

MEMORIAL
OF
JOHN BEESON,

ASKING

The appointment of a delegation, composed in part of women, to visit the Indian tribes and devise means to improve their condition.

APRIL 1, 1874.—Referred to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

To the Senate and House of Representatives in Congress assembled :

Impelled by sympathy for the Indians, together with a desire to know and to make known the truth or falsity of many conflicting reports about the occupants of the Indian Territory, and especially to learn the points of difference between the parties which so unhappily divide the Cherokee Nation, the subscriber made them a visit during the month of January, 1874, and, after many interviews with intelligent Indians and white men, (five hundred of whom are connected with them by marriage,) he is able to give the following as a condensed statement of what he heard and observed while in their midst. The differences arise in a great measure from a difference in race, one being progressive, the other content with nature as it is; but education has also had very much to do in making contentions more bitter and irreconcilable. They have had for more than fifty years mission-schools and missionaries in abundance, but it is apparent that, owing to some fatal mistake in the systems taught, their social and pecuniary condition is far from being truly Christian and satisfactory to themselves or their friends; for, with all the material elements of plenty, the majority of them are poor and cramped for want of means. Their chief missionary, who is also agent and a fluent speaker of their language, and on these accounts stands as the representative head of the ruling party, seems to exercise no power to facilitate their progress; for where before the war there were eight mission-schools, there are now but two, and the children learn the English tongue only while studying and reciting their lessons in the public schools, but, not using it at their homes, they do not learn its application to things, so they know not the sense. Even though they read and recite with great fluency, it is only by rote, like the talk of a parrot; and this must ever be the case until the children can be kept sufficiently apart from their families for the English tongue to become as familiar as their own.

Previous to the war the Cherokees numbered 22,000, all of whom, except twenty families, were driven, alike by the northern and southern armies, from their territory, and during their four years' absence and exposure to cold and hunger their infants and aged and infirm died, and

many of their houses and furniture and fences were burned, and their live stock, which was valued at \$6,000,000, was all driven away. From this terrible loss they have not yet recovered, for on their return to their homes many of the pure bloods brought nothing with them, and those who did have had to subsist themselves upon the increase, which makes it impossible almost to raise a surplus for sale; and if the war had not closed at the time it did they would have been in a still worse condition, for a bargain had just been made with a large force of Comanches to raid and destroy all they could, beginning on one side of the Indian Territory and to finish on the other. The recollection of this murderous plot and of their actual sufferings, caused by the war of their Christian neighbors, has burned into their very souls a distrust of everything which the white man proposes, even though it is intended for their good; and in order to protect themselves from frauds they (the pure bloods chiefly) have a secret association, which makes and administers its own laws, utterly regardless of the civil authorities, the rifle and revolver being their executive instruments, by which so many have fallen that no public man, not even their delegates at Washington, dare imperil their lives by the utterance of a word in favor of the survey of their lands or the development of their material resources. Even their mineral wealth, which is known to consist in mines of silver, lead, copper, iron, coal, and salt, is kept undeveloped, through fear that the white man's greed would take it from them. And to-day their law subjects them to a penalty of \$500 for employing a white man, except he be a millwright, and then not without a legal permit and the payment of \$24 tax per annum. This is a serious cause of suffering, for there are many widows and helpless persons who own farms who are nevertheless dependent upon charity for their daily bread, because they cannot get any one to work their land; and though they have a large amount of Government bonds, the interest of which brings them in an annual income of about \$150,000, it all goes to the support of their government officials and for the payment of school-teachers and delegates to Washington, and for lawyers' fees. The last two items have cost them since the war \$200,000, and still they are beset by those who are trying to get from them a strip of land twenty miles wide and five hundred miles long, or ten miles on each side of two railroads through the best portion of their country.

In view of the many frauds to which the Indians have been subject, it is no wonder that they are still in fear of losing that which justly belongs to them, especially as there are tens of thousands of landless white men anxiously looking for homes somewhere in the 168,000 square miles which the Indians possess but do not occupy. It is a domain that is full of all the natural elements of wealth, and capable of sustaining a dense population, numerous enough for a European kingdom, and yet all its present inhabitants together would only make one respectable city, or three or four villages, in the Eastern States, and the experience of successive generations demonstrates that all the methods which have been used to develop the Indians, so that they can make a proper use of their material resources, are, in the main, a failure, and the question now to be solved is, can it be otherwise? The subscriber believes it can, and would respectfully submit the following for your consideration:

Inasmuch as Christian creeds differ and induce contentions, it is therefore only Christian virtue that should be taught to Indians, such as the love of our neighbor, and overcoming evil with good, and that "charity is greater than faith or hope," and no person should be author-

ized to teach in their Territory but such as can teach these virtues by their example as well as by precept.

And whereas the mutual wrongs between the races has produced mutual suffering, which can only be remedied by mutual compromise; therefore, let a solemn compact be entered into between the Government and the representatives of the confederate tribes, to the effect that no settlement whatever shall be made upon the Indian Territory without their consent, and that its government and laws shall be made and administered by them as friendly allies.

And in order to insure to them the advantages of general commerce, and the more perfect development of all the tribes, as well as the material resources of their respective territories, let groups of co-operative white families, with experts as farmers, gardeners, and mechanics, and of persons skilled in the various departments of art and science, be furnished with stock and tools and building material, and free transportation to form settlements in all parts of the Territory; and at each settlement let there be accommodations for the board and education of all the children (orphans included) in their respective districts, and also for as many adults and Indian families as choose to join the co-operative groups.

The object of these groups being expressly for the development of the Indians and their Territory, the Indians should be participants in every branch of labor, and be thoroughly instructed in the theory and practice of every vocation in civilized life, both in the house, in the mechanic's shop, in the field, at seed-time and at harvest, and also in the market and in the counting-house. The children and infirm persons should be supported by the funds which are now appropriated for that purpose. The adults should be sustained by the profits of their united labor and the increase of their herds. The expense of transportation and for building materials, and for implements, teams, and stock, should be provided for with the funds belonging to the Indians, because the land with all the improvements would remain theirs, while the whites would receive their proportion of the annual profits, and, when any of them desire to leave, the respective communities will allow them only a reasonable amount for the value of their labor in the improvements made. And in order to insure families for the various groups who will sustain the Indian territorial government in the promotion of temperance, industry, and fair dealing in all the relations of life, none should be admitted but such as are fully commended by well-known advocates of temperance and peace, and the commendation, accompanied with a photograph likeness of the parties, should be sent to a committee of Indians and their friends, to be appointed to examine and to authorize those who are to form the groups.

It will be seen that, by the adoption of this proposed plan, the following good results would be attained:

1. The English language, with all the literature and arts, and science and commerce, in which it is used, would sooner be diffused among the Indians than by any plan hitherto adopted.
2. The prosperity of the neighboring States would be greatly enhanced by helping the Indians to become a prosperous people.
3. It would become a settled Indian policy that would stop frauds and prevent wars, and obviate the necessity of Indian agents and military posts.
4. It would insure the supremacy of law, the allegiance of the Indians, and the honor and strength of the American Government and people to an extent never before attained.

5. It seems the only way by which justice and a truly Christian civilization can be established, and it need not cost the national Treasury a dollar to put it in full operation.

Your memorialist respectfully represents that he has recently returned from a private visit to the tribes living in the Indian Territory, and that he has ascertained the truth of the following statements :

First. That neither the material resources nor the Indians nor the negroes who live among them can be developed under existing circumstances.

Secondly. That the delegates from the Indian Territory who are now in Washington are instructed to oppose any measures (governmental) which can affect a change in their status.

Thirdly. That their opposition to change and improvement is the natural result of the frauds which have been so frequently practiced upon them by men in the guise of religion and friendship.

Fourthly. That the proposition to extend over them the territorial laws, and to make them citizens, is regarded by the great majority as a step toward their utter destruction as a race.

Therefore your memorialist respectfully asks that a delegation, composed in part of women, (wisely selected,) be appointed to visit all the tribes in the Indian Territory, to hold council with them as to the best mode for a united effort of the different races to insure justice for each and the advancement of all to higher conditions of a true Christian civilization.

JOHN BEESON.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *April 1, 1874.*