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STOCKBRIDGE INDIANS.

[To accompany bill H. R. No. 559.]

JULY 30, 1842.

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

REPORT :

The Committee on Indian Affairs, to whom was referred the memorial of the Stockbridge tribe of Indians, report :

That the petitioners represent themselves civilized Indians, of the Stockbridge tribe, or nation; that the present tribe, or its immediate forefathers, collected its scattered members together many years ago, in the State of Massachusetts, and then removed to a tract of land purchased by them of the Oneida Indians, in the State of New York. Upon this reservation they dwelt for about forty years, but at length, compelled by the encroachments of the white race, by the havoc and ruin of ardent spirits, and by the general demoralization and degradation, which spring from their contact with a society which introduced among them all its vices and few of its virtues, they sought, as a last refuge, a new home in the wilds of the Northwest. Twenty years ago, they purchased from the Menomonee Indians a tract of country on the waters of the Neenah, or Fox river, in the vicinity of Green Bay; but still their repose was but brief. In a short time the restless cupidity of the white blood discovered them in their retreat, and, by the delicate coercion of a treaty, their ceaseless wanderings again went on. An exchange of land was effected for them, and they removed once more West, upon the eastern shore of Lake Winnebago. At this spot an extent of land, containing forty-eight thousand acres, was secured to them forever; and, already they have found themselves obliged to sell one-half of it to the General Government. Thus, at every step of their national existence, they have found their home more and more precarious, and its limits yet more circumscribed.

The petitioners further represent, that they have ever endeavored, by enacting rigorous and judicious laws among themselves, and by imitating to the greatest possible extent the spirit and forms of civilized jurisprudence, to vie with their white brethren in good order and industry, in regularity, equity and justice. But, unfortunately for them, they say, daily experience teaches them that, in their own municipal regulations, the majesty and weight of authority, which give effect to the laws of the United States, do not exist; but that the enactment of laws, im-

possible to be carried into effect, or else to be executed in a vague and unsatisfactory manner, has become at length, but a solemn mockery of the forms of legislation, and that the memorialists can no longer enforce any proper government among themselves, unless they are backed and supported by the supreme law of the land. Their population amounts to about *one hundred and ninety-three souls*—they have about fifty houses—have many good and valuable barns—each head of family has cleared and cultivated a farm—they possess stock and horses in abundance—a church, and a parsonage for a minister of the Gospel. Two expensive mills, and other buildings, have been erected upon their reservation, and all that seems to be wanted, to ensure their happiness and prosperity, is a code of laws which will encourage the well disposed and repress the evil.

They therefore pray, in the most respectful and deferential manner, to be made "*citizens of the United States, to all intents and purposes.*"

J. D. Doty, the superintendant of Indian affairs, in Wisconsin, accompanies the memorial with a letter, from which the following is an extract: "I have the honor to present the memorial of a majority of the civilized Indians of the Stockbridge tribe, now residing on the reservation in this Territory. I am personally acquainted with these Indians, and believe that it will be no more than an act of justice to them, and to the Government of the United States, to extend to them all the rights of citizenship."

The memorial and letter were first presented to the Secretary of War, and by him referred to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and that officer has made a report favorable to the object which the petitioners have in view. It would seem, from all the sources of information accessible to your committee, that these Indians are in such a state of semi-civilization as to render it safe and proper, and advantageous to them, to admit them to the rights of citizenship, and to extend over them the protecting and conservative guards of our institutions and laws. Indeed, it seems peculiarly proper, under all the circumstances of the case, to bring them under the protecting influence of our laws. Their advances in civilization have gradually influenced them to abandon the hunter life. This has led them to adopt fixed places of abode, acquire individual property, cultivate the earth, and assume most of those habits and customs, amongst themselves, which go to distinguish the savage and nomadic life from that of educated and civilized man. With an inherent weakness in their condition, as a very small community, and but a portion of their number fully established in the habits and customs of our race, with the countervailing influence of the vicious and less civilized amongst them, they find it difficult to execute such laws as they themselves enact, or protect themselves in their rights of person and property. They, therefore, wisely and considerately look to a Government whose resistless arm is alike extended to protect the weak and secure the strong in all the rights and blessings which good government bestows. Under a proper sense, therefore, of these things—the weakness and insecurity of their condition on the one hand, and of the stability and security of ours on the other—they ask for admission into our system, and to be made "*citizens of the United States, to all intents and purposes.*" To the granting of the prayer your committee can see no objection whatever; on the contrary, it seems to be the policy of the Government, already established in the case of the Brotherton Indians and others, to extend to that unfortunate race all the advantages as well as the responsibilities of our laws, as soon as their habits of life and advances in

civilization may qualify them to sustain the character of citizens of well organized government. If it be true that the ill-regulated intercourse which the most vicious of our race hold with the Indians inflicts upon them most of our vices, with none of our virtues, it would seem but a duty which we owe them to place such of them as are qualified to do so under circumstances and in a situation to enjoy the ameliorating influences of a better state of society ; indeed, it appears almost the only course left to us now to save a remnant of that doomed race from total destruction ; for, whilst the onward and resistless march of the Anglo-Saxon race seems destined to sweep these aboriginal inhabitants from this continent, your committee cannot but view it as a proper policy of humanity and of mercy to incorporate such of them as may be benefited by it into our free system of government.

Your committee therefore recommend to the House to grant the prayer of the memorialists, that the Stockbridge nation or tribe of Indians be admitted to become citizens of the United States ; and they report a bill accordingly.