

LANDS OF WARM SPRINGS, UMATILLA, CHIPPEWA, UTE,
AND OTHER INDIAN TRIBES.

DECEMBER 10, 1879.—Recommended to the Committee on Indian Affairs and ordered to be printed.

Mr. WHITEAKER, from the Committee on Indian Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT:

[To accompany bill H. R. 351.]

This bill (H. R. 351) has for its first object the dispensing with that army of Indian agents and agency employes which at present is necessary to our Indian system. It also proposes, by reducing the number of reservations, to collect the Indians together on new reservations or on old ones, whether enlarged for that purpose or otherwise; to have them more under the eye of the government, so that their conduct may be the more readily scrutinized and a disposition on their part to engage in hostilities crushed at once. Even were this the only good to result from making the bill a law, it should be done; but it is hoped and believed that other benefits will accrue.

At present our Indian system is a failure. The Indian neither respects nor loves the white man. He may be made to fear him, but he will never trust the pale face. He has learned to look upon him as his one great enemy, to destroy whom is a duty, an act of self-preservation on his part. On the other hand, the white man heartily hates the Indian. He sees nothing in him but a merciless savage—a red devil thirsting for the blood of innocent white people—and though this mutual hatred may not be uniform it is sufficiently general to justify the expression. Candor compels us to say that the benefits resulting from practical civilization are unknown west of the Mississippi River, except in the Indian Territory. That some progress in the direction of civilization has been made among some tribes at particular agencies will not be denied, but it also ought to be admitted that where education and its refining influences have been tendered them at the hands of the whites they have accepted and adopted all the vices incident to civilization and as obstinately rejected the virtues.

No matter how highly some enthusiastic agents may color their reports regarding the rapid progress in the arts of a cultured life made by the Indians under their charge, the facts do not support them. Their reports simply make manifest their wishes rather than the true state of affairs; and the practical mind has long since come to this conclusion, and refuses to be further misled. But if civilization be rejected persistently by the Indian his doom is sealed—he has but the alternative, civilization or early and inevitable extinction.

The march of progress and push and enterprise of the white man make this necessary. The wants of civilization itself demand it, and that demand must be respected. There are no longer vast tracts of un-

occupied and almost unknown lands abounding in fish, fruits, game, and other things needful to a wandering and savage life, where the red man might live, flourish, and be happy. Every foot of ground has been prospected, examined, and found to be useful to the white man—needed by him in his civilization. The white man says these great and fertile plains must be made to produce wealth and furnish food for hungry millions; and the mountains must give up their precious metals even if the Indian, the original and in one sense the true owner, goes to the wall. Barbarism must yield to civilization; and then if our civilization teaches us to deal kindly and justly with these people, whose natures seem in a measure to unfit them for the habits of an advanced life, if it be proposed to prolong their existence on earth, it must be accomplished through the medium of a new Indian policy. The people believe the Indian service has been corrupt for the last twenty-five or thirty years. There are at this time some thirty-six reservations sustaining about twenty agents with other employés covered by this bill. Doubtless, among so many men personally unknown to the appointing power, some bad men have secured office—men unfit for the places they occupy; and who consider only their own prosperity regardless of the well-being of the Indian, whose comfort and advancement in the arts of civilized life should be their chief concern. By reducing the number of reservations a corresponding diminution in the number of agents and employés will follow—to say nothing of the cutting down of the pay-roll—and as the government can better observe the character and conduct of a few persons than of many, the Indian service may, under the provisions of this bill, be much improved, if not entirely purified, and the civilization of the Indian assume a more healthful aspect. The discovery and practice of the simpler arts in civilized life are supposed to have been the result of necessity on the part of those who first employed them; and a little well-timed necessity applied to the Indian, who fully appreciates a good and bountiful dinner, but who abhors the labor necessary to produce it, might have a salutary effect in commending to him the adoption of the habits of the white man. If he will not do this labor for himself, it is clear the white man must labor for him.

Our entire Indian system is anomalous. We treat with every vagabond tribe of aborigines, whether composed of few or many, on the same terms of reciprocal right and sovereignty as we would in negotiating with the most powerful and enlightened government in Christendom. In making treaties with them we acknowledge their rights to be equal to our own, and, nominally, carefully guard against forcing them to accept anything against their will; but when questions arise as to the true meaning of such treaties, they are then just as carefully denied the right of interpretation. The government of the United States exercises the right to interpret and construe all treaties made with the Indians, and to judge of their infraction by either party. The exercise of this latent right by the government is doubtless wise and even indispensable when dealing with the Indian; but it would be quite as honest in some instances, and more profitable to both parties, if the United States were to use that same power in making the treaties as well as in their explanation after they have been violated. It is sheer nonsense to talk about each band of miserable wandering savages as equals in political rights and dignity with the Government of the United States, and the more quickly this fact is recognized by the Indian and the white man the better it will be for all concerned.

If this bill should become law, and the expectations of its author realized, there will be some twenty-seven reservations, embracing about

17,683,455 acres of land, thrown open to settlement. In treating with Indians for their lands—and reservations have been made by them—they invariably retain the most fertile tracts within the limits of the country alienated by them, and it is known that some of the reservations, under the provisions of this bill to be vacated by the Indians and turned over in trust by the government, contain some of the best lands in the country where situated. Valuable agricultural lands such as these reservations generally embrace would be an acceptable addition to the agricultural interests of the Great West, where they are located, and where, in some instances, a large proportion of the land surrounding them is unfit for agricultural purposes. Hundreds of hardy and enterprising farmers stand ready, under proper restrictions, to purchase, enter upon, and cultivate these lands, and thereby not only better their own condition, but add something to the general wealth of the country.

It is not claimed here that Congress should legislate in the interest of one class of citizens as against another, but it is believed that, in offering these lands for sale, so wise and reasonable regulations could be made as will place it in the power of those who wish to become actual purchasers to do so. Those desiring to occupy and cultivate ought not to be brought into competition with the capital of the speculator, who would neither occupy nor cultivate the property himself, but buy merely as a profitable investment for his money. To throw these lands open to unrestricted purchase would be to practically place them in the hands of the land speculator, who would purchase solely to sell again to those who would become actual settlers, thus placing it in the hands of capital to oppress labor. The terms under which these lands should be offered for sale should be such as to enable, at least primarily, the actual settler to become possessed of them. These remarks are as applicable to timber lands as to agricultural lands. On many of the reservations the agricultural and timber lands are widely separated, and yet either is comparatively useless without the other. Timber is indispensable to the farmer for fuel, fencing, building, &c., and timber by itself, generally growing on lands unfit for farming purposes, is worth nothing to its owner but for speculative purposes—to sell to those who own agricultural lands in the vicinity, but destitute of trees fit for lumber. In order to meet the just demands of an agricultural people, restrictions as to the quantity of both agricultural and timber lands that may be purchased by any one individual should be incorporated into any measure providing for their sale, and also regulations be made debarring the speculator from competing with the laborer for their ownership. Actual residence and cultivation—something like that required by existing pre-emption laws, modified as to the length of time of such residence—it is believed, will protect the genuine settler against the speculator in the purchase of these lands, and will work hardship to neither individuals nor the government. We recommend the adoption of these amendments, without which the bill ought not to pass.

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