

American Missionary Association.

ANNUAL MEETING,

HARTFORD, CONN., OCT., 1892.

ADDRESS OF

HON. T. J. MORGAN,

Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

THE INDIAN'S HELPING HAND.

I think there is no more beautiful chapter in the history of the United States than that which records the efforts of the churches in behalf of the black man in the South and the red man of the West, and I know of no more thrilling stories than those that are told of the wide-reaching plans, the self-denying labors, the sagacious administration, and the magnificent results that thus far have rewarded the efforts of the American Missionary Association. And I rejoice as a great privilege to stand here this morning in the presence of those of you that are helping to carry on this work. I rejoice in it as a patriot. I rejoice in it as a philanthropist. I rejoice in it, I hope, as a professed Christian.

The story of our relations with the Indians has been sketched in outline by Senator Dawes. It has been crystallized, not perhaps with absolute accuracy, and yet with wonderful appeal to the popular mind, in Helen Hunt Jackson's volume entitled "A Century of Dishonor." I am not here to dispute that record, but whatever may be said of it, it certainly is true that the people of the United States have entered upon a new system or method in dealing with these people, a method born, as Senator Dawes has told you, of necessity. We have ceased to treat these people as independent nations. We have ceased to attempt to exterminate them. We have ceased to shut them up on reservations, with a view that they may be destroyed by their own vices. We have ceased to regard them as those with whom

nothing could be done, and we have entered upon the broad plan of making of them citizens of the United States. During the last few years I think the most captious critic of the government would find it difficult to point his finger to any act of the United States that could be regarded as dishonorable in its treatment of the Indian. The most scrupulous pains have been taken to fulfill to the letter the treaty obligations with these people. Every effort is made to understand fully and precisely what they have a right to expect of the nation, and then to the fullest extent to meet that expectation. We are confronted in doing this with two alternatives. In dealing, for instance, with the more than 20,000 Dakotas, it was felt that the time had come when they should become, so far as possible, self-supporting, and the government began a method some years ago of cutting down the amount of rations to be issued to them by reducing the annual appropriation, and the Indians were told that they must furnish to a limited extent their own supplies of food. Then came the outbreak two years ago, and the cry that rang all through this land as a criticism upon the Interior Department was that the government had first starved these Indians into rebellion, and then shot them. Then the cry came, "Turn them over to the army and feed them to the full." That was one side.

Now, in response to that criticism and that public sentiment which focalized itself into the Indian office, these treaty stipulations are being carried out and those people are receiving that which the government promised to give them. Now there comes from the opposite side—I speak now in no spirit of censure, but simply to call your attention to it—the criticism that the government is pauperizing these Indians and destroying them by its kindness. Well, the fact is, I suppose, that the truth lies between the extremes. The government did not starve them into rebellion and then shoot them, and it is not pauperizing them to their destruction. It is attempting to deal with a problem, the difficulties and embarrassments of which cannot be known to any one except to those that either attempt to frame the law for them or to execute the law after it has been framed. The one key-word to the present situation is that of citizenship. These people are no longer to be treated as organized bodies or tribes, but as individuals. The tribal organization which has been prolific of so many evils is gradually being destroyed; not suddenly or violently, but the idea of citizenship, of individuality, of responsibility, of manhood and womanhood, is working into the mind of the Indian everywhere, and the tribal bonds are becoming looser and looser, so that in many cases a tribe exists now only in name and not in fact. The power of the chiefs, that Indian form of bossism which we all abhor, is gradually being destroyed, and those that heretofore have exercised a despotic sway over their fellows, exercising the power of life and death itself, are gradually finding as the years go by that their word in the council is only the word of an older man or of an adviser and not of a chief. The agency system that from the necessities of the case has been fraught

with more or less of occasion for criticism, by which one man is appointed to superintend and direct all the affairs of a great body of people, with autocratic power, and relieved in a large degree from supervision and accountability such as attaches to the exercise of power in a civilized community where the newspapers and the town meetings daily subject his operations to the public gaze—that system is gradually being destroyed; and wherever the Indians have taken their lands in severalty and have become citizens and are appealing to the laws, they are passing out from under the control of the agent, and the agent remains rather as a reminiscence than as a fact. And so the whole system is passing away. The entire method of dealing with these people has been revolutionized—revolutionized because there was one man in the Senate of the United States who was willing to give to it his time and thought day in and day out, month in and month out, year in and year out, taking advice from every source, studying the problem face to face on the reservations, meeting objections, moving aside difficulties, and, with a far-seeing statesmanship and with faith in humanity and with faith in the great fundamental principles that underlie this republic, feeling that they could be safely applied to the Indian as well as to any other class of people—because there was that man that could frame the Dawes bill and secure its enactment into a law in 1887, there has come about this change, of which he has spoken this morning so modestly—a change born of necessity, just as the Reformation was born of necessity, just as the exodus of the Jews was born of necessity, just as the emancipation of the slaves was born of necessity. And yet God in His wisdom called a Moses for the exodus and a Luther for the reformation and a Lincoln for the emancipation, and a Henry L. Dawes for the citizenship of the Indian.

Now, this work of citizenship requires for these Indians preparation, and I wish to outline in five words what this preparation requires. I do not believe in reservations, but I am reminded that I am myself on an Indian reservation with a limit of thirty minutes, of which fifteen are already gone. To prepare these people for citizenship and individuality and self-support among us, there are needed five things:

First—Land. Of this I need not speak more than has already been said. They must have a place they can call their own, a spot of earth on which they can establish a home. This, by the Dawes bill, they have.

Second—Law. They need law. They have heretofore largely been under the control of the chiefs or under the sway of the agents. It is necessary, if they are to cease to be Indians and are to become citizens, that they should have access to the courts that they may appeal for justice to the judges of the land and that they may have that which attaches to their own citizenship, their own individuality—the right to their own persons, their own property, their own pursuit of happiness. By becoming citizens of the United States they pass at once under the control of the States or Territories in which they are situated, and thus very rapidly, and in a comparatively few

years all that are capable of taking their lands and becoming citizens will be brought under the protection of the courts. It is possible (mark you, I say it is possible), with the machinery now in operation by the government to allow all the land that should be allotted to these people within the next four years. I do not say it will be done, because there are some cases in which I think it would be unwise. I simply say it is possible to bring all the Indians of the United States, to whom it is practicable to make allotment, and thus to make of them citizens within the operation of the laws and under the protection of the courts, within four years. In the meantime the Indian courts, that have done good service both as schools of training for these people in self-government and for the administration of justice, are being enlarged in jurisdiction, improved in efficiency, and rendered more and more capable of doing for these people what needs to be done for them, waiting the time when the operation of the laws of the United States, and of the several states, shall come into full exercise over them.

Third—Labor. They must work for their living. It is being taught to the Indians all over the land again and again that they must earn their bread by the sweat of their faces. In a great many cases all they ask is an opportunity, accompanied by an inspiration to labor which comes from feeling that if they have a home of their own that which they bestow upon it by labor is their own in perpetuity. In other cases they need the kindly help of the government in order that the land that has been given to them may be made susceptible of cultivation. I cannot go into all this, but I will simply say that we are spending in Montana and in that vicinity \$250,000. A careful inquiry is being made on every Indian reservation to know what is necessary in the way of sinking wells, of building dams, and making it possible to utilize the labor of their hands in the gaining of a subsistence out of the soil. They are rapidly passing from the state of the hunter and the trapper and are becoming self-supporting by their care of sheep and cattle. Twenty thousand head of cattle have been distributed among the Dakotas this summer. They are becoming farmers slowly. The buffalo has disappeared. The elk and the deer are no more, and the Indians are driven by the force of necessity back upon the soil, and, with an eagerness and a progress that I believe has not been equaled in the history of the race, they are emerging from the state of dependence upon nature in its wild state to the condition of drawing out of the soil the products which God has stored within it. Let us be patient and give them time, and do not expect of them in fifty years to acquire what it has taken the Anglo-Saxon race a thousand years to obtain. The twenty thousand Indian children that to-day are in the schools are being taught the various trades and agriculture, and so they are being taught to work.

Fourth, learning. They need especially a knowledge of the English language. The great barrier that hitherto has shut them out from us has made it impossible that they should understand us or we understand them. They have a poor, broken language of their own and have persistently refused

to learn ours. If they can be taught to accept everywhere the English language so that they may communicate with us in our own tongue and have access to our literature so that they may read our newspapers, so that they can read our Bible, so that they can communicate with us in writing for themselves, so that they shall know when they go to the trader whether they are getting just weights, and understand the treaties made with them, then there will come a better day for them. Then they need along with this that learning of arithmetic and grammar and geography and the ordinary studies taught in our common schools, which is being furnished to them by the trained teachers that are employed by the government. And I pretend to say as an old schoolmaster that the work that is being done in the government schools to-day for these Indians in training them in the ordinary branches of an English education is equal to that in any schools anywhere, for any class of people of the same degree of advancement.

Fifth. And lastly, they need as a preparation for citizenship, love. Now I have put these five I's together. They need law, land, labor, learning and love, and it makes a completed hand. You may give them land, and it is like a little finger. Eighty acres of a prairie dog town is worth but little to an Indian or a white man. You may give him law, and it is but two fingers. He is yet a helpless man. You may give him labor and endeavor to help him to work after a fashion, but we have the condition of things that was described last night on this platform, of the people in Alabama that have their land and labor and law, but still are merely scratching out a subsistence. You give him learning, even. He must have a knowledge that shall enable him to understand the seasons, and put within his reach the best methods of agriculture, and that shall enable him to adjust himself to the changing condition of things. And yet if he has all of those and does not have that which is symbolized by that one unspeakable word which is used as an expression of the Creator himself—for God is love—unless he has that he is still helpless. He is the prey of the sharper. He is the victim of vice. He is swept away by the temptations that surround him. The Indian needs to be taught, both by precept and example, to love his neighbor as himself, to love his native land, its institutions, its flag, and to love his Creator with all his mind and soul and strength. When he has all these, land, law, labor, learning—the four fingers, and love, the thumb—he has the complete self-helping hand, and when he has all these combined he is prepared as any other human being, to take his place as a citizen, as an individual, as a man standing upon his own feet, using his own powers, defending his own hearthstone, educating his own children, and carving for himself a place among his fellow-men.

Now, in closing. I am not an alarmist, but I believe that we have reached a critical time in this matter of Indian civilization. I tremble a little as I look into the future. In the first place, the man that has borne it upon his shoulders, as Atlas has borne the world, has reached a point where he says,

"I must lay down this burden." Who will take it up? I trust that God will raise up to him a worthy successor. But see to it that you have a voice in determining that whoever takes up that work shall take it up in the same spirit of statesmanship and philanthropy as the man that lays it down. And then this system of education, for which such great things have been said by Senator Dawes, and which I believe is capable of doing for these people that which they need to have done for them, is to be assailed at every point. The minds of the Indians are being poisoned against it. The minds of the public are to be poisoned against it. I cannot say to you this morning what I know, but I simply utter this word of warning, that unless the people of this country in their majesty, in their might and intelligence, in their devotion to the cause of truth simply say that this benign work for these people shall be left substantially as it is now until it shall have completed its results, it will be torn to pieces—not in the interests of the Indian. Whether I remain Commissioner or not, (and I am in that office simply because I feel it a sense of duty, I would not have been there to-day if I had not been afraid to leave it for fear I should be called a coward), whoever is there let him take it and carry it along in the line marked out by the twenty-five years of history of the past, and let him say to every man that would strike it at any point that he does it at his peril.

Rooms, AMERICAN MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION,
Bible House, New York }

Annexed
District of
St. John's
T. J. McLaughlin