

Department of Indian Affairs.

Aggregate reduction of Expenditure.

In this connection it may be pointed out that notwithstanding an extension of educational facilities, necessitating a corresponding outlay, there has been in the amount expended upon the Indians in the Territories for all purposes, as compared with the preceding year, a reduction of over one hundred thousand dollars, of which the sum of sixty-three thousand six hundred dollars has been saved from destitute supplies.

It was pointed out last year that in other directions the limit of true economy had been very nearly if not quite reached for the present, but notwithstanding this an appreciable further reduction has been made with regard to general expenses, and farm maintenance. The latter, however, was rather of an experimental character, and it is doubtful to what extent it can be profitably maintained.

Causes operating against Retrenchment.

There are one or two points worthy of notice in order to further appreciate the significance of the extent to which the Government has been relieved of the supply of provisions to Indians.

It has to be remembered that a very large proportion of such assistance is consumed by the Indians of Treaty No. 7, and that from the comparatively short time they have been under civilizing influences, and the fact of their being located in a ranching rather than in a grain producing district, it has been impossible so far to get them to contribute to their own support in any way proportionately to what has been effected with regard to Indians in other treaties. At the same time, the peculiarity of their position renders it advisable to treat them with exceptional liberality in order to remove temptation to commit depredations upon the large ranches which surround them, raids into other parts of the Territories, or forays across the border.

Again it should not be forgotten that the game is steadily and rapidly disappearing from every district, and numbers of the best hunters are now so steadily engaged in their agricultural and kindred industries as to be unable to follow up such game as is left to the comparatively distant haunts to which it has retired before the advance of settlement.

Other obstacles to getting the full value of the products of the Indians' farming still exist.

I refer to the distance to which many of them have to haul their grain before they can find a mill to grist it, the exorbitant toll commonly levied by millers, whose charges in the Territories are not regulated by law, and the cost of getting threshing mills to go to some of the reserves.

Agricultural Operations.

The harvest of last fall, the result of operations in the spring of the fiscal year 1890-91, was the subject of my last report. In it I pointed out how vigorously the preparation and seeding of the ground were taken hold of by the Indians, and what a trifling contribution was asked from the department towards the supply of seed, also that at the time of writing a bountiful harvest had become assured.

Of course the last mentioned statement was of a general character, for it is obviously idle to expect that localities so widely separated from each other as are our agencies and reserves and scattered over so vast an extent of territory, can during any one season fare alike. Some crops were not a success.

In the Pelly, File Hills and Touchwood Hills agency the grain suffered more or less severely from various causes; however, only one complete failure occurred and that was at the Sarcee Agency.

With these exceptions more or less abundant returns of, in every case, grain of excellent quality were secured; and even in the few cases mentioned as exceptional with regard to the return from cereals, the singularity did not extend to root crops, which were everywhere very satisfactory.