

Commissioner McLeod, in his report for 1879, says :

" I have experienced great difficulty (with the distress and suffering) applications for relief being constantly made to me by the starving bands of Indians "

Again the commissioner says :

" A Stoney Indian and his family had been without food for many days."

Superintendent Walsh, in his report for 1880, says :

" Hunger and suffering prevailed. In some places persons became so reduced as to be unable to help themselves. The want of food followed by disease caused an epidemic, which marked its results by the many graves now to be seen in Wood Mountain."

Was there ever such a picture as this painted by the most skilful artist? Was there ever such an indictment preferred against any Government? Was there ever such an indictment preferred against this incompetent Government as that framed in this report of one of their own agents in the North-West? Nothing but the weakness, the incompetency of this Administration would have permitted this condition of affairs to have existed one hour after it was made known to the Government, but, with a full knowledge of all these facts, with a full knowledge on their own part, on the part of the Superintendent-General and of Commissioner Dewdney, not the first step was taken to rectify the wrong done to the Indians. The breach of faith, the violated promises, the broken pledges, the fraud and misconduct of the officials, the robbing and cheating all around, the negligence and incompetency of this Administration, are all marked by the graves of the Indians on the side of Wood Mountain. Still the Government never moved, never stirred, never investigated. The Commissioner of Indian Affairs in the North-West Territories never moved, never stirred, never investigated. No, he luxuriated in his comfortable quarters in Regina, and the Indians whom we are bound to protect might starve to death and freeze to death as far as he was concerned. Let me establish this statement by a mass of testimony that cannot be successfully assailed. The *Moose Jaw News*, a paper by no means unfavorable to the Administration, on the 14th March, 1884, writing of the condition of the Indians in that neighborhood, speaks as follows:—

" In this connection the case of several Indian families in this vicinity may be cited. A friend driving by one, a few days ago, was given to understand that death had been in their midst. On entering the tepee a pitiable sight was discovered. Starvation was visible in their countenances, and a glance sufficed to show the cause of the warrior's death. One can hardly imagine how they had lived at all. The canvass of the tent was old and torn. Not a vestige of anything edible was to be seen, but a few rabbit-skins lying around showed what had composed their last meal. Everything in the way of blankets was under or over the dead braves. Around a cheerless fire were huddled an Indian and three or four squaws. They stated that they had been without food for two days, and appearances would go to prove the truth of their assertion. Can we in this enlightened age, allow scenes like this to take place in our midst without uttering an indignant protest to the proper authorities? Would these Indians have left their reserves, and run the risk of starvation, if they were sure of being supplied with the necessities of life there? "

The same paper, on the 13th June, 1884, discussing the injury inflicted by the Government upon chief Pi-a-pot, says :

" But even this will be utterly insufficient to wipe out the past. Its record will remain a foul blot in our history. The sufferings of the Indians in the Assinibioia reserves during the past winter are a burning shame to us, a lasting reproach to our Government. What would be thought of us in England, or in any other Christian country, were it clearly understood that for weeks large bands of Indians, the wards of the nation, poor, wretched creatures, whose primitive sources of supply had been cut off by our invasion, and whom we were bound by solemn treaty, as well as by every consideration of justice and humanity, to feed and care for, were dying by scores, partly from semi-starvation and partly from disease resulting from the bad quality of the food supplied by the agents! It is no excuse to say that the facts were not known. Why were they not known? Were there not high officials whose first duty it was to know the facts? If it should prove that the want of knowledge, or to the fearful ravages of scurvy, were due in any degree to a petty economy which dispensed with the services of a competent medical inspector in order to save his fees, this would be an aggravation of the guilt of those responsible for it.

Mr. CAMERON (Huron).

" We write thus strongly because we feel strongly on this subject. It is a subject on which every Canadian and every settler in the North-West in particular, is in duty bound to feel strongly. As we have before pointed out, the gravest issues, involving not only the paramount claims of humanity and right, but also the security of life and property, are wrapped up in the maintenance of friendly relations and good faith with the aborigines.

" We do not remember to have met with a settler from the neighborhood in which those events occurred, who has not sympathized with Pi-a-pot and admitted that, however wrong-headed and cantankerous the chief may have shown himself on other occasions, he is, in this instance, the injured party. We have returned to the matter because it is of the first importance that the record of last winter's treatment of the Indians should be thoroughly examined, and such measures taken as will render the recurrence of such scenes impossible."

Commissioner Irvine in his report of 1882, says :

" For a considerable time they made no demand for aid from the Government, but as the cold weather came on being very poorly clad and insufficiently supplied with food, they experienced much hardship from exposure and starvation."

Mr. Jackson, in his speech to which I have already referred, said :

" Now, I charge that at Indian Head, in the winter of 1883, several of the Indians died of starvation. When I stated that fact, I knew it to be a fact. The Lieutenant-Governor in his reply to me, brings a lot of documents, and the report of Dr. Edwards says that five men starved to death. Mr. Dewdney said there was so much provisions at Indian Head. I know they were there; but his fiat had gone forth not to feed them so much, that Pi-a-pot was a bad piece of muslin, and that they must cut down the rations. And now, instead of five dying, it is a matter of my own knowledge, a matter I can prove on oath, that instead of five dying there, 10 per cent. of all the Indians on the Indian Head reserve died through starvation in six months (that is 20 per cent. per annum). He became very anxious about the File Hill Indians. What has he done with them because of their turbulency, because they showed a disposition, perhaps, to rise up and join the Indians of the north in fighting? He has reduced them at the present time to that state that in the case of one Indian (I am prepared to prove this and to give the name of the man too), within two months seven of his children died because they had not the necessaries of life. I tell you what I know to be a fact. The Indians on the File Hills reserve believe that if one of their number falls sick there is no use in trying to make him get well, they have not sufficient nourishing food and they must let him die."

This policy of starvation was adopted by the Agent General of Indian Affairs six years ago. It is a cruel and atrocious policy, it is a policy that ought not to prevail in any civilized country. Six years ago the Agent General of Indian Affairs openly and deliberately adopted this policy in the following language:—

" I must say, however, that it was a dangerous thing to commence the system of feeding the Indians. So long as they know they can rely, or believe they can rely, on any source whatever for their food they make no effort to support themselves. We have to guard against that, and the only way to guard against it is by being rigid, even stingy in the distribution of food, and require absolute proof of starvation before distributing it "

Sir, this policy was adopted six years ago, and it has been persisted in ever since. During the last four or five years this policy has proved to be a failure, but its failure taught the Government no lesson. The experience of the past, the reports of their own agents in the North-West Territories, taught hon. gentlemen opposite no lesson; the reports of the best of their officials transmitted to this Administration fell upon deaf ears. They neither opened their eyes nor unscaled their ears. They slumbered on from year to year, and even the unmistakable signs of the coming storm in the North-West Territory did not arouse hon. gentlemen opposite to a sense of the danger in which the country was placed. Last Session the Agent General of Indian Affairs used the following language:—

" When Louis Riel was sent for last summer he was sent for by these poor people suffering from hunger; because, while we went to a large expenditure in keeping them, we did not give them such a quantity of food as would make them hang around the different stations and become habitual beggars. We kept them on short rations, on short allowances, and we tried to force them—I am speaking now of the Indians—and we have forced them upon their reserves."

Sir, let me give you another piece of testimony upon this subject. Mr. Jackson says this :