

Dawson, one of the Commissioners, at the outset of the negotiations, told them how desirable it was for them to have a treaty, they answered him very plainly, that there were other matters that ought to be settled first; that promises had been made to them when the road was built that had not been fulfilled; and that they regarded, therefore, all the houses on the line, and all the big boats on the waters as theirs, till they were recompensed for them. The only answer his Honour could give to them was to fall back on first principles that would make the hair of an English Squire or Judge stand on end—"Wood and water," he assured them, "were the gift of the Great Spirit, and were made alike for the good both of the white and red man." Being well assured that the land is theirs, they demand compensation for it as a right. And who will question their right? Those vast rolling prairies, those gently sloping or bold broken hills, those sparkling lakes covered with wild fowl and stocked with fish, are theirs by inheritance and by possession. They did not, after the fashion of white men, divide their property up into separate estates. Had they done so, no one would have questioned their title. But that the country that has always yielded them support is their own and not ours, they firmly and rightly believe. The tribe holds the land and the wood and the water for common use. Surely, then, it is only fair that—before arranging to run our railroads through it, or inviting European emigrants to go in and take possession—we should meet the Indians in friendly council, buy their rights and extinguish their title. They are ready to meet us half-way. Though brave and proud, they are willing to admit our superiority. Though few in number, and every year becoming fewer, they would be formidable as enemies, for they are magnificent horsemen, and could support themselves on the great plains where ordinary troops would starve. Though born hunters, and almost as fond of a buffalo run as of fire-water, they are—under missionary influences—betaking themselves in