

es loaned to them to be without interest and to be repaid after the lapse of ten years in three annual instalments.

9. They would have the privilege of formulating their own municipal or community laws and appointing their own officers.

10. Government officials would not interfere with any of the inner laws governing their communities but they would be entitled to military protection should they require it.

11. All settlers' effects would be passed into the country duty free.

12. As long as they remained in the country military service should not be required of them, but, should any Mennonite enlist in the army thirty rubles, extra bounty money would be paid to him. They would be allowed to affirm instead of being compelled to take an oath.

13. They would be free from every kind of state labor for ten years.

14. They were at liberty to leave the country at any time but, according to the amount of assistance that they had received, they would be required to leave behind a certain portion of their goods, until after the lapse of ten years.

"I have given this offer at length because last summer the two delegates from Kansas, who came to prospect for a colony, suggested similar terms to our Emigration Commissioner who seemed rather aghast at their liberality. But they were asking no more than their forefathers received from the Russian Government.

This proposal, with a few minor changes, was accepted by the heads of the Mennonite people and in 1788 a large number of them moved into Russia and settled in the Province of Berdiansk on the Sea of Azof. Of those that remained in Germany I have been able to get but few particulars. In the course of years it would seem as if their conditions must somewhat have improved as they increased largely. Even now, after the very extensive immigration to the United States, there are still large settlements of the Mennonites in North Germany. But, as I said before, it is in the colony that moved to Russia we feel the most interest. Catherine of Russia kept faith with them and they prospered. Their privileges were also confirmed by Paul II. In 1867 another large body left Germany for Russia. During the interval of 77 years between the arrival of the first Mennonites in Russia and the coming of those in 1867 a constant, though somewhat limited communication, had been maintained between those in Russia and the brethren in Germany.

It would seem as if the very air of Russia had a bad effect on educational advancement. In spite of the privilege accorded them of having their own schools and educating their children in the German language, learning did not flourish amongst them. They will tell you themselves, that as a community they are not at all so highly educated as their brethren in Germany.

They engaged in manufactures to a considerable extent, especially the making of cloth, but agriculture was, and always has been, their chief business. They raised vast flocks of sheep, many cattle and much of the wheat, the sale of which has made Odessa one of the wheat markets of the world. Time passed along and the Russian Government had never seriously broken faith with them until 1870, when the new law was passed requiring military service of them. For a time they refused to believe that their "Good Father the

Czar," as they styled him, had turned so cold a heart towards them. But time showed that like most bad news it was only too true. On the 16th of February, 1871, a deputation of the most prominent Mennonites sought an interview with the Czar and were accorded one with the Chief Minister. They urged their claims to consideration in a most eloquent manner. They pointed out to him that immunity from Military service had been one of the chief inducements for their coming into the country. Showed what law-abiding, faithful citizens they had been and reminded the Minister that in the war, but then recently closed, if they had not borne arms they had assisted with their money and had given very valuable aid in the care of the sick and dead. The Minister admitted all these facts, but complained that though they had been so long in the country, but few of them spoke the language, and that they were all as distinctively Dutch or German as they had ever been. The spokesman of the delegation admitted the accusation about the language, but said they intended to learn it. The Minister then reminded him that they had been eighty years thinking about it. After much discussion, further delegations and a great deal of anxiety and uneasiness, a further exemption was granted them for twenty-five years. But the learning of the Russian language was made compulsory, many of their minor privileges were taken away from them and a certain amount of labor for the state was to be exacted each year. This labor for the state was to be in the form of planting trees and caring for them. They were to be divided into districts. To wear a certain uniform, to go through a certain prescribed drill and to plant each year a certain number of trees and to care for these forests as they grew. The Mennonites were not at all satisfied with these conditions, but it was Hobson's choice. There were at that time in Russia, between 50,000 and 80,000 Mennonites.

LOOKING TOWARDS CANADA.

It was at this period that, through the efforts of Mr. Zorabs, English Consul at Berdiansk, they began to look towards Canada as a land of promise. They were to be allowed to leave Russia if they did so before 1883, and many of them were only too anxious to get away. The first official communication to the Canadian Government, of their desire to come to Canada, bears date the 7th day of March, 1872, and is in the form of a dispatch from the Honorable Secretary of State for the colonies, accompanied by letters from Mr. Zorabs and some of the leading Mennonites asking if they would be exempt from military duty and the taking of oaths. And what land grants would be made them. Favorable answers were returned and they were invited to send delegates (at the cost of the Canadian Government) to spy out the land. Mr. Hespeler, present German Consul, at Winnipeg, was then on an emigration trip in Germany. He was requested by our Government to go to Berdiansk and make enquiries and assist the emigrants in any way he could. This Mr. Hespeler did, but it was found to be a false move. Russia proved a veritable dog-in-the-manger. She would not let these people live peaceable in her territory. Said if they did not like her terms they might go.

But as soon as she saw that somebody else wanted them, she made a fuss and would not allow any one to induce them to emigrate. However, after some trouble and delay, they sent out delegates in 1872 and 1873. These delegates, after travelling all over the province, decided on the level prairie land between Winnipeg and the boundary, as a location. These lands had been passed over by other settlers as useless on account of the lack of fuel. But to a people from the vast treeless steppes of Russia, and accustomed to preparing their own fuel, this presented no difficulty. The first terms granted these people was as follows:—

- 1st. Entire exemption from military service.
- 2nd. A free grant of lands in Manitoba.
- 3rd. The privilege of religious schools of their own.
- 4th. The privilege of affirming instead of making oaths in court.
- 5th. The passenger warrants from Hamburg to Fort Garry, for the sum of \$30 per adult, \$15 for children under eight years, and \$3 for infants under one year.
- 6th. These prices not to be changed during the years 1874, 1875 and 1876, and if changed afterwards, not to exceed \$40 up to the year 1882.
- 7th. The immigrants to be provided with provisions during their journey between Liverpool and Collingwood.

(An incident which occurred during the visit of the delegates, and for which I am indebted to Rev. Dr. Bryce, was rather inauspicious, considering they were a people seeking immunity from war. The delegates had set out to view the Portage plains. Their waggons were driven by Canadians. When they had got some distance on their way they met some halfbreeds on horseback. An altercation arose between the Canadians and the halfbreeds, the feeling between the two parties being very bitter at that time. After some sparring the drivers of the Mennonite delegates continued the journey and put up for the night at "Howao" or "House's," (a tavern halfway between Fort Garry and Portage la Prairie.) During the night the place was surrounded by armed halfbreeds, and there the delegates were kept in a state of siege until released by a band of mounted troopers from Winnipeg. It was feared that this unpleasant occurrence would put an end to Mennonite immigration, but fortunately such was not the case.

THEY FINALLY SETTLE HERE.

In 1874 about 200 families came out and settled on these lands. Up to 1889 the stream of Mennonite emigration was more or less constant. In addition to the privileges already spoken of some further concessions as to homesteading were made to them. An entrant in the Western Reserve prior to 1885, and any one in the Eastern Reserve who secured his entry prior to 14th August, 1889, can obtain patent on proof of residence in a house of his own for six months in each year for three years any where within the reserve in which the land is situated and that he has been engaged in agriculture within such reserve. He is not required to show that he has lived at all on his own homestead or within any given radius therefrom, or that he has cultivated or improved his own homestead. These special privileges accorded to Mennonites were withdrawn in the Eastern and Western Reserves upon the dates mentioned respectively. Some twenty-two townships were set apart for Mennonite settle-

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