

DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 1795.]

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MEMORIAL

OF

YEARLY MEETINGS OF THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,

RELATIVE TO

*The treatment of the Indians.*

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JANUARY 25, 1869.—Ordered to be printed.

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*To the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress assembled :*

The memorial of the undersigned, representatives of seven yearly meetings of the religious society of Friends in the States of Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Michigan, Maryland, Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Kansas, respectfully represents:

That we have met in the city of Baltimore unitedly to consider our Christian duty in reference to the present condition of the Indians of our country.

While thus engaged, having before us the report of the joint special committee of Congress upon the condition of the Indian tribes, printed January 26, 1867, and that of the Indian peace commission, January 14, 1868, and subsequent reports of the civil and military proceedings in reference to the Indians, we have realized the deep responsibility which rests upon all members of a community professing to be Christians, in their dealings and intercourse with the feeble remnants of the aboriginal inhabitants of this land.

In contemplating the disgraceful facts revealed in those reports, and the admission of our own witnesses that our wars with the Indians, which have been almost constant, have been uniformly caused by injustice on the part of our white citizens and of government officials,\* we are reminded of the fact that the treaty of the Indians with William Penn was faithfully kept during the 70 years in which the government of Pennsylvania was administered upon the principles of its founder; and history tells us that "while the surrounding colonies were ever and anon at war with the Indians, and the scalping-knife and the tomahawk

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\* But it is said that our wars with them have been almost constant. Have we been uniformly unjust? We answer unhesitatingly, yes. See Peace Commissioners' Report, signed by Taylor, Henderson, Sherman, Harney, Sanborn, Terry, Tappan, and Augur, January 7, 1868.

brought death and terror to many a hearth, the Pennsylvanians and all their possessions remained uninjured." "The Indians remembered the treaty with the sons of Onas, (Penn,) and kept it inviolate."

Is there any reason to suppose that the Indians of the present day are less disposed to be faithful to their engagements than were their ancestors? The testimony of Colonel Bent, confirmed by other witnesses, before the joint committee above referred to, states, after 36 years' experience in the vicinity of the Indians against whom the United States army is now engaged in hostile operations, that nearly every instance of difficulties between the Indians and the whites during his residence there were from aggressions on the Indians by the whites. And after giving an interesting detail of the causes which have directly or indirectly led to the present deplorable state of affairs, this experienced witness closed his testimony with these remarkable words: "If the matter were left to me, I would guarantee with my life that in three months I could have all the Indians along the Arkansas at peace without the expense of war."

But we do not desire to dwell upon the sickening history of the past, except to guard against its repetition in the future. While the white men whose brutal murders have brought upon many innocent settlers the vengeance of an outraged savage foe still go unpunished, and with blood upon their hands demand the extermination of the Indians, many of the tribes, both innocent and guilty of retaliation, have been destroyed by the sword, and their survivors have been reduced to subjection and have submitted themselves to the sense of justice in the white man's breast.

While we have no sympathy with wrong or outrage of any kind, we cannot but express the hope that the further shedding of blood shall cease, and that the leniency which becomes a powerful nation may be extended to the children-of the forest, who have been struggling for the right to live upon the soil of their ancestors.

Mercy to him that shows it, is the rule  
And righteous limitation of its act,  
By which Heaven moves in pardoning guilty man;  
And he that shows none, being ripe in years,  
And conscious of the outrage he commits,  
Shall seek it, and not find it, in his turn.

We have watched with deep interest, and highly appreciate, the evident desire of Congress to remedy the gross evils and abuses of our Indian system. We have no doubt that the proposal to place the Indian affairs in the control of the War Department has been dictated by motives of humanity, both to the interest of the Indians and the honor of the nation. While, however, we sympathize with our fellow-citizens in their desire to remedy these evils, we feel anxious that no retrograde course shall be adopted in these respects. The reasons which induced Congress in former years to remove these affairs from the War Department still exist, if possible, in greater degree. The loathsome disease which has destroyed thousands, and which now enfeebles and degrades most of the tribes, must be traced to licentious intercourse between the soldiers and the Indians. The demoralization to all parties from this cause is beyond estimate, and we respectfully submit that every consideration of principle and honor demand that the untutored Indian, who now looks to us for the arts of civilized life, upon which he must hereafter mainly depend, should be kept as far as possible from contact with dissolute and licentious men.

When we reflect upon the boundless evils of such contact, and the outrages to which they have been subjected, we can appreciate the remark

of the indignant chief who said to your commissioners: "The white people treat us worse than the wolves do."

As professing Christians we have the utmost reliance upon the power of God upon the human heart; and we are confident that the faithful exercise of the principles and commands of our Lord Jesus Christ will be found sufficient to solve the Indian question without military aid. If we have heretofore failed to convert these heathen to the adoption of those principles, it is not because they are deficient in strength for their object, but because of the corruption and unfaithfulness of men whose examples have dishonored the Christian name. "Whatever our people may choose to say of the insincerity or duplicity of the Indian, would fail to express the estimate entertained by many Indians of the white man's character in this respect."\*

The evils which arise from the exercise of arbitrary power by subordinate military men is more than enough to counteract the good which might be expected from the influence of officers of high character for principle and honor; and we are forced to conclude that the experience of military influence as a whole in the past is no warrant to expect a more favorable result in the future.

We, therefore, have read with much satisfaction the bill before the Senate, introduced by the senator from Kansas, "to create a department of Indian affairs, and to provide for the consolidation, civilization, and government of the Indian tribes." We believe that in its general features it is well adapted to secure the important reforms so loudly called for. Let the effort be made in good faith to promote their education, their industry, their morality. Invite the assistance of the philanthropic and Christian effort which has been so valuable an aid in the elevation of the freedmen, and render it possible for justice and good example to restore that confidence which has been lost by injustice and cruelty.

We are informed that the policy of our neighbors on our northern frontier has resulted in peace with the Indians for a hundred years. It is our belief that the sooner the tribal relation is broken up, and the Indian population permanently attached to the land, and brought under the same laws, privileges, and responsibilities with the rest of the community, the better it will be for the whole country. The 300,000 Indians will then become a valuable aid in the development of the national wealth; and the tax-paying inhabitants of the land will be spared from contributing the untold millions now worse than wasted in Indian wars. So long as these lands continue to be held in common, they will present irresistible temptation to avaricious men, and schemes for obtaining possession of them, such as that which was last year denounced by the House committee as a shameful outrage, will continue to be devised. We cannot refrain from expressing the hope that the bill above referred to may contain a provision which will hereafter effectually prevent all men from attempting thus to enrich themselves at the expense of the national honor.

The last occasion upon which the representatives of our religious society appeared unitedly before you was during the darkest days of our country's history. Congress then listened with patient interest to our appeals in behalf of the rights of conscience, and granted relief. We now rejoice that the subject of our appeal is on behalf of humanity, in the interests of peace, and for the practical maintenance of the principles of Christianity. We desire that in legislating upon the rights and interests of the aboriginal inhabitants of our highly-favored land, you may remem-

\* Report of the Indian peace commissioners, page 4.

ber that "righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." May you be enabled, as representatives of a Christian nation, to legislate respecting the Indians in the fear of the Almighty, and be guided by His wisdom. On the one side is weakness, and on the other is power; therefore justice and mercy, kindness and liberality, commensurate with its greatness, concern alike the honor and the interests of the nation.

We desire to strengthen the hands of those who fearlessly advocate the right, and to remind all that the eye of Omniscience rests upon us.

It is our prayer that the result of your action may redound to your own peace and to the interests and happiness of all the inhabitants of the land.

Signed on behalf of the representatives of the meetings aforesaid:

JOHN BUTLER.  
ENOCH HOAG.  
WILLIAM WOOD.  
WILLIAM B. COLLINS.  
AUGUSTUS TABER.  
BENJAMIN TATHAM.  
WILLIAM C. TABER.  
GEORGE HOWLAND, JR.  
GILBERT CONGDON,  
RICHARD M. JANNEY.  
FRANCIS T. KING.  
JAMES C. THOMAS.  
JAMES CAREY.

BALTIMORE, 1st Month 21, 1869.