REPORT ON THE KOOTENAY INDIANS.

BY MR. A. S. FARWELL.

VICTORIA, B. C.,
December, 31st 1883.

To the Honourable the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works:

SIR,—With reference to that portion of your letter of instructions, dated 14th July, 1883, bearing on the "number of Indians (if any) who, by usage, may have claims for grazing "or other purposes upon the lands proposed to be reclaimed, and generally upon Indian require-"ments in the locality," I beg to report as follows:—

On my arrival in Kootenay District, every white man I conversed with, without an exception, forcibly impressed on me the fact that the Kootenay Indians, as a whole, were extremely dissatisfied with the unsettled state of their land affairs, and that they looked on anyone with the semblance of an official capacity with suspicion. Under these circumstances I deemed it inexpedient to communicate directly with the Indians on any matter relating to their land claims, and confined myself to collecting what reliable information I could from white settlers and others I chanced to meet. As far as I have been able to ascertain, there has been no census taken of the Kootenay Indians, either by the Indian Department or anyone else. From the most reliable sources, I gather the Kootenay tribe of Indians number about 800, men, women, and children, and are divided, approximately, as follows:—450 British Indians, domiciled north of the international boundary line, and 200 American Indians residing in Idaho and Montana Territories; the remaining 150 Indians are migratory, receiving their share of the annuities paid by the United States Government, at its Agency on the Jocko River, in the Flathead reservation, Montana Territory, and claiming to be British Indians when they wander north of the boundary line.

Of the 450 British Indians, 150 claim the Lower Kootenay as their country, from the boundary line, down Kootenay river, and through Kootenay Lake and its tributaries. The remaining 300 Indians consider the land along the Upper Kootenay River, from the boundary line at Tobacco Plains northward, to the Lower Columbia Lake, as theirs. The majority of these Upper Kootenays winter at St. Mary's Mission. This Mission is, at present, presided over by the Rev. Father Fouquet, and is situated on the right bank of St. Mary's River, about four miles from its confluence with Kootenay River. In the immediate vicinity of the church and mission buildings, the Indians have erected fifty-five houses, which are occupied by their families during the winter. The condition of these Indians has materially changed since the advent of gold seekers to the western slope of the Rocky Mountains, north of the boundary line. They formerly lived almost entirely on the products of the chase, and annually crossed to the eastern side of the mountains in quest of buffalo, their staple article of food. Shortly after the discovery of gold on Wild Horse Creek, cattle owned by white men were wintered successfully along the east of the Columbia Lakes. The Indians since then have gradually accumulated small bands of cattle, and wintered them without material loss, with the exception of the winter of 1879-80; that season was an exceptional one. The late Mr. Milby, who had a large and valuable band of cattle running on the east side of the Columbia Lakes, lost nearly all of them, and the Indians, as I am informed by Mr. Baptiste Morigeau, lost about 500 head. The Upper Kootenays have entirely abandoned their old custom of crossing the mountains in pursuit of game, the buffalo having left their former haunts on the eastern slope of the mountains. The Indians now depend for their sustenance chiefly on their cattle, and the game and fish they can secure on the Upper Kootenay and Upper Columbia Rivers. These Indians

at present own about 400 head of cattle and some 500 horses. The major part of their cattle have been wintered heretofore on the east side of the Columbia Lakes. This is a favourite grazing place of the Indians, and they felt very sore at its being pre-empted, occupied and fenced in by white settlers. Up to last April, the only person claiming land in the neighbourhood of these lakes is a Mr. Baptiste Morigeau, who has built a house and trading store on Morigeau Creek. This creek runs in on the east side of the Lower Columbia Lake, about 3½ miles from its outlet.

A number of engineers and their assistants, employés of the Canadian Pacific Railway Syndicate, passed last winter on the Upper Columbia River in the vicinity of the railway crossing, and several of them on leaving that service last spring staked off and recorded land in the neighbourhood of the Columbia Lakes. On the 19th April last, E. J. Johnston recorded 80 acres, adjoining Morigeau's claim. On the 2nd June, F. W. Aylmer recorded 320 acres on the right of the Columbia River, a few miles below the Columbia Lakes. On the 9th July last, F. P. Armstrong and D. Bellhouse recorded 320 acres and 80 acres respectively along the eastern shore of the Upper Lake. These last two records the Indians look on with particular disfavour, as they are located directly on their long-used and favourite cattle run. Numerous applications have also been filed for large tracts of meadow and grazing land between the Kootenay and Columbia Rivers, by different parties, chiefly stock-raisers from the North-West Territory. These Indians have been anxiously awaiting, year after year, the arrival of the "Commissioner," and are particularly angry and disappointed at no action having been taken during the past season towards defining their reserves. Isadore, the chief of the Upper Kootenays, resides on the right bank of the Kootenay River, about eight miles below Galbraith's Ferry. He is reputed to be well off in money, horses, and cattle. The latter he winters in the neighbourhood of his camp. He is considered by the white residents as a clever Indian, with very pronounced opinions, but amenable to sound arguments. He also bears a good character. One of his ideas is (in which he is joined by the majority of his followers) that there should be no fences, in order that every man's cattle might range at large. I may remark here that all the Upper Kootenays are civil and good natured, and appear well disposed towards the whites. They are good horsemen and can make long journeys with rapidity and ease. They are well armed with Winchester rifles, and possess large quantities of ammunition. Nearly every Indian met on the trails has his rifle on the horn of his saddle and a belt full of cartridges. The Indian Reserve Commission will probably meet with more difficulty in satisfactorily assigning the Upper Kootenay Reserves than has been experienced in any other section of the Province. These Indians are in constant communication with the aborigines south of the boundary line, and are thoroughly acquainted with the vast extent of the American reservations.

The Flathead reservation, in Montana, is about 100 miles south-east from the boundary line, and contains 1,500,000 acres. The Colville, or Calispell reservation, in Washington Territory, bounded on the north by the 49th parallel of north latitude, on the south by Okanagan River, and on the east and south by Columbia River, contains 2,000,000 acres. Chief Moses' reservation, Washington Territory, joins the Calispell reservation on the west, and contains 2,000,000 acres. These quantities are only approximate. The American Indians are remunerated for the land which is taken from them, and receive annuities from the United States Government. The Kootenays are also well acquainted with the manner of dealing with the North-West Territory Indians, adopted by the Dominion Government, Some of the Upper and Lower Kootenays, the Flatheads, Calispells, and other Indians, frequently rendezvous at Old Kootenay Fort, on Musula Creek. Old Kootenay Fort is in the south-east bend of Kootenay River, about fifty miles south of the line. At this place the Indians meet to trade horses, &c., gamble, drink whiskey and dissipate generally. It is within the bounds of possibility that the undisturbed relations at present existing, between the very few white residents of Kootenay District, and the Indians may not be of long duration. The land complications above referred to are daily increasing, and there is little doubt that next spring, a number of stock-raisers and settlers will record land claims along the Upper Kootenay and Columbia rivers. I beg, therefore, to point out the grave necessity of settling the Indian land claims in this district at the earliest possible date. It is much to be regretted that the proper authorities failed to take steps in this direction during the past season, thereby permitting the difficulties, which have been known to exist in that portion of the Province for many years past, to accumulate to a very serious extent.

There is a small band of Shuswap Indians living in a village situate about five miles below the Lower Columbia Lake, on the right bank of Columbia River. They number thirty-

five men, women and children. Originally they came from Shuswap Lake, and now occasionally visit their relatives at Kamloops. This little settlement keep almost entirely to themselves. They possess a few horses and cattle, and appear comfortably off.

The Lower Kootenay Indians.

These Indians, including men, women, and children, number 157, divided as follows: Thirty-five men; 34 married women; 39 boys; 32 girls; 4 widows, with 6 boys and 3 girls between them; and 4 widows without encumbrances. I obtained this statement from David McLoughlin, Esq., who resides 200 yards south of the boundary line. Mr. McLoughlin formerly had charge of the Hudson's Bay Co.'s trading post on the left bank of Kootenay River, at the Shepherd trail crossing, but on the decline of the mining interests on Wild Horse and neighbouring creeks, and the consequent closing out of the Hudson's Bay Co.'s business at that point, he took up a farm on the American side of the line. Mr. McLoughlin speaks the Kootenay language fluently, and is well acquainted with the habits and customs of the Indians. These natives are not nearly as civilized as the Upper Kootenays. They are indolent, poor, badly clothed and badly armed. They have no houses, and live, summer and winter, in lodges, constructed of poles covered with mats or hides. Mr. McLoughlin informs me that in former years, these Indians were supplied with seeds of different kinds, and they made efforts to raise potatoes, wheat, etc., but the uncertainty of securing their crops, through the flooding of the land, so thoroughly disheartened them, that they gave up farming in disgust. During the past season no seed of any kind was planted. From the same source I learn that these Indians, only a year or two since, possessed quite a number of horses and cattle. Their stock is now reduced to about eight or ten head of cattle and 60 horses. This decrease has been brought about by gambling. A great many of these Indians formerly wintered on Goat River, about nine miles north of the boundary line; now only two or three families winter there. A few families winter close to Mr. McLoughlin's house, and the remainder winter on Jerome Creek, some eight miles south of the line.

They run their stock in the winter on Goat River, and between McLoughlin's and Jerome Creek. As the summer advances, and the water recedes, the Indians move down the river and fish, and take their stock with them. In the event of the Reclamation Scheme being a success, I am of opinion, a reserve of, say, 1,000 acres of grass land, in the neighbourhood of Goat River, would be sufficient. In case the lessee fails to drain these bottom lands, the Indians will practically have the run of the whole country, as they have had for years past.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,
A. S. Farwell.