

## IDAHO AND THE NEZ PERCE RESERVE

NOTHING of greater importance to the welfare of the northwest interior, not even the building of the Northern Pacific railroad, has ever occurred than the recent action of the interior department in taking the initial steps toward allotting the Nez Perce Indians lands in severalty, and throwing open the balance of that great reservation to public settlement. I append herewith a close estimate, compiled from official sources, of facts and figures, as follows :

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| Indian population.....                     | 1,500          |
| 300 heads of families, 160 acres each..... | 48,000 acres.  |
| 600 single adults, 80 acres each.....      | 48,000 "       |
| 600 under age, 40 acres each.....          | 24,000 "       |
| For pasture lands.....                     | 30,000 "       |
| For timber lands.....                      | 30,000 "       |
| Total allotment to Indians.....            | 180,000 acres. |
| Area of reserve.....                       | 743,680 acres. |
| Deduct Indian allotments.....              | 180,000 "      |
| Leaving a total of.....                    | 563,680 acres. |

The opening of this reservation will thus render more than half a million acres subject to settlement by white people, making homes of one hundred and sixty acres each for three thousand five hundred and twenty-three heads of families. The process to be pursued, as near as I can learn, is as follows: Miss Fletcher, an expert from the Indian bureau, is already on the reservation to allot the Indians their lands, and so confident does the department feel that this lady will be successful in her mission, that Mr. Edson Briggs, of Pomeroy, has been detailed to survey the allotments as fast as they are made. At the conclusion of this work a commission will be appointed to treat with the Indians for the cession of the remaining area to the United States. The lands thus secured by treaty will thereupon become a part of the public domain, subject, however, to no entry filing except homestead. The commutation clause of the law does not apply to homestead entries made on these lands. There must be five years of actual residence thereon to secure title to a homestead of one hundred and sixty acres of the finest land in the United States. I have stated the law relating to the disposal of these lands thus explicitly, so that none may come but those who are prepared to live up to its requirements, and for the further reason that none may say they were lured here under false pretenses.

Within the last few days fully one hundred intending settlers have arrived here, and during the interval of waiting for the opening of the reservation, have located pre-emption claims on the beautiful prairies on Craig's mountain, which are cut in twain by the reservation line. These people are wise in their

generation, for, instead of living in idleness during the year that must elapse before the authorities can complete the allotment and treaty, they are securing title to a quarter section of land as fine as ever a crow flew over, and which is always valuable property, and which, moreover, affords them a home convenient to the promised land, where they can keep posted on the development and progress of the work on the reserve. When the bars are let down, these people will be on the spot to locate their homesteads on the most fruitful soil on the continent. What these people are doing, others can do. The great prairies bordering Mason creek, Wilton creek and Lawyer's canyon afford homes for hundreds more, homes where the soil is wonderfully prolific, well watered and timbered, and where the climate is so genial that stock pull through the winter without feed.

But it is not alone in the opening of the five hundred thousand acres of surplus land on the reservation, though that in itself is no small item, that the beneficial effect will be felt, for it must be understood that the boundary lines of the reservation are so located that they have practically kept under lock and key the best part of Idaho Territory, by commanding the outlet to the whole of the Clearwater basin and the western slope of the Bitter Root mountains, a region dowered with an infinite variety and profusion of nature's richest gifts. Commencing six miles above Lewiston, the reservaton has a water front on both sides of the Clearwater river and its tributaries of one hundred and twenty miles. The main river—the principal artery of access to the back country for two hundred miles—has been closed by the reservation, and it has been practically sealed territory in the possession of an Indian tribe. The tributary country extends from Cœur d'Alene on the north to Salmon river on the south, and is a region rich in prairie, meadow and pasture lands. The western slope of the Bitter Root range contains the largest and best forests of timber in the northwest, while indications of the existence of great mineral zones have been found. It is all, however, a practical *terra incognita*, and even the number and sources of the principal tributaries are not definitely known. With the opening of the reservation, wagon roads will be built and the gradual development of this new country will reveal sources of wealth undreamed of in these primeval solitudes. It is a vast country. Take Idaho county, in the heart of the territory. It is two hundred miles from north to south, and an equal distance from east to west. The main Clearwater flows along its northern boundary, while the tortuous Salmon river drains through its heart. The waters of Snake river wash its western base, and the tall summits of the Bitter Root divide, rearing their pine and cedar