paid in cattle and clothing, with a view to induce them to become owners of herds.

Such portions of the country as may appear fitted for agriculture, should be reserved to the government; and of the lands so reserved, an allotment should be made to every Indian inhabitant of the country, and the remainder, except such as might be reserved for the use of the government posts, opened for sale to whites or Indians who might choose to purchase. The remainder of the country should be thrown open for one vast grazing-field, to be used by all who might own stock.

The posts just established should at first attend to the rearing of stock; but subse-

quently, when a sufficient number of animals have been transferred to private individuals, either Indian or white, it might be relinquished to their enterprise.

At first the expenses of these establishments might be considerable; but in the end this would be fully compensated by the advantages gained. A tax per head might be laid on the animals grazed on the common lands, as a condition of the use of them for that purpose, and also on the allotments of agricultural lands; and from these services, in a few years the revenue would nearly or quite equal the expenditure.

The lands being in common, cattle intended for export from the country might be grazed slowly, at a proper season, down to the Great Dalles; whence the transportation would be a slight charge.

I am fully impressed with the belief that these Indians must become extinct under the operation of existing causes, and that some system should be adopted for their improvement which will supply their physical wants, and develop such elements of wealth as may exist in these remote regions, both for the benefit of their race and our own. I have no doubt that some well-devised system to carry out the leading ideas above expressed, would in time accomplish both; but should it fail, as all other plans have, to improve the Indian race, it would certainly enure to the advantage of our own, by rendering productive in pastoral wealth regions which otherwise will remain a waste.

Letter XIV.

June 6th, 1848.

Sir:

Your favor of 2d instant was received yesterday. I do not precisely understand whether you seek the Indian name of the Bear River, or that of the Snake River. The latter is called by the Nézperces "Säaptin," and by the Shoshonees "Päah," and the tribal name of the Nézperces was, I believe, Säaptin. Among them the Bear is called Hohost, and lower down on the Columbia it is Khoot. Lewis and Clark's Narrative mentions a chief named "Hohostilpilp," which means red or brown bear, and should be divided thus—Hohost-ilp-ilp; and the Koos Kooshe, on which he was found, is a compound of the word koots, or little, and coose, or horse—little horse, which is the name for the dog. The Nézperce whom I brought to Boston in 1833, called my cat by the same name also. Also by the Säaptins all the colors are denoted by double words, as "hi-hi," white, "ilp-ilp," red or brown, "snioux-snioux," black.

With the resident Shoshonees of Bear River of Salt Lake, I had no verbal intercourse. In 1833, when I saw them, they always fled to the inaccessible mountains.

Without having any evidence of the fact, I suppose the name of the river was given by the whites. At one time it was called White River. In the same manner the trappers have named branches of Grand River "Little Snake" and "Little Bear River," and some used the word South instead of Little, while the Shoshonee name of the latter was "Yampah."

The great number of bears which formerly harbored in the deep volcanic chasms of the mountains, near the Soda Springs, might have induced either whites or Indians to confer this name on the river.

I might, if desirable, give you a very few Nézperce and Flathead, or Spokan words, and more that were used on and near the Wallamette; but I suppose there is now much better means of obtaining a vocabulary of the latter.

Letter XV.

August 14th, 1848.

Sir:

Your favor of 29th ultimo was received on the 1st instant. Unavoidable engagements have prevented answering it until now.

I have no memorandum of the statistics of the Snakes, Bonacks, and Shoshonees, although one was kept at Fort Hall of the Indians who visited that establishment, up to the time it was sold to the Hudson's Bay Company, in 1837; but such estimates are of little value, owing to the inaccuracies arising from the very roving character of the Indians of that region, and the difficulty of identifying them when they return, after long intervals of time.

The Green River Snakes have a country well stored with buffalo, and consequently good food, clothes, and lodges. They appeared to be thriving Indians in 1836, but I do not suppose they were on the increase. Probably they had been stationary in numbers for a long period; and the same observation, I think, may be applied to all the Indians on both sides of the mountains, who have access to the Buffalo regions. I suppose that all such Indians have been prevented from increasing by continual encounters, arising from horse-stealing and other predatory habits incident to hunting-grounds, which are used as a commonalty among several tribes, combined with the natural desire of each to monopolize the whole.

The natural effect produced by a state of warfare would be to compel them to visit the hunting grounds for limited periods, and in large parties, for the purpose of making meat and skins, retiring, when that was accomplished, to residences more secure for themselves and property, thereby allowing the buffalo some respite. It has been noticed that all buffalo countries are the war-grounds of several tribes. Before the inroads of the Whites to these regions, a long-continued peace among the Indians, allowing them to hunt continuously, and in small parties, would have increased their numbers; but if long continued would have extirpated the game, and, in the end, compelled the Indians to choose between the labors of herding domesticated animals and agriculture, to sustain the increased number, or a resort to war to reproduce an equilibrium with the means of sustenance. The latter resort is more in accordance with the Indian mind, in its past and present state.

From such considerations, my own opinion is, that these Indians have been, as

regards numbers, for a long time weighed in a balance, the means of subsistence sometimes preponderating, and increasing their numbers, and this decreasing the game, which would again produce depopulating contests, which would again allow the game to increase.

When the Whites began to visit these regions, the destruction of the game became inevitable, and that of the Indians will surely follow, if the power of the government is not exerted to substitute some means of obtaining food which is available, without a violent or sudden departure from their established habits and natural character.

No success has attended the effort to bring the natives of this continent to the level of our race; but it is incumbent on us to continue it in good faith, and I am fully impressed with the belief that it might be accomplished through the introduction of the means and habits of pastoral pursuits, as an intermediate step to agriculture, and I believe the experiment would not cost, in dollars, as much as that of keeping Indians quiet, who have been crowded into countries nearly destitute of game, while they are still inadequate to the labors of agriculture.

The Bonacks and Shoshonees, I have no doubt, were decreasing when I was in their country, and I do not believe they were ever very numerous: the country is too poor, in all respects, to admit of increase.

I can without any reserve state, that the Indians between the Rocky and Blue Mountains, and from 49° to 53° north latitude, which includes the range of these two tribes, and many more, were never demoralized previous to 1837, by the introduction of alcohol. I was in the trade myself and conversant with the parties who visited that region, and the management of all the posts in it, for the five preceding years. Spirits were never traded with them; rarely, a good hunter or chief was presented with a glass on his arrival. And the whole quantity introduced in a year would not have supplied the value of a week's fertility in a year to the white persons in the country. It was far too expensive, owing to long transportation on packed animals, which was the only means of conveyance, to be brought in considerable quantities.

The introduction of alcohol among Indians may have influenced their condition elsewhere, and would probably do so in the countries referred to, but when I left those regions, their products were so inconsiderable in value, as to interpose a complete protection from its introduction or use.

I am, very respectfully,

Your Obedient Servant,

NATHANIEL J. WYETH.

HENRY R. SCHOOLCRAFT, ESQ.