

PETITION.

To the Honourable the Commons of the Province of Canada, in Parliament assembled, &c., &c., &c. :

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE UNDERSIGNED, PRINCIPAL CHIEFS AND OTHER HEADS OF FAMILIES OF THE ALGONQUIN AND NIPISSINGUE INDIAN TRIBES, ESTABLISHED AT THE LAKE OF TWO MOUNTAINS,

HUMBLY SHEWETH TO YOUR HONOURABLE HOUSE,—

That Your Petitioners, at the head of three or four hundred families of the above-mentioned tribes, are the descendants of once powerful Indian nations who, from the very first days of European domination in this country, entered with confidence into an alliance with, and submitted to, the protection of its new inhabitants, and stood by them both in peace and in war, protecting them against the incursions of other warlike tribes, whose mode of warfare consisted in laying waste the new settlements ; that Your Petitioners' forefathers in particular, who had embraced the Christian faith from the very beginning, remained faithful allies, and from the cession of Canada to the British Crown, have at all times shewn the same attachment, defended the Government during the American wars, with the hope which they always entertained, and still entertain, of finding permanent and increasing happiness, peace and comfort, in the religious, political and social institutions to which they have ever desired to conform, and which were represented to them as being more than an equivalent for the loss of the sovereignty and liberty they formerly enjoyed.

That the Algonquin and Nipissingue tribes, from which Your Petitioners are descended, located at the Lake of Two Mountains for the last century and a half, after having been several times moved to and fro in the Island of Montreal, and living in a body under the protection of the Seminary of St. Sulpice, have been well instructed by them in that religious doctrine which teaches men to look upon each other as brothers, and to respect their neighbours' goods, and also to look forward to another life for a compensation for the sufferings of the present one ; that they appreciate the benefits conferred and the promises made by that religion to which they remain attached, and are equally grateful for what the Seminary has done for them in other respects in their village ; but that they cannot refrain from representing energetically to Your Honourable House that neither the Government, nor any body, nor authority, nor even the mass of inhabitants of European descent have done anything to realize the advantages which they expected from a state of civilization ; that having been in fact deprived of the soil which formed their patrimony and gave them sustenance, nothing has been granted them in exchange, and they are consequently often led to believe that the principles of religion and of humanity which men profess, cannot be deeply rooted in their hearts.

That the continuous extension of the settlements by means of the grants of these very lands which have been made to farmers by the Government, is a fact which they cannot, nor wish not to oppose ; that they would see an advantage for their descendants in these grants if they were invited, with justice and with a paternal liberality, to learn the art of cultivation, and to partake of the property thus organized, and especially if a portion of the lands they were in possession of, and which they most cherished, had been reserved for their special advantage,

whether for the purpose of being cultivated by them after they should have acquired sufficient practice and means to do so, or, principally, whether for the purpose of selling them to others, and forming a revenue from the proceeds for the benefit of Your Petitioners, which, by wise management, would enable them gradually to procure a better state of existence and sustenance, thus compensating them by the greater value of these reserves, for the whole of the remainder which they had been deprived of; that nothing of the sort, however, has taken place; that even their right to the islands and lands along the Ottawa, which were their own property, and which they had begun to improve, has been unacknowledged, notwithstanding their constant claims, which they have lately renewed, and that Your Government have shown themselves, quite recently, incapable of finding, or of understanding the title of Your Petitioners, one which, nevertheless, is older than your own, and may be found in every page of the annals of your history from the time when the representative of Ononchio seemed to deal with the Indian tribes as with friends and equals, to the time when it became necessary to take up arms to defend the power of Great Britain and the security of the country.

That the just demands made at different periods by Your Petitioners for assistance and protection, have entirely failed and been misunderstood by Your Legislature and Your Government, whether it be that Your Petitioners did not sufficiently rely, in making them, upon the principles of revealed or positive natural right which they now invoke, and upon considerations of humanity and justice, or whether it be that their claims appeared only to refer to isolated subjects, or rather that the heads of Your Offices, not having received orders from You to consider the greater and imprescriptible rights of Your Petitioners, decided their cause according to the written niceties and the formalities in use among you, but which you have not shewn us, nor taught us to consider as Your law towards us.

That having thus remained a hunting nation while you had destroyed all their means of hunting, Your Petitioners, leaving their families without help, have nevertheless continued at the proper seasons to repair to the depths of the forests to seek for furs and traffic in them; but that the inutility of that occupation is such as to render it a mere farce, so much so, that few of them venture to follow it and many remain in their village, without encouragement, without hope, and without means; that the poverty which results from this state of things is accompanied by misfortunes of every nature, and by diseases which quickly carry off their wives and their children.

That the contract entered into by Your Petitioners with the inhabitants of the neighbouring settlements cannot be of any use to them in their present state, as the past has fully shewn; that they are victims of frauds practised upon them in consequence of their want of experience and their little knowledge in business transactions; that they cannot work as journeymen in the labours of agriculture and of arts foreign to them, and that even there they would not find sufficient means; that besides they will only get accustomed to manual labour by commencing as agriculturists on their own account, and as proprietors, which they are ardently desirous of becoming, although they are not only deprived of lands but of every means of improving them.

That they are aware that it has been intended to reserve for them an extent of land at the head of the Ottawa in the neighbourhood of Lake Temiscamingue; that apart from their repugnance to emigrate in a body and leave the remains of their fathers in the village which is for them the only fatherland from which they have not been driven, the ingratitude of the climate and of the soil at that place, its distance, the want of roads and the total absence of neighbouring

establishments, of any example in the practice of cultivation, and of all means of procuring for themselves implements of agriculture, seeds and live stock, render that project impracticable and visionary, so much so that if you undertook the formation of that settlement yourselves, with experienced agriculturists and every possible pecuniary means at your disposal, you would be unable to succeed.

That these lands, which however they beg of you to preserve for them, although other tribes who are still nomadic claim them as their property, so that in any case Your Petitioners would be prevented from settling on them, could not either produce the income which they beg of you to secure to them; that it will be necessary to appropriate for this purpose some of the more favourably situated townships, lately surveyed, to the north of the Ottawa:—and they would respectfully point out to you the same locality for a permanent settlement for themselves in the event of their hopes of a settlement in the Seigniorship of the Lake of the Two Mountains not being realized.

That they have had of late to cultivate by hand and without sufficient capital pieces of land which have been assigned to them as tenants at will from year to year by the gentlemen of the seminary; that these gentlemen having recently organized among them a more settled and more encouraging plan of cultivation, the present interruption of which will no doubt be merely temporary, Your Petitioners and their families accepted it without hesitation; that as to their manner of working, and even as to their success, they appeal confidently to those who have been witnesses thereof; that, moreover, this mode of cultivation would be insufficient if continued to assure to them the position and the advantages to which they aspire; that according to the promise frequently made to them, and as they think in accordance with their rights, they expect to obtain lands by concession in the seigniorship of the Lake; they beg of you to use your influence with the seigniors to hasten this result, and when it shall have been obtained, to assist them with the necessary capital and with the means of living for a time; to establish among them a system of gratuitous instruction in the elements of general knowledge as well as in agriculture; to establish for them a model-farm, to protect them from the intrusion into their village and upon these lands of the descendants of Europeans with the exception of a blacksmith, a carpenter and other artisans indispensably required; to secure to their relatives by law the succession of these lands free and clear from their present liabilities and from any sale which they might make of them inconsiderately before they learn to appreciate the value of property: that if you establish agricultural societies for the improvement even of breeds of animals it would be inhuman in you not to feel disposed to make the same efforts for the moral even more than the material advancement of your brothers, Christians like yourselves; that the general revenue of the Province only can suffice at present for the supply of these numerous wants, and that your Petitioners hope that their share of it will not be refused to them; that it is also absolutely necessary to establish among them, as interpreter, agent and protector, and as a medium of communication between them and the Government and the public at large, a person who has their confidence and your own; that while the means of remunerating such a person are wanting, as they are informed is the case, your petitioners believe that Mr. Pillet, whose name they have suggested and from whom they have already received great services, would consent to render them those which they require, so far as, being employed gratuitously, he could do so without much trouble.

That, while in Upper Canada all the lands of the Indians have been purchased and the numerous and fertile townships that have been left to them as their own, are administered with care and protected against all depredations, those of

Lower Canada have been despoiled of their property without any equivalent and abandoned to their fate, although among those of Upper Canada are some who are not even Christians; the copper mines were not allowed to be worked without buying permission to do so from them at a high price; the Official Gazette lately contained a long list of Indian lands carefully reserved and distinguished; the law under which such a proclamation was issued is extended to Lower Canada; will you leave it without effect there?

That the tribes in Lower Canada having been taken under the protection of religious establishments from which they have received spiritual instruction without its having been possible for these establishments to provide for their other wants, former governments cannot in honour or justice have thought themselves thereby relieved from the obligation of restitution, and from all other obligations towards these tribes.

That the diminution and probable extinction of the presents hitherto received from the Imperial Government, and for the continuance of which they beg Your Honourable House to intercede, is a source of great apprehension to Your Petitioners, who find themselves continually bandied about between the Imperial authorities and those of the Province; that as the Canadian Government now benefits by the Territorial Revenue, it is from that source that it is your duty to remedy the evils under which they suffer, the more so that a due appreciation of the claims of justice and of the rights of the Indian Tribes has sufficed, as far as Upper Canada is concerned, to procure for the aboriginal population, out of this revenue, considerable annuities which they continue to enjoy.

That in your plans of colonization and of the appropriation of lands, and in many laws, you have recognized the existence of the right of the Indian Tribes to a portion of these lands, and admitted as optional, if not as obligatory, the setting apart of such lands from time to time for the same purposes;—be pleased to give effect to these acts and these recorded professions.

That your justice and your benevolence were manifested by an Act of the last Session of Parliament for the protection of the lands of the Indians; that Your Petitioners thank you for it,—but that as they have nothing, you will have to protect for them only what you may give them; you may at least connect with the operation of this law the realization of the numerous benefits which they expect from you, and the organization which they have suggested to you as the sole means of snatching them from an abyss of misery and despair.

Your Petitioners, while they pray for the success of your government and the individual happiness of those who take a part in it, and above all for the august person of their Mother the Queen, cannot conclude without imparting to you their conviction that what is called the Indian Department is calculated solely to perpetuate the salaries of those employed in it, and not to improve the condition of the remnants of the aboriginal population; if the intention was different, as Your Petitioners are convinced it was, they may say without fear that, at least as to them, such has been the result.

Wherefore Your Petitioners humbly pray that, by means of the necessary laws and of appropriate Acts of Administration, and guided by liberal Christian and civilizing views, you will take under your protection the Indian Tribes of Lower Canada; and, in particular, that you will reserve lands of sufficient extent in the vicinity of the settlements, and in places to which settlers are beginning to resort, to be sold and administered as the property of Your Petitioners, and the revenue thereof applied to save them from total ruin and extinction—to relieve their present misfortunes, to assist them to become farmers and proprietors, to

initiate them in the arts and the habits of the populations by which they are surrounded, and to encourage and turn to account steady and laborious habits among them; to protect them against the frauds to which their inexperience exposes them in their intercourse with certain individuals among those populations; to establish facilities for communication between you and them, by means of agents in whom they have confidence, and generally to perfect and consolidate the work of their civilization: that until they shall derive a revenue from such lands, and in case of their insufficiency, you will provide for the above object out of the public funds, to which your Petitioners are as much entitled as their fellow citizens of European origin; that other lands may be reserved and given to them hereafter if they should require them, for cultivation; that they may be assisted, protected, and organized in the clearing and cultivation of the lands, and for the peaceable possession, as proprietors, of those which they expect to obtain in the Seignior of the Lake of Two Mountains, in order that the moral and physical position of your Petitioners may be known, understood and secured, and that they may not say nor let others say with justice to their posterity, that their faithful adhesion to civilized men and to Christianity has proved to be, for them, after two hundred years' expectation, nothing but a cruel deception, and the source of the greatest evils.

And confiding in your Honourable House, Your Petitioners will ever pray.
Lake of Two Mountains,
9th February, 1851.

F. PAPINO and 23 others.

4th Session, 3rd Parliament, 14 Victoria 1851.

PETITION

Of the principal Chiefs, and other heads
of families of the Algonquin and Nipp-
issings Indian Tribes, established at
the Lake of Two Mountains.

Printed by order of the Legislative Assembly.
