

OTTAWA AND CHIPPEWA INDIAN LANDS IN MICHIGAN.]

FEBRUARY 25, 1874.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. BRADLEY, from the Committee on the Public Lands, submitted the following

R E P O R T :

[To accompany bill H. R. 1700.]

The Committee on the Public Lands, to whom was referred House bill 1700, being a bill to amend the act of June 10, 1872, which act provides for the restoration to market of certain lands in Michigan heretofore withdrawn from market pursuant to the terms of a treaty made with the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan, under date of July 31, 1855, submit the following report :

By the terms of said treaty the Indians therein described were to be allowed to select from the reservations lands for homesteads. After the selections had been made, the Indian agent went among them and issued certificates of selection to them, and reported the list thereof to the Interior Department, and upon such reported lists patents were issued and the act of June 10, 1872, was passed, authorizing such issuance, and further authorizing that the balance of said reserved lands should be open for entry, under the homestead laws, for the space of six months; that such of the Indians as had arrived at the age of twenty-one years since the date of the treaty, who were not provided for under it, might be permitted to enter land; but after the expiration of said six months, all lands undisposed of were to be restored to market. But, upon the delivery of the patents above mentioned to the Indians, it was found that three hundred and twenty still held certificates of selections that had not been reported to the Department, and consequently no patents had issued to them. When this was discovered your committee were informed that great dissatisfaction was manifested on the part of the Indians so overlooked, and when they came to understand that the lands had been placed in market, it was with the greatest difficulty, on the part of the agent, that they could be made to understand that the Government would do what was right with them, and they are now manifesting great anxiety to know when they can have their lands. The act of restoration of 10th June, 1872, had placed it out of the power of the Secretary of the Interior to grant the relief necessary, and deeming it important that these Indians should be provided for before the lands were offered for sale, all action, as your committee understand, has been suspended. This bill provides for the issuing of patents to these three hundred and twenty Indians, and for the extension of the time for homestead entry for one year from the passage of this act, that the Indians above spoken of, as not having been provided for under the treaty, may have ample opportunity to enter

lands and locate them near others of their people; and also to afford opportunity for others than Indians to secure homes. A large number of such people, your committee understand, are living in the country around the reservations, as is set forth in the following letter, to which we invite the attention of the House:

CROSS VILLAGE, *February 13, 1874.*

DEAR SIR: I see by the papers that there is soon to be a bill introduced in Congress in regard to the vacant lands of this Indian reserve. I write you for the purpose of contributing my mite toward helping the poor and uneducated people of this country.

There are large numbers of poor men with large families in this country who are uneducated, and not fitted for any kind of business, that must soon go to farming in order to make a living. Heretofore these people have made a scanty living by hunting, fishing, chopping wood on public lands, getting out pine, &c.; but the time is near at hand when the timber will be out of their reach; as the country settles up the animals which they trap for furs are becoming scarce, (there being a decrease of nearly 25 per cent. in the last five years;) fishing is decreasing also. So you see at once it is of the utmost importance that there should be something done to help these people. Many of these men have some Indian blood, but not enough to entitle them to the rites and privileges of an Indian, and no better educated; consequently not as well off as the Indians. There are also some white men who have lived in this country for many years, and as there was no land for sale, they squatted on vacant land and have improved the lands, have built houses, some of which are worth two to three hundred dollars. Now, of this class of men, there is not one of my acquaintance that is able to buy their lands should they come in market.

It is astonishing the number of land-lookers there has been through this country looking up every vacant lot on the whole reserve for speculators; they of course will buy these improved lands first, if they get the chance. So you see it is of vital importance to these poor people that this land be withheld from market for homesteaders for a time, in order to give these men a chance.

I could forward petitions as long as the moral law, but I think it would be of little importance, as such things are usually carried by the most influential men.

If there could be a law passed so poor men could take up homesteads, the country would be settled up in a very short time; but if speculators get hold of it, it will deprive these poor men of their homes and keep the country unsettled for many years to come. By using your utmost influence in this matter you will confer a blessing on, and ever be remembered by, the people of this whole northern country

Very respectfully, yours,

A. T. BURNETT.

N. B. BRADLEY, Esq.,
Washington, D. C.

Section two of the bill provides for certain bands of these Indians who have been living on lands in 47 north, range 2 east, and 47 north, 3 west, and made improvements thereon, and being desirous still to remain, to locate the same not exceeding eighty acres each, for the purposes of a home. Your committee further find that there are some settlers who have located themselves on some of these reserved lands, but have, as we believe, done so in good faith, and they have asked to be permitted to enter their selections. Section three of the bill provides for this, the same to be made from lands not claimed by any Indians after the expiration of the year from the passage of this act. The balance of the lands reserved, not disposed of, are to be sold as provided for by the said act of June 10, 1872.