

Nez Percé Indians

Governor William Walker.

On the Subject of

Slavery in the Nebraska Territory

1849

Paper engraved

Addressed to person now residing in the State.

Eight pages, letter-size

Beautifully written

Valuable document

Wyanndott City, Mo Territory
July 1847

Sir,
From my acquaintance with you, tho' not of an intimate character, I feel a degree of freedom in addressing you upon subjects which has assumed some degree of prominence and not a little portentous of danger to the tranquillity of this border. I confess to you Sir, I feel no small degree of alarm when I contemplate the attitude which attempts have been made and are still making to induce the Indians to assume upon the question of slavery - a question to which, they have hitherto, stood indifferent.

You are doubtless aware that the Indian territory proper, borders upon two slave holding States, viz: Missouri and Arkansas, and that the citizens of these States are very excitable upon this question. These two points being admitted, it requires no unusual quickness of perception to see the necessity of protecting the Indians from such influences, by the enforcement of the existing laws, regulating trade and intercourse with the Indians, and to preserve peace upon the frontier, by keeping out of their territory such persons as are likely to produce by their conduct, such results, tho' under the specious pretence of preaching the Gospel, and in places too, where there is no lack of service by preachers of the same denomination, even if that were an important consideration. Your laws are amply sufficient,
when

when refused, to export and furnish a liquor trader as a trader of any other goods and wares when found in the Indian country without license, and to remove all suspicious or dangerous persons; and must then exterminate guerrillas, who, when compared to the former in point of pernicious influences are, as "Hypocrites" is a "Satyr" be exempted from its operations, under the plea of christianizing and civilizing the Indians?

We, with our neighboring tribes were almost forced from our ancient home, and fled to this country under the plea that, situated as we then were, surrounded by the bad example of many white people the work of civilization could not be so successfully carried on; but in the West we would be under the exclusive protection of the Federal government and unembarrassed by State laws.

We came. We found the tribes that had preceded us at peace with each and prospered and happy; the work of civilization and education going on with great prosperity under the pastoral charge of the Indian Mission Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, while out in its unity, and our people who were members of the Church were in kin under its pastoral charge. The division of the Church took place in 1843, and the Indian Mission Conference fell to the Southern division, as I understand it; and for nearly five years ^{peace} has been under its fostering care, with no evidence of discontent among the membership till last year. We had hoped to have escaped the

boisterous influence produced by this measure. Doubtless. The Northern division, especially the Ohio Conference, actuated by a spirit not the more Christian like, interfere. An active correspondence was opened and kept up with each of our people as they knew could be best within the scope of the mail system. The Church South was malignant, vilified and denounced as a blaspheming Church and every effort made to destroy the confidence of the Indians in their ministers. The Church members were urged to leave it and attack themselves to the Church North. Various laws and ordinances were held out. The Rev. James D. Smiley, formerly a Missionary among the Wyandots, and at present Chaplain to the Ohio State prison, appears to have been the chosen organ of communication. (See paper makes no) If a better, if possible, better has it been possible for people, if he devotes these leisure hours to the instruction of his own interesting congregation. Our people were urged to petition the Ohio Conference for a preacher. The plan succeeded. A respectable number of Church members did hereby petition the board and the matter at large upon making the discovery, sent in a protest against the measure. (See papers paper makes B.) But a preacher was not without tardiness, in the person of the Rev. James G. Gales. The ball was so fairly in motion.

Mr. G. in due time received a letter of introduction from the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, St. Thomas to the Wyandott Sub-Agent, as well as

a somewhat lengthy letter of instructions from his Bishop.
He was treated with courtesy and kindness by all. Every
facility and all necessary information were freely furnished
to him in order to a correct understanding of the true
state of affairs; and had he but half followed the intui-
tion given him by that wise and good man, Bishop Morris;
he would not have remained here over a week. Yet, a
week would have sufficed to have satisfied him that
his presence and his labors would be productive of
harm instead of good. In this contingency he was in-
structed quietly to withdraw. He chose to remain
and remained two months, laboring zealously
to build up a party by inflaming the worst passions
of our nature. Not wise, backward or scrupulous as
to the means he employed in his operations - nor
did he ~~express~~ ^{exhibit} any qualms of conscience in being
admonished of the impropriety of his course. He de-
scended to the low and disreputable tricks of a brow-
ding County electioneer. Preaching the peaceful
gospel was but a small part of his employment.
I do not believe he preached exceeding a half do-
zen of sermons to the Wyandott, during his stay among
them. The results of his labors were of a partisan char-
acter. He succeeded in raising the storm he so
coveted; and a storm it was, and one ^{from which} he was an-
xious to flee, ~~from~~, as the sequel will show.

Our new Church edifice was assailed in the night,
the windows shattered to atoms, the storm, with the
paper

papers and other fixtures were torn down and thrown out of doors and nearly every thing of a fragile nature was destroyed and not a word of remonstrance, admonition or reproof was heard from the Evangelist but to civilize the Indians. This produced as was to be expected, acts of retaliation from the opposite party. Davies was the mob's while holding his nocturnal meetings at private houses with his followers and he forced to flee for safety, - a circumstance unheard of in the history of the Wyandotte nation. Mr. G. ^{ever} from the honor of being the first Minister of the Gospel that Wyandotte by Wyandotte. It may be asked, why ^{on account} were he made an exception? ^{min} Because of the obligingness of his conduct. The young composing the mob had sense and sagacity enough to see that he had descended from the dignity of his calling and station, and that his conduct did not quadrate with his profession or the nature of his mission, and in so acting, had forfeited all claim to that respectful treatment they had been taught to extend to Ministers of the Gospel. Tho' not a professed religion nor a member of any Church, yet, I cannot help blessing for our common Christianity.

The resident Missionary, Rev John T. Pease, looked on with astonishment and he may and was completely at a loss what course to pursue in this deplorable state of affairs.

The authorities of the nation took measures to effect a compromise with the party, but with Mr. Guley and his party it was
of

of no avail. (See paper marked 'C'.) The plea then was that the movement was designed to effect harm and his party and that the authorities of the nation ought not to interfere. Then, failing, a Meeting of the non-Communist portion of the tribe was called and held to take some action in the premises. The result was a recommendation to the Chief, that with a view of thus failing to effect an adjustment between the parties, there to reject both allegations. (See paper marked 'D'.) But a majority of the Chiefs, being Church members, declared the damnable result.

It is an early paper the Chief made an appeal in writing to D. Stewart, the Sub Indian Agent, for interposition; but being unavailable to receive the response, ability of dismissing the distinction of the parties, communicated it to the Department and asked for instructions. But the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, like most old politicians, seldom make official execution officers, vibrates between the two parties, being first to one, then to the other, as if saying, "I am quite sure, I pray you, I do believe you are wrong" - then vacillating, hesitating, offering without instruction - without support and to act as his judgment might dictate. Mr. Gurney's earnest solicitation the official order was issued ordering him to leave the Wyandott territory. I repeat, he earnestly believed expulsion and that more than once, as he said, to relieve him from the responsibility of executing the first assigned him by the Conference. He was anxious to get away, as he was in danger from the citizens of the tribe. And now, forsooth, he is held up, "strange," and with the characteristic

characteristic indelicacy, now pitifully complains of being the victim of official tyranny.

I write this one point kept in view: that our people were urged and impelled to petition the Ohio Conference for a preacher and against the removal of the authorities of the nation, one was appointed and sent; and now the plea is, one was petitioned for a preacher.

I dismiss Mr. Gurney by remarking that his conduct, while here, was highly reprehensible - insincere and jealous. As to what he may have said, or written to your Department, of me or my family, connections, I care but little. We have made too many sacrifices for the best interests of our people, to be thus put down by such a man as James Gurney, however high he may stand in Ohio.

Having thus given you a brief, but true history of the origin and rise of the difficulties among the Wyandotts, permit me to press upon your attention the imperative necessity of action on the part of the government, or our people will be forced to take some steps to rid themselves of these difficulties and that might, peradventure, be done in a manner a little too summary. Either exclude one or both. It is better to adopt the latter course ~~than~~ and let civilization be sent to the Red and Mohs, than endure such a state of disorder. It cannot be disguised, the movement is purely of a political character. Slavery is the absorbing question. It towers above all others, and if its agitation be prevented in, among the Indians,

