

produced the same effect at Medicine Hat as the filth did in the Indian camps, and they had the same fever there. I had five or six men there moved to the upper grounds, and in a few weeks they were all right, and were able to go back to their work. I drew the attention of the official at the Blackfoot Crossing to this matter, and tried to induce the Indians to leave the flat ground where their reservation was and to go out on the plains. They did so a short time afterwards, and, when I returned in a month, the agent told me that the disease had entirely disappeared, which fully corroborated my view as to its origin. As to the flour, I know nothing about the quality generally, but I am certain that neither the flour, nor any of the other food had anything to do with the disease or the death of the Indians in that district during that period. Instead of the Indians being dissatisfied with the treatment they were then receiving, the chief Indian, the Indian king, as I may call him, Crowfoot, whom everyone has heard of, expressed himself perfectly satisfied.

An hon. MEMBER. Were your first patients among the Indians?

Mr. FERGUSON (Leeds). I have been twenty-seven years practising medicine, and I can afford to take that remark for what it is worth. Crowfoot was one of my first patients among the Indians. He gave me, on my departure, a pocketfull of tobacco, and a cake baked, I suppose, with that same flour, which I kept as a souvenir. For five days and nights, I lived in the chapel with the priest in charge of that district. We eat the bread made from that flour. I examined all the stores with the store clerk, and was careful to enquire if the bread was made from the same flour that was furnished to the Indians. He said: "Yes." I saw the meat that was furnished, and it was a great deal better meat than I am getting in Ottawa, to-day. And I am not growling, because I think it is as good as the vicinity can afford.

Mr. PATTERSON (Brant). In what month and what year was the hon. gentleman out there?

Mr. FERGUSON (Leeds). I was there from June to October, 1883. I stated that I was there during that epidemic, and I think the hon. gentleman might take my words for that statement. I also found that the Government had provided and had instructed the agent and the storekeeper that, when an old woman or a young woman or an old man that was sick, should receive sugar, tea and rice, which were given out not as a portion of the rations allotted to them, but as a sort of kindness, and I saw them getting it every day. The question of poor food never occurred, we were eating beef, and bread made from the same flour which the Indians were getting. It was baked in the farm cookery and was carried to the little chapel where I had my meals with the priest. As to the clothes, more from curiosity than anything else, because the idea of complaint never occurred to me, I got the storekeeper to unpack two or three cases. The clothing was good, substantially woven tweed. I am not a clothier, but the goods were good heavy Canadian tweed coat, pants and vest, a suit of clothes which would do no discredit to any member of this House. The only addition was a set of brass buttons. As to wearing out the pantaloons in two or three days, the hon. gentleman who stated that must have known very little about the pantaloons or the pantaloons habits of the Indians. During the whole time I was there I never saw a pair of pantaloons on an Indian. They will not wear the pantaloons. They wear a coat and a hat, and that is all. On the first opportunity they have, when some half-breed trader comes in, they trade off their pants for a red shirt or a hat, and, when they are taken to task by the agent about the pantaloons, they say they were worn out, when they have traded them off, perhaps for candies, which they have eaten in the meantime, and in this way the three day story may have originated. Now, there is this difficulty with the Indians. Many of them,

Mr. FERGUSON (Leeds).

doubtless complain of disease, and one great cause of it I do not know how any Government can get over. The Indian when he was hunting for his food, and riding about over the prairie, got exercise which helped him to digest his food. Now the buffalo has gone, and the Indian is on his reservation, and he gets his pound of beef and pound of flour a day, for every soul in his family. When the beef is carried to the camp the Indian head of the family, in which we will say, there are five persons, sits down to the meal, and the chances are that he eats the whole five pounds before he gets up. He will roll about on the ground for the next four or five hours, like a snake in the grass before he is able to get up. There are hundreds of these men to-day who have charge of families, and who can get these large rations, that are suffering from chronic dyspepsia, the result of over-eating and no exercise, and the children who have nothing to eat are starved by their own parents. The moment they can toddle out of their tent they are cast off. The Indian boy or girl, from 8 years old up to 14, you may find wandering over the prairie eight or ten miles from the reserve, with a string made of raw hide, like a fiddle string, with which they snare the little gophers, a little animal like our Canadian chipmunk, but they are a little fatter, they burrow in the ground. The Indian children travel around in pursuit of these gophers. They lie down on the ground beside the hole with their strings, and the moment the gopher comes up to look about, directly he is trapped, and then he is divided into as many pieces as there are children present, and when they have eaten it up they hunt for another gopher. There is no doubt that in cold and unhealthy weather these children die largely from the want of subsistence, but that is under circumstances that no Government can control. The hon. gentleman made reference to the statements that appeared in the newspapers of a Rev. Mr. Robertson. I happen to know something about Rev. Mr. Robertson, which I do not care to disclose or discuss here, and which, to my mind, does not add much to the weight of his statement on this subject. I am not going any further on that point just now. Then, as to the Indians that he saw in Winnipeg, Portage la Prairie, Brandon and Minnedosa, filching their living out of swill barrels and the refuse heaps behind houses—these were the American Sioux Indians, with whom our Government have no treaty, to whom they furnish nothing, and furnishing which the hands of our own loyal Indians resisted, these are the remnant of the Minnesota massacres, and they are in a most destitute state, and I think that the Government should, out of common humanity, in some way come to some understanding with our own Indians to permit them to give those unfortunates some relief. Before I left my friend Crowfoot, he thus expressed himself to me: "The buffalo has gone, but the Great Spirit has sent the white man to take care of his red brother. We will be loyal." He found out that I had something to do with the Parliament, and he said to me: "We have a great friend at Ottawa; please thank him for the kindness and care he has already taken of us, and under these circumstances we will continue to be loyal." This is the way the interpreter gave it to me. Now about the women. I am not going to sit down without defending even the character of an Indian woman. They have peculiar notions about the marriage relationship; there is no doubt about that. Now, I have as high an opinion of the average—I was going to use the words virtue and integrity—of civilised women as any man in this country, or anywhere else. And while I know that their views and notions of the marriage relations and outside of that relation are not the same as those of white women, I say that the Indian women of the North-West, judged by their own code of both public and private morality, would not compare unfavorably in this with their civilised white sisters. That is the result of