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Alice Cunningham Fletcher Papers- Omaha Allotment, Congressional Bills Box: 3, 1882-1925

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14 OMAHA INDIANS.

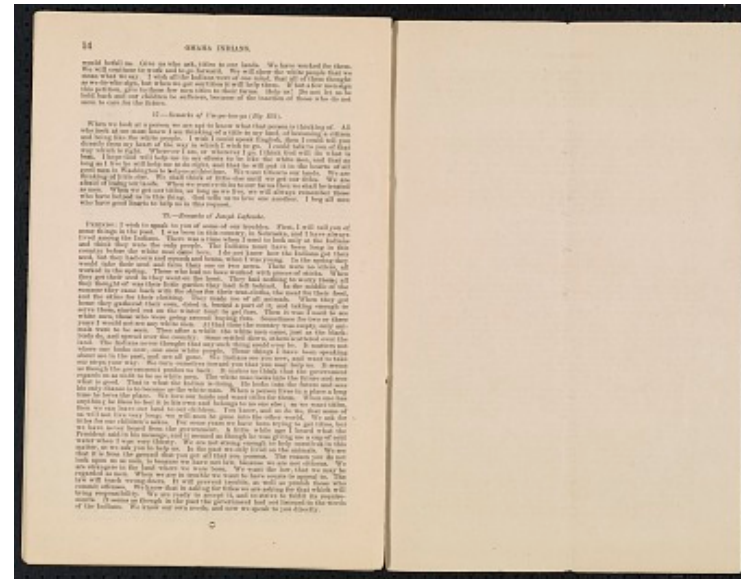
would befall us. Give us who ask, titles to our lands. We have worked for them. We will continue to work and go forward. We will show the white people that we mean what we say. I wish all the Indians were of one mind, that all of them thought as we do who sign, but when we get our titles it will help them. If but a few men sign this petition, give to those few men titles to their farms. Help us! Do not let us be held back and our children be sufferers, because of the inaction of those who do not seem to care for the future.

17. — Remarks of Um-pa-tun-ga (Big Elk)

When we look at a person we are apt to know what that person is thinking of. All who look at me must know I am thinking of a title to my land, of becoming a citizen and being like the white people. I wish I could speak English, then I could tell you directly from my heart of the way in which I wish to go. I could talk to you of that way which is right. Wherever I am, or wherever I go, I think God will do what is best. I hope God will help me in my efforts to be like the white men, and that as long as I live he will help me to do right, and that he will put it in the hearts of all good men in Washington to help us at this time. We want titles to our lands. We are thinking of little else. We shall think of little else until we get our titles. We are afraid of losing our lands. When we receive titles to our farms then we shall be treated as men. When we get our titles, as long as we live, we will always remember those who have helped us in this thing. God tells us to love one another. I beg all men who have good hearts to help us in this request.

23. — Remarks of Joseph Laflesche

FRIENDS: I wish to speak to you of some of our troubles. First, I will tell you of some things in the past. I was born in this country, in Nebraska, and I have always lived among the Indians. There was a time when I used to look only at the Indians and think they were the only people. The Indians must have been long in this country before the white man came here. I do not know how the Indians got their seed, but they had corn and squash and beans, when I was young. In the spring they would take their seed and farm their one or two acres. There were no idlers, all worked in the spring. Those who had no hoes worked with pieces of sticks. When they got their seed in they went on the hunt. They had nothing to worry them; all summer they came back with the skins for their tent-cloths, the meat for their food, and the skins for their clothing. They made use of all animals. When they got home they gathered their corn, dried it, buried a part of it, and taking enough to serve them, started out on the winter hunt to get furs. Then it was I used to see white men, those who were going around buying furs. Sometimes for two or three years I would not see any white men. At that time the country was empty, only animals were to be seen. Then after a while the white men came, just as the blackbirds do, and spread over the country. Some settled down, others scattered over the land. The Indians never thought that any such thing could ever be. It matters not where one looks now, one sees white people. These things I have been speaking about are in the past, and are all gone. We Indians see you now, and want to take our steps your way. We turn ourselves toward you that you may help us. It seems as though the government pushes us back. It makes us think that the government regards us as unfit to be as white men. The white man looks into the future and sees what is good. That is what the Indian is doing. He looks into the future



and sees his only chance is to become as the white man. When a person lives in a place a long time he loves the place. We love our lands and want titles for them. When one has anything he likes to feel it is his own and belongs to no one else; so we want titles, then we can leave our land to our children. You know, and so do we, that some of us will not live very long; we will soon be gone into the other world. We ask for titles for our children's sakes. For some years we have been trying to get titles, but we have never heard from the government. A little while ago I heard what the President said in his message, and it seemed as though he was giving me a cup of cold water when I was very thirsty. We are not strong enough to help ourselves in this matter, so we ask you to help us. In the past we only lived on the animals. We see that it is from the ground that you get all that you possess. The reason you do not look upon us as men, is because we have not law, because we are not citizens. We are strangers in the land where we were born. We want the law, that we may be regarded as men. When we are in trouble we want to have courts to appeal to. The law will teach wrong-doers. It will prevent trouble, as well as punish those who commit offenses. We know that in asking for titles we are asking for that which will bring responsibility. We are ready to accept it, and to strive to fulfill its requirements. It seems as though in the past the government had not listened to the words of the Indians. We know our own needs, and now we speak to you directly.

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