

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER OF INDIAN AFFAIRS,
REGINA, 31st October, 1892.

The Honourable

The Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs,
Ottawa.

SIR,—I have the honour to submit my annual report for the fiscal year 1891–92, which will be found to compare not unfavourably with that of the preceding year, much as the latter contained indicative of progress and prosperity.

General Progress.

Marked as the advancement is seen to be, when the present condition of our Indians is contrasted with what it was a few years ago, it has often been difficult to measure the steps taken during single years considered by themselves, but in the course of the year now under review, there is a widespread feeling among those engaged in the work, that well marked progress has been achieved, and the more confident tone with which many of them now speak of the approach of the day when their Indians will be able, at any rate in so far as the supply of food is concerned, to provide for their own requirements, is worthy of note and full of encouragement.

Saving in Food Supplies.

Three years ago I expressed the belief that a succession of two or three good seasons would relieve the Government of the burden of finding food for a large proportion of the Indians beyond the limits of Treaty 7. Unfortunately the year following that upon which this statement was made was not a favourable one, but last year, as was shown in my report, there was effected an aggregate saving in the distribution of destitute supplies of three thousand nine hundred and thirty-three sacks of flour, sixty-four thousand five hundred and thirty-seven pounds of bacon, and one hundred and ninety-six thousand five hundred and forty-six pounds of beef.

During the year 1891–92, a further reduction in the quantities of such assistance has been made, as follows:—

In flour two thousand four hundred and sixty-three sacks; in bacon twenty-five thousand five hundred and sixty-eight pounds, and in beef two hundred and fifty thousand eight hundred and thirty-seven pounds; or during the past two years an aggregate reduction of—in flour six thousand three hundred and ninety-six sacks; in bacon ninety thousand one hundred and five pounds, and in beef four hundred and forty-seven thousand three hundred and eighty-three pounds.

Since the diminution, through death, in the number of the aged and infirm (of whom until the generation originally taken into treaty disappears, many must be dependent on the Government) is at least counterbalanced by the annual influx of hunting and other Indians who, abandoning their former pursuits in favour of farming, have for a time to be almost wholly supported, it is obvious that the large retrenchment shown has only been rendered possible by the progress which the Indians generally have made on the road to independence.

Individual Earnings.

This naturally excites the expectation of finding that the individual earnings of the Indians have been increasing, nor upon turning to the records will this expectation be disappointed.

As was shown last year, there was, as compared with the preceding one, an increase in such earnings amounting to sixteen thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine dollars and eighty cents, and during 1891–92 another advance to the extent of fifteen thousand nine hundred and fifty dollars and eighteen cents has taken place in the same direction, or during the last two years there has been an aggregate increase amounting to the sum of thirty-two thousand seven hundred and forty-nine dollars and ninety-eight cents.