PROCEEDINGS OF THE THIRD ANNUAL MEETING OF THE LAKE MOHONK CONFERENCE OF FRIENDS OF THE INDIAN, HELD OCTOBER 7 TO 9, 1885

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VARIOUS

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THE LAKE MOHONK CONFERENCE.

THIRD ANNUAL MEETING.

FIRST DAY—OPENING SESSION.

THE Third Annual Conference of friends of Indian civilization was held at the Lake Mohonk Mountain House, October 7–9, 1885, on the nvitation of the Hon. Albert K. Smiley, one of the Board of Indian Commissioners, and the owner of that beautiful resort. The objects of the meeting cannot be told better than in Mr. Smiley's own words. He said:

"The time has arrived for the opening of this Conference, and I would like to make a little explanation, before the appointment of officers, in regard to its origin. For many years, ever since the organization of our Board of Indian Commissioners, it has been their practice to have a Convention in connection with the annual meeting, in Washington, to discuss Indian affairs generally. To that Convention the secretaries and well-known members of religious denominations have been invited, and they have generally been present, as well as members of Congress and others. In these discussions, usually occupying one day, we have always found that the time was short. The pressure of business in Washington was so great that we could not hold people together more than one day, and we have had to adjourn before we were through. So the thought struck me a few years ago that we could give more time to the subject by inviting friends of the cause to this house and having a three-days' Conference. I suggested the idea to some of my friends and they approved of it, and that is the way this Conference originated.

"My aim has been to unite the best minds interested in Indian affairs, so that all should act together and be in harmony, and so that the prominent persons connected with Indian affairs should act as one body and create a public sentiment in favor of the Indians. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all here. There has been a great advance in public sentiment. I feel exceedingly hopeful in regard to the Indian."

On motion of Mr. Smiley, General Clinton B. Fisk, of New York, President of the Board of Indian Commissioners, was elected President of the Conference. Prayer was then offered by the Rev. Mr. Harding, of Long Meadow, Mass.; after which General Fisk, while doubting the

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wisdom of a third term [he presided at the preceding conferences], returned his thanks, and said:

"There is some progress in Indian affairs,—not great, but we may say there is progress. General Grant in his first message used about this language: The treatment of the original owners of this country has been such from the beginning as to lead to continual murder and robbery and all sorts of affliction. He added that his own knowledge of matters on the frontier, his own experience as a soldier, led him to believe that the rulers of this country had pursued a course, or that national legislation had been such, from the beginning, as to be most harmful to the Indian. He then said: 'I have adopted a new policy which is working well, and from which I hope the best results.' The new policy was the legislation which provided for the appointment of the Board of Indian Commissioners, and such other, in the spring of 1869, as led to a better understanding of Indian affairs. From that time—from the time when a certain delegation, one of the members of which is in this room, visited President Grant, when he said his knowledge as President, and his knowledge as an old soldier should be thrown in the right direction for the Indian—progress has been marked. At midnight on March 3d, 1871, Congress made that remarkable declaration that thenceforth no treaty should be made with an Indian tribe. They reached that decision after having made four hundred treaties, which had been frequently broken, with nearly one hundred tribes. Congress said we will put a stop to this wrong; we will not regard any tribe as a nation. From that time we have been visiting nearly all the larger tribes, and making certain agreements with them that are working for better things. Many of us are beginning to believe that the Indian has made all the progress he can under the conditions which have obtained in the past."

"At the first interview I had with General Grant after coming into this Board of Commissioners, he said: 'The trouble is, we regard the Indians as nations, when they are simply our wards.' General Grant went out on the skirmish line. Said he: 'We must make the Indian believe us; we must treat him as a ward. We should work especially to throw down every barrier in this country, so as to have no foot of land on which any American may not go.' This, of course, meant the doing away with all reservations, and pointed to the ultimate citizenship of the Indian; to his absorption, for which we have been working for more than a hundred years. We owe the Indian a great deal,—land, homes, law, and above all, patience and care. With such help coming to him, and in confiding in those who deal with him, it will not be difficult in the future to settle this problem. It was more than a score of years ago that I met Bishop Whipple pleading for the Sioux. Mr. Stanton said: 'What does Bishop Whipple want? If he wants to

tell us that we have done wrong, we know it. The remedy is not at this end of the avenue; it is at the other end.' When you convince people; when you make the right sentiment that shall lead Congressmen to believe they had better give attention to this matter, then I shall believe the time is not far distant when there will be no Indians who are not American citizens. It is astonishing that nearly sixty millions of people cannot manage these few."

Ex Justice Strong, of the United States Supreme Court, was elected Vice-President.

Mr. J. C. Kinney, of Hartford, and Miss M. S. Cook, of Washington, were elected Secretaries.

The President, authorized by vote of the Conference, appointed the following general committees:

On Business.—Dr. J. E. Rhoads, President of Bryn Mawr College; Philip C. Garrett, of Philadelphia; Mrs. A. S. Quinton, of Philadelphia, Secretary of the Woman's National Indian Association; Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott, of New York; and Professor C. C. Painter, of Washington.

On Roll of Members.—Drs. H. Kendall, M. E. Strieby, and Wm. H. Ward.

By request Dr. Rhoads made the following report:

DR. RHOADS: "At the Conference held last winter, in Washington, a committee of five was appointed to call upon President Cleveland and lay before him such information with regard to the best methods of conducting Indian affairs, as the experience of the last fifteen years had suggested to those immediately engaged in the work. President Cleveland kindly appointed a day and hour for us to meet him, and three members of the Committee,—Dr. Kendall, Dr. Strieby, and myself—called upon him in Albany, when he gave us a most attentive and courteous hearing. We directed his attention to a few distinct points: first, the importance of having a Secretary of the Interior who was in earnest sympathy with the cause of Indian progress, and who would devote himself to doing all that could be done in his office for the promotion of their welfare; secondly, that the Secretary of the Interior should so foster the work carried on by philanthropic and religious bodies for the education of the Indians, that the Government might avail itself of their effective help without interfering with the ordinary course of its administration of Indian affairs. We respectfully urged that the appointment of a Commissioner of Indian Affairs was also a very important matter; that he should be a man in the full vigor of life, who would be ready to give himself heartily to his duties. He should be allowed by the Department as much freedom of action and such authority as would be necessary to secure success. In the appointment of Indian Agents it would be better to continue in power men of experience than to put in new men who, though they might be more able, were without

experience. Most of those in the field were doing well, but a few could probably be removed to advantage, and their places filled by better officers. We called his attention to the importance of sustaining the educational work which the Government was now carrying on, of maintaining the reservation schools and extending them so as to embrace all the Indian children. We especially desired that the Indian training schools should be sustained. We referred to the importance of defending the rights of the Indians to their lands, and that as soon as practicable, they should hold their lands in severalty, under a provision enabling them to retain them at least twenty-five years without incumbrance, before their lands became subject to sale ; and that the rest of the reservations should be thrown open to public occupation, the lands to be sold to the United States and the proceeds applied to benefit the Indians. We also called his attention to the importance of placing the Indians under the protection and the restraints of law. President Cleveland listened with such apparent interest that we parted from him with the feeling that he intended to do all that in him lay, as President of the United States, to care for the rights of the Indians and advance them in civilization."

DR. STRIEBY: "I want to add one thing. Dr. Rhoads spoke of the value of the services of the Board of Indian Commissioners, and the President asked who they were ; we told him who they were, and of their supervision of the purchase of Indian supplies at the office in Worcester street, New York, which interested him much."

THE PRESIDENT: "We should like to hear from Dr. Rhoads as to the Indian becoming a homogeneous part of our country."

DR. RHOADS: "A glance at the map of the United States and territories, prepared by the Department of the Interior to show the position and size of the Indian reservations, at once reveals the fact that almost all the Indians have been driven west of the Mississippi. The exceptions are that a small spot in Florida is occupied by the Seminoles, one in North Carolina by the eastern Cherokees, others in western New York by the Senecas, etc., and a few reserves are found in Wisconsin and Michigan. There are some large groups of Indians, as in the Indian Territory, which has a population of about 75,000 ; and in the great Sioux reserve, which has almost 26,000 ; nearly 20,000 live along the Canadian border, and large numbers are found on the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains, as well as in Arizona and New Mexico. But all Indian reserves and communities are surrounded by white settlements, and are not only affected at their margins by the influences of white civilization, but are more or less interpenetrated by it. In short, the Indians are now in a new relation to the white race, no longer to be forced back into unbroken wildernesses, but in ever-increasing contact with our American civil and social forces. The advancing host of native and immigrant people press the reservations on all sides, and the question of the civilization of the In-

dians and of their absorption into the body politic cannot be postponed, but must be met.

Lands.

"The whole territory held by the Indians comprises 137,764,731 acres, which seems an immense domain for so small a population. But it must be borne in mind that to a large extent the white man has possessed himself of the most fertile and well-watered lands, and relegated them to the arid and sterile districts. In fact, of the whole, only 17,886,815 acres are reported to be tillable. In the Indian Territory, for example, a strip along the eastern border from 50 to 80 miles in width has plentiful rains and is fertile. But almost all that portion which lies west of the 100th meridian is so dry that it can be used for grazing only. The same remark applies to a large part of the great Sioux reserve, and with yet greater force to the reserves in New Mexico and Arizona. In attempting, therefore, to make the Indians self-supporting, it must be considered that many of them occupy land on which white men could not make a living by farming, and that grazing must be their chief occupation. Moreover, as it requires from 10 to 30 acres to sustain one ox, and sometimes from 3000 to 16,000 acres to support one family, the reservations will seem less disproportionate to their owners' needs than might at first appear.

Population.

"The whole number of Indians in 1884 was 264,369, exclusive of those in Alaska, who probably do not exceed 30,000. Instead of decreasing they are slowly increasing; certain tribes are dying out, but others, like the Sioux, have gained in numbers during the last fifty years. The New York Indians are said to have advanced from 4000 to 5000 within that time. In 1884 the births, as reported by the Indian Bureau, were 4069, and deaths were 3087, showing a gain for the year of about one in 264. A wild tribe, when it is obliged to settle down and live in houses, usually loses many members by death, but after having assumed civilized habits it slowly increases.

"Of the whole number of Indians only a few Apaches in Arizona, perhaps two hundred in all, can be considered as now hostile to the Government, the rest are peaceable and likely to remain so unless provoked to some blind outbreak by injustice or cruelty. The number who speak English so as to be understood is about 70,000, and 146,642 are reported as wearing citizens' dress. The Indians own 29,076 houses, of which 1975 were built in 1884.

The Government and the Indians.

"There are two groups of Government officers who have to do with the Indians. At Washington Congress legislates for them, and the Presi-

dent, the Secretary of the Interior, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and all his clerks carry these laws into effect, and form one group. Another is formed by the Indian Agents, United States officers who reside among the Indians on the reservations.

"The Department of the Interior, with the aid of the Board of Indian Commissioners, purchases all supplies of food, annuity goods, etc., and contracts for their transportation to the railway station nearest to the Indians for whom they are designed. It directs and controls the Agents, issues orders and regulations for the management of the tribes, watches over their legal and property rights, issues a code for 'Courts of Indian offences,' and keeps an elaborate system of accounts for the five millions of dollars it annually expends.

"But the Department at Washington could effect nothing for the good of the Indians without the afore-mentioned Indian Agents, by whom the actual task of civilizing them is accomplished. The Agents are appointed by the President for a term of four years. They are usually supplied with a house, often a poor one, at some point convenient to the tribes under their care. Near it are a commissary building where the stores of food, etc., are kept to be issued to the Indians,—a blacksmith shop, the trader's stores, the houses for employés, the buildings for schools, and perhaps a saw-mill to supply lumber,—so that the whole at one of the larger agencies constitutes a little village. As the Agent is entrusted with property, he has to give a bond with securities for a sum varying from $10,000 to $30,000. Take an agency in the Indian Territory with from 3000 to 5000 Indians. The Agent must make out each year a complete estimate of all supplies, implements, etc., required for his people, and send it to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at Washington. When the goods arrive he must receive and account for them, certify to their conformity to the samples by which they were purchased, and distribute them with strict impartiality to each family, taking receipts for all moneys disbursed. He must gain and hold the confidence of his Indians, restrain them when they are irritated or capricious, advise them in all difficulties, make an annual census of them (if he can), plan buildings for all purposes (including those for boarding schools), make contracts for their erection, and see that these are honestly performed.

"When the goods arrive the Indians come in from week to week for their food. Formerly the beef was distributed to the chiefs of bands; now it is apportioned to each family. The animals are weighed alive, turned out to the Indians, are shot by them, the skin kept for sale to the trader, and the other soft parts are wholly consumed. Each year the goods for clothing are distributed in like manner.

"The Agent also is practically chief magistrate. He selects a body of men for a police force, pays them eight dollars a month, drills them, and

uses them for the arrest of transgressors, white or red, and thus keeps good order on his reservations. Moreover, he holds a Court with the aid of certain of his people to try offenders, fining them if convicted or sending them to a United States Court for trial. Then he does all that in him lies to stimulate his Indians to take up land, to fence and plough and cultivate it. But the Indian seems to be as averse to assuming our mode of life as we would be to adopting his, and the task of the Agent is a most difficult one. Until we comprehend this we shall not understand the Indian problem. An Agent induced a wild Cheyenne chief with his band of young men to carry the United States mail, and for months he did it with faithfulness. Again he sent one of his employés with wild Indians and ponies one hundred and fifty miles to the railway station for the Agency supplies. Here they received wagons from the Government, loaded them, harnessed their ponies to them, and hauled the goods safely to the Agency. This is a civilizing process.

"There are traders licensed by the Department who buy from the Indians skins and produce, and sell them what they want. These traders are everywhere spoken against, but take great business risks, and in many instances contribute to the civilization of the Indians.

"On each reservation the Agent must establish a boarding-school, must have the building erected and furnished, and get the parents to bring the children to school. Remember that when the wild Indians first bring their children to be placed at school, it seems to cost them nearly as much as it would cost us to put a child of ours in their care. They come trembling, and with the greatest moral effort, with the utmost stretch of human confidence, give their child into the hands of the Agent to be educated. We should give them honor for this.

"The boarding school takes the child from camp life, isolates him from its savage influences and brings him under the control of Christian teachers. In all these schools instruction in work is considered of equal or greater importance than that in letters. But the children have to be trained in everything and to unlearn their savage ways; but for the most part they are singularly docile. On some reserves there are day-schools away from the agency to catch and train the children, as it were, until they can be placed in the boarding-schools.

"Besides these reservation schools, there are seven training schools away from reservations. General Armstrong, at Hampton, has 100 pupils; Captain Pratt, at Carlisle, has about 500; at Salem, Oregon, is another with 200 children; at Genoa is a school with 150 children; in Kansas, one with 250 pupils; in the Indian Territory, near the Kansas border, is the Chilocco School, with 150 boys and girls; at Albuquerque is a school under the management of the Presbyterian Church. Besides these there are admirable schools among the Sioux conducted by the Congregational and Episcopal churches, and there is