

SETTLERS ON LANDS IN INDIAN TERRITORY.

JUNE 11, 1879.—Laid on the table and ordered to be printed.

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

REPORT:

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the petition of sundry persons, dated at Baxter Springs, Kansas, praying for the passage of a law to enable them to settle in the Indian Territory, on the Quapaw reserved lands, respectfully report:

That by different laws and treaties, dating from the year 1802, (see S. Ex. Doc. 20, forty-sixth Congress, first session, pp. 16, 17, and 18), a certain tract of land, now known as the Indian Territory, was selected to be set off and divided for several Indian tribes as a reservation. Of this tract the Quapaw tribe, who number 235 souls, have a reservation of 56,685 acres, giving only a fraction over 241 acres to each person; and to allow any person or persons to settle on these lands would not only be unjust, but unwise.

The lands sought by the petitioners and others have been solemnly set apart and appropriated for the use of the Indians by treaty and other acts of recognition by the legislative and executive departments of the government expressly for this purpose. To allow any part of this Territory to be diverted from the original intent would be a breach of faith that no man could justify and the government should not permit. Some of the tribes to whom these lands were originally allotted have ceded part of them back to the United States, for the purpose of settling other tribes who may wish to remove or who may be removed there by the government, and are held in trust for that purpose, and for no other. This seems to have given rise to the opinion that these lands belong to the United States, and were subject to the laws governing public lands, making them open to settlement.

There is an abundance of public land open to settlement, where every facility is afforded to those seeking homes; wise and liberal laws invite a settlement; protection and security given to each person on the claims made by them. Some of these lands are not far distant from the Indian Territory, are easy of access, and free to all.

Evidently there is an organized attempt to get these lands from the Indians and again force them to new places. It is time to adopt a definite policy for the better government of the Indians. Under the past system wars and wrongs were continually perpetrated, often caused by the breach of treaties and breach of contracts, the frontier settler paying the penalty in death and all the horrors that precede it. Why continue a system that has resulted in death, destruction, and outrages on women and children more terrible than death?

The aim and object of the government should be to bring the Indians together, to teach them how to live, to the end that they may become civilized. The wisest and best men in the country, men who have given this subject much careful thought, believe that the Indians are capable of a high state of culture and civilization. It is too late to say that a people with such brain-power and courage, though often used in a bad cause, cannot be civilized. Shall we act as becomes a wise government, to remove the evils that surround these people, and solve the Indian question, by using all the means within our power to civilize them and make them useful citizens, or leave them in their nomadic state, which, coming in contact with our civilization, will end in their destruction, but not without great loss to us?

Let the Indian Territory be kept as it was intended to be by those who have preceded us in the affairs of government, sacred for their use. Say to those men who seek to violate this solemn contract, "Keep off; this land is not ours to give or barter away nor yours to take; any interference with the acquired rights of the Indians is robbery, and we will not permit it." The frequent violation of treaties has made them distrust the government and doubt the word of all who approach them. Let us set an example to the Indians, by keeping this land for them. Let us keep our plighted faith. Let them know that when they build houses, fence and cultivate their fields, they have an ownership that cannot and will not be disturbed. This will be an inducement to them to work and improve the land, and lead to what all must desire, a happy and peaceful solution of the whole question. We owe this to ourselves, we owe it to mankind, and more particularly to the good name of our country. In doing this, we perform an act of justice that has been too long neglected.

We therefore recommend that the prayer of the petitioners be not granted.

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