Littlefield to Slum.
White River Agency.
552.

With regard for the agricultural prospects for the coming year, Mr. Adams informed me that it was only an experiment which he had tried for the first time, it having been thought impossible to raise crops, on account of the alkali in the soil and the coldness and high altitude of the agency. We are of the opinion, though, that the experiment has proved that wheat, oats, potatoes, and some other garden vegetables of the hardy kind can be raised. The corn in the garden did not mature, owing in part to the want of irrigation but the potatoes and some other vegetable did mature, and were excellent. I should not attempt to sow or plant without irrigation, and, as some spots can be selected easy to irrigate, I shall select those for farming purposes. I have purchased four mules, and these, with the oxen, are ample for our work.

I found no plows, except broken ones, at the agency, and have purchased one, and shall break up six or eight acres this fall. The manure and offal that was accumulated last year was burnt up, but, being of the opinion that even on the best land good stock-manure is a good fertilizer, I shall take care to use it to enrich the land. We have cured and put in covered stacks, 50 tons of excellent hay. Last year but a small quantity was secured. The severe storms and deep snows rendered it necessary to keep the work-stock upon hay during three months of the year, and Mr. Adams assured me that it was absolutely necessary to work cattle during the inclement season on hay, and have them well protected from the inclemency of the weather.

The herd of cattle that was driven here by Mr. U.M. Curtis from "San Luis Plains," numbered 290 cows, 4 Durham bulls, 90 young steers and 56 heifer calves and yearlings. One of the large Durham bulls they were obliged to shoot; the other was left on Bear River, being too foot-acent to be driven but may be brought in. Of the 290 cows are large portion are Texas cattle, but the heifers and young steers are one-half American, and fine stock. They were in good condition, when we consider they were driven four hundred and fifty miles, at a season of the year when grass was scarce, and through sixty miles of the heart of the Rocky Mountains. I take pleasure in remarking that Mr. Curtis fulfilled his contract acceptably, and that those cattle could not have been driven the long distance and looked after better by any other man.

A letter of Mr. Sheath, asking compensation for herding of the cattle from February, I send you, not having any means of knowing whether the claim was just; also a demand for tolls that Mr. Curtis signed, that I do not feel warranted to pay without instructions from the Department. The cattle are branded with every variety of brand, over thirty in number. We propose to build a corral and have them all branded with the letters I.D. "Indian Department." At a council of the chiefs and headmen of this agency, held August 10, 1871, among the matters brought up for consideration was a desire that this agency be removed to Bear River, sixty-five miles north, and the reasons urged were the excessive cold of the winter, and the scarcity of game in this vicinity. The chiefs were unanimous in requesting that I insist on the removal. Douglas, their head chief, said Governor McCook promised its removal after one year's experiment here. By consulting Thayer's map of Colorado for 1871, I find that the Indian reservation does reach the Bear River within ten miles, and that at Williams Fork. With the experiment this year in raising crops, I am fully convinced that the change is not expedient, but, viewed from the pecuniary point, doubtless it would cost the Government far less for the transportation of freight; a saving of two or three per cent could be made, but the building are all here, and I do not think that with regard to game the Indians would experience any advantage; the country between the Bear River and Rawlins will soon be settled up, and the game, of course, will disappear. I would like the Department to consider the matter
and report to me at the earliest convenience. Doubtless the Indians would not have thought of making the change, had it not been suggested by the Governor and talked of by the white people.

Upon the subject of education, I would report that, while the chiefs do not feel much interest in the matter, from the simple reason that they do not understand what it means, yet they do not oppose it; and as soon as a school house can be erected, it will be used, numbers of them having expressed a desire to learn. One of them (by the name of Joe) who speaks English fluently, has said to me that he was anxious to go to school; and with his knowledge of the English language could be easily taught so as to fit himself for an interpreter—a man very much needed at this agency. The teacher has been unremitting in his efforts to acquire a knowledge of the Ute language so as to be able to teach them. Our books, blackboards, slates, etc have not been received; but we expect them next week, and shall fit up a room, and have no doubt but that a good school can be carried on. We have reported forty scholars, yet doubtless, in a short time more will be added. I have confidence that if the right means are employed the Indian youths can be educated—perhaps not quite as easily as the freed children of the South.

I take pleasure in reporting that no complaints have come to me from Indians, or from whites, of disturbance or difficulty of any kind. The Indians are highly gratified with the herd of cattle that the Government has given them. No intoxicating liquors of any kind are to be obtained within a hundred miles; hence the Indian camp has been quiet and peaceful. With the exception of the talk of removal of the agency, they seem to be satisfied with what the Government does for them, and are anxious that other men now off the reservation shall come and live with them.

The general health is good, although, from time to time, we have applications for medicines, which we give according to our judgment. I regret very much to prescribe in cases I do not understand, and wish that the Department would furnish a physician. We are so far remote from white settlements, that if accidents occur among the Indians or employees, life often has to be sacrificed for want of medical and surgical aid. The physician at Fort Tsele (Wyoming Territory) said to me of the late Otto Von Hagen, who died in the hospital last July, that if he could have had prompt surgical aid, his life could have been saved.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully your obedient servant,

J. S. Littlefield, U.S. Indian Agent.

Hon. H.R. Clum,
Acting Indian Commissioner, Washington D.C.

End of Report.