

INDIAN HOME-GUARD REGIMENTS.

PETITION

FOR THE

Relief of certain soldiers of the Indian home-guard regiments.

MAY 14, 1874.—Referred to the Committee on Military Affairs and ordered to be printed.

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

Your memorialist, William P. Ross, principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, would respectfully represent to your honorable bodies that during the late war the First, Second, and Third Regiments of Indian Home-Guard Volunteers were organized and mustered into the service of the United States for three years ; that the soldiers composing said regiments were Cherokee, Creek, and Seminole Indians ; that they rendered very important service in aiding to put down the rebellion ; but certain of said soldiers were erroneously charged with desertion under the following circumstances, viz : Certain of said soldiers of said regiments, while in the line of their duty and in the service of the United States, were at times taken sick, and, on account of their abhorrence to being in a hospital, were permitted by their company officers to remain at places other than hospitals while sick, but on account of their being absent from their regiments, and their names not appearing on the hospital-rolls, they were erroneously marked as deserters. This is true in the case of most of those who were marked as deserters. The facts in the case of those charged with desertion, but who were not absent on account of sickness, are as follows : Some of the officers of the companies of said regiments were Indians, and a part of said officers were whites. As said soldiers had a very imperfect knowledge of the English language, and the white officers did not understand the soldiers' native language, and were, in fact, nearly strangers to said soldiers, when they wished a short leave of absence to look after their families or other matters, they would ask and get permission to do so from their Indian officers, with whom they were well acquainted, but some of the Indian officers, not understanding their duties fully, and failing to notify the white officers, who had charge of the company-rolls, of the leave of absence they had granted, said soldiers would find on their return that they had been marked on the rolls as deserters.

Your memorialist would further state that he has every reason to believe, and does believe, that there were not three actual cases of deser-

tion from said three regiments during their whole term of enlistment, for the reason that their own personal safety and the safety and welfare of their families and kindred, all they held sacred and dear, depended upon their remaining in their regiments and doing all they could to crush the rebellion. When the said alleged cases of desertion were investigated by their head commanding officer they were cleared of all charges of desertion and restored to all their former rights and privileges, and said soldiers continued to discharge their duties faithfully until the end of their enlistment, when they were honorably discharged; but bounties and pensions have been denied said soldiers or their heirs on account of said erroneous charges of desertion having been found on the records in the War Department. As said soldiers were not guilty of desertion or of disobeying any order, but were always good and faithful soldiers, and therefore should in all equity and justice be allowed and paid the same bounties and pensions awarded to the other soldiers of said regiments, therefore your memorialist would respectfully but earnestly pray your honorable bodies to pass an act granting to these soldiers or their heirs the bounties, pensions, and other allowances heretofore provided by law, thus awarding impartial justice to all the soldiers of said Indian home-guard regiments.

WILL. P. ROSS,
Principal Chief Cherokee Nation.

On this 13th day of April, 1874, personally appeared before the undersigned, a notary public in and for the city and county of Washington, District of Columbia, William P. Ross, who, being by me duly sworn according to law, declares that the statements in the foregoing petition are true according to his best knowledge and belief.

WILL. P. ROSS,
Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 13th day of April, A. D. 1874.

THOMAS C. CONNOLLY,
Notary Public.

The undersigned, members of the Cherokee delegation now in Washington City, certify, from their own knowledge or from information believed to be reliable, that they believe the statement of facts set forth in the memorial of William P. Ross, principal chief of the Cherokee Nation, is correct, and they do, therefore, earnestly request that Congress will by appropriate legislation speedily extend the relief asked for the soldiers referred to, and for their widows and orphans.

W. P. ADAIR,
H. W. BUSHYHEAD,
RUFUS O. ROSS,
Cherokee Delegation.

APRIL 13, 1874.