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SIOUX TRIBES

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IMPRESSIONS
OF
THE SIOUX TRIBES

IN 1882,

WITH

Some First Principles in the Indian Question,

BY

HENRY S. PANCOAST.

PHILADELPHIA :
ALLEN, LANE & SCOTT'S PRINTING HOUSE,
Nos. 229-231 South Fifth Street.
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Justitia est constans et perpetua voluntas jus suum cuique tribuendi.

Honesté vivre ; alterum non lædere ; jus suum cuique tribuere.—JUSTINIAN.

States or bodies politic, are to be considered as moral persons, having a public will, capable and free to do right and wrong, inasmuch as they are collections of individuals, each of whom carries with him into the service of the community the same binding law of morality and religion which ought to control his conduct in private life.—JAMES KENT.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE following is a simple, and I trust faithful record of some things which impressed me most strongly in a recent visit to a few of the Sioux Reservations of Dakota. Its excuse for being, is that it may help some to a better understanding of the disposition and condition of the Indians, and perhaps excite an interest in the question of their right treatment, which is now, more imperatively than ever, demanding an answer of the nation. These scattered impressions of mine are of interest chiefly, or only, in connection with this Indian question; but as they were put down with no thought of publishing them as an Indian pamphlet, I venture to supplement them with a few general facts.

What are the essential elements in the Indian problem?

We have in the midst of our rapidly growing Western civilization a foreign race. A race of another language, another color, another, but uncertain, origin. A race widely diverse from all the others that quietly melt into our mixed population, and but partially reclaimed from its original wildness and ferocity. This people is comparatively insignificant numerically, numbering, according to the last census (1882), but 262,366;* it is scattered in forty-nine reservations over our Western States and Territories, and so broken and dependent on the Government as to be no longer formidable. Out of this 262,366, the five tribes in the Indian Territory, numbering in all some sixty thousand, are practically civilized and self-supporting. The Cherokees have, for years, had their own government, with its regular divisions: leg-

* Report of Indian Commissioner for 1882, page 14.

islative, executive, and judicial. These tribes have numerous schools and churches, and are extensive cattle raisers. The other Indians are in different stages of the struggle towards civilization, from the fifteen thousand four hundred and thirty-four Indians not under the control of agents and confined to no reservation, to tribes like the Christian and industrious Sioux, farming their lands at Santee.

In attempting to seize the salient features of this question nothing, perhaps, stands out more strongly than the absence of intercourse between the Indians and our people; the isolation of the Indian on his reservation. The reservation is an island of darkness; on it the Indian is an alien in the midst of our national life. Now it is apparent that this sharp line between them and us is due, not exclusively to the great race differences, although, of course, largely a result of them, but also to the Indians' peculiar position before the law.

The early colonists treated the Indians as separate, independent nations. This was not so much a policy as a necessity, the whites at that time being weak and scattered, while the Indian tribes were organized and strong. Their position after the Revolution under our Government was substantially the same. While in Canada the Indian was an individual subject of the Crown, under the protection and liable to the punishment of the general law, in the United States a policy directly opposite was pursued. We continued to treat with them at arms' length, as autonomous tribes, yet denied them certain privileges usually considered inseparable to national life. We recognized in them but a usufructuary right to land, or only a title by occupancy; the fee, or actual title, "being either in the United States or in some one of the several States."* Purchasers from them could, of course, acquire only this Indian title. But although the tribes had merely this right of

* 8 Opin. Atty. Gen., 255.

occupancy, our Supreme Court held that they could not be deprived of it except by their own consent.

In the well-known case of *The Cherokee Nation vs. Georgia** it was said, "The Indians are acknowledged to have an unquestionable and therefore unquestioned right to the lands they occupy until that right shall be extinguished by a voluntary cession to the Government." Yet, although judicially declared to have this right, practically it *was* often questioned, or, at any rate, disregarded by the people and by the Executive. Our refusal in 1831 to allow a tribe to maintain an action in the Supreme Court of the United States was a conclusive negation of this theoretical right. It became *no* right except in the forum of conscience when we took away the only remedy except war. Tribal standing in our courts was denied them, because they were not considered as foreign States in the sense in which these words are used in the clause of the Constitution giving to such States a right to sue. They were "domestic dependent nations," "looking to our Government for protection, and relying upon its kindness and power." † And thus while on the pages of our Reports we find judicial declarations of the rights of the Indian, and many humane and admirable sentiments as to the way he should be treated, on the pages of our histories we can find little but his wrongs.

This policy of treating with the Indian tribes as separate nations was continued until 1871. In that year a statute was passed, declaring that "No Indian nation or tribe within the territory of the United States shall be acknowledged as an independent nation, tribe, or power, with whom the United States may contract by treaty.‡

While since this statute we have ceased to consider them as nations (in many respects independent), able by the dig-

* 5 Pet., 1.

† *Cherokee Na. vs. Georgia, sup.*

‡ Rev. Stat. U. S., page 366, section 2079.

nity of that nationality to treat with the United States as an equal power, we have yet retained the policy of regarding them as tribes, or bodies of men, and as tribes have continued to contract with them. Their present legal position is a unique one. They are not citizens, nor do the general naturalization acts apply to them.* An Indian can acquire no title to land unless he relinquish his tribal relations and settle among the whites.

Until he renounces tribal relations an Indian has no standing in our courts.† If he *does* leave his tribe, he acquires not citizenship, but the rights of an alien, his children of course being citizens by birth.

Such in a most general way is the position of this people. The question before us therefore is, How are we to deal with them? While it is contended on the one hand that there is in the Indian a cruelty, treachery, and want of moral perception which makes it impossible for him to be civilized, and further that it is the universal law of human progress that the lower race shall go down before the higher—it is urged on the other that we have abundant evidence of the Indian's capability of civilization, and that the real difficulty is in our neglect and oppression.

While those upholding the former view have frequently been called heartless and brutal, the supporters of the latter are often regarded as amiable sentimentalists and harmless enthusiasts.

On even a slight examination of the question this, at least, seems plain: the Indian is separated from the rest of our population by two great barriers—the difference of race, and the difference of his political position from every other man's in the community. These two things have

* 7 Opin. Atty. Gen., 746.

† *Contra*. The celebrated decision of Judge Dundy in the Ponca case, which gave an Indian the right to have a writ of *habeas corpus*. This, however, is an exceptional case, and was never taken to the Supreme Court.

from the first worked together to make him a stranger in his own country. The barrier of race induced us to put him in a wrong political position, and that wrong political position has perpetuated the barrier of race. If these people are ever to be assimilated, they can be assimilated only by breaking down these two barriers. We must bring them as nearly as we can to the level of our civilization and place them in our position politically. It is evident also that this isolation can not continue; the rush of Western settlement grows more and more. An enormous army pours continually into our Eastern seaports to spread itself over the West. How can we keep these still places in the midst of the current, a bit of the stone age in the crush and fever of American enterprise? Yet this people is there—a hard, undeniable, stubborn fact; and it is increasing, a spot of red in the white of our civilization which “will not out.” We are thus brought face to face with that uncompromising alternative which every one who rationally considers this question must recognize. We must either butcher them or civilize them, and what we do we must do quickly. The first would of course never be tolerated by our people; the other is that to which our Government has committed itself.

This civilization, then, is *not* a sentimental undertaking for the benefit of the Indian; it is a national necessity. We *must* make them self-supporting, industrious, and peaceable. We must in the order of things, for our own interest, assimilate and civilize them.

The one simple question is, if we must civilize them, what is the best and quickest way to do it?

To remove the barrier of race, the first great necessity is education in its most comprehensive sense.

It is not within the purpose of this sketch to speak of the work done by different religious bodies, particularly the Friends, the Episcopalians, the Baptists, and the Presbyterians; yet any one in the least familiar with it must be

aware of the enormous part it plays in the Indian's elevation. The success of our Government schools, notably those at Hampton, Carlisle, and Forest Grove, establishes beyond a doubt the great results that might be obtained, were education more general. Children taken from every tribe, even the wildest, have shown great aptitude. There is no excuse, then, for the very limited extent to which Indian children are being educated. If at Carlisle the wildest children can be made intelligent, industrious, English-speaking men and women, all can. By the treaty of 1868, made with ten tribes—the Sioux, the Arapahoes, the Comanches, and others, the Government pledged itself to educate all the children of these tribes. To provide a school for every thirty children between the ages of six and sixteen. This treaty has been but partially fulfilled.

Until within a year, although the whole number of children of school age in these tribes was, according to Commissioner Price's estimate, not over twelve thousand,* there were enough schools to educate but fourteen hundred and twenty-three. The report of Mr. Price for 1882 shows a marked improvement in this matter, six boarding-schools having been established since his last report; yet there is still much to be done. The Government should not be satisfied while it permits one Indian child to grow up without education.

"The injury," says Captain Pratt, "done by the United States Government to the large number of Indian boys and girls who have grown up during this period, by withholding this promised and valuable intelligence, and the actual injury and loss to the country from their having been an ignorant, pauper, peace-destroying, life-disturbing, and impoverishing, instead of an intelligent producing element, could not be stated in figures."†

* Indian Com. Report, 1881, page 38. *Ib.* 1882, page 33.

† Quoted in Rept. Ind. Com., 1881, page 38.

But education is not enough. Were every Indian in the United States educated our work would be but half done. The Indian would be but made keenly alive to his unjust and defenceless position politically. We have seen that the Indians, whether from necessity or policy, have always been treated as tribes. A graver error could scarcely have been made. This course—more than anything else—has prevented their quiet absorption. While the negroes with no national organization to hold them together, are gradually dissolving into our population, occupying positions, subordinate it is true, but honest and respectable, the Indians have remained insoluble, bound together by their national entity. By deliberately preserving their national existence, we have preserved their manners, laws, habits of thought, barbarity, we have made them, from the very nature of their position, draw closer together, and rendered them comparatively inaccessible to the influence of religion and civilization. To appreciate this, one has but to glance at the history of the Indian, and his position at the present time. It will be seen that to-day we are neglecting the most obvious means of breaking down this tribal organization, and bringing about a feeling of individual responsibility and individual allegiance to our government. One of the ways in which this can be done, a way which has been often urged by those whose opinion is of value, is, to give the Indian his land in severalty by an absolute fee simple title. It is generally suggested that land so given should be made inalienable for a fixed period, as twenty years, and be for a time at least not liable for the debts of the owner.

The advantages of thus giving the Indian a right of individual property in land are manifest. The man ceases to be identified with the tribe when he becomes a separate landholder, individually protected in the possession of his land, feeling himself individually responsible for its cultivation. Again, it is our avowed purpose to make the Indians farmers; it is highly expedient that this purpose should

be carried out. It is in the natural order of progress for them to pass from a nomadic to an agricultural state. Yet we deny to them this right of property, which has ever been found one of the most powerful and necessary inducements to human industry. "According to all past experience," says Malthus, "and the best observations which can be made on the motives which operate on the human mind, there can be no well-founded hope of obtaining a large produce from the soil but under a system of private property. * * * All the attempts which have been made since the commencement of authentic history to proceed upon a principle of common property have either been so insignificant that no inference can be drawn from them, or have been marked by the most signal failures. * * *

We may therefore more safely conclude that while man retains the same physical and moral constitution which he is observed to possess at present, no other than a system of private property stands the least chance of providing for such a large and increasing population as that which is to be found in many countries at present."* But there is more than this. Not only do we deny the Indian this common and essential stimulus of holding his land in severalty, but will not give to the tribe itself any security in the possession of its reservation. The wavering, feeble, shiftless course pursued by the Government in this matter, which it is a satire to call its policy, can only be spoken of in words of the most uncompromising condemnation. We have pursued a course that would ruin civilization and go far to make thrifty New England farmers beggars. The tearing up of these people just as they are beginning to take root in the soil, the keeping them in a nomadic condition by moving them when they have just settled down, is not merely a blot on the purity of our national honor, a shame to our religion, but—if these things have no weight with

* Quoted by Commissioner Price in Report for 1882.

us—it is most flagrantly short-sighted and impolitic. It is a course which handicaps the weakest runner in the race, which tends to make of this people a nation of paupers and vagabonds for the Government to support.

But this is not enough. We may educate the Indian; we may give him his land in severalty, yet if we stop here we have but gained the outworks. To strike at the centre of the whole matter, to effect anything great and permanent, to take away our reproach among men, we must change the position of the Indian before the law, we must give him those legal means of enforcing right—which we deny to no other man in the community—and we must make every Indian, who is fit for it, a citizen of the United States. I have not space to more than allude to this fundamental necessity—the necessity for law—but its growing importance can hardly be overestimated. These people must perish as a nation. If they are to survive at all, it must be by an individual absorption into our population. They must sink their national entity to quietly mix with us as the negroes and other diverse elements are doing. But in taking away their tribal organization, and in taking away their own primitive regulations for the repression and punishment of crime, we give them no law in their place. This evil must grow more and more as the old tribal bonds become more and more loosened. Yet while there is no law in its proper sense, there is much despotism. The Indians are under the despotic rule of men with great and ill-defined powers. The reservations are like so many absolute monarchies blotting the face of a republic.

I do not want to exaggerate in this matter, nor to say anything to the discredit of Indian agents. There are among them some good, honest, and faithful men. The fault is in the system, a system of big powers and small salaries, a system which makes one man prosecutor, judge, jury, and executive.

It is a fatal mistake to suppose this unconstitutional

power placed in the wanton hands of ignorant men is required to keep order among their tribes. I speak of the things I have seen. Both reason and facts tell us no people can be elevated by being kept in this servile and degrading condition. Not only is the absence of law a cruel error in the effect it has on the reservation life, but in that it is an almost insuperable difficulty to these people having any commerce with the whites. How *can* an Indian trade or work when he can not bring a suit to collect a debt, or to recover his wages? Nor is this all. Not only do we neglect to protect them individually, we punish a tribe for an individual offence.

“Fifth avenue shall not be hung for the murders of the Five Points. But in the United States the Indians have been punished by tribes for the misdeeds of individual offenders.”*

How this law is to be introduced I shall not consider. The manner is too much a matter of opinion to be properly discussed in such a simple statement of first principles as I have here attempted. Perhaps the establishment of courts, independent of course of the agent, similar to our Magistrates' Courts, with a right of appeal to the courts of the United States, and the introduction of a simple code of laws suitable to the primitive condition of the people, would answer.

Such, in brief, is the singular position which nearly three hundred thousand of our population now occupies—a position brought about in part by the peculiar circumstances and complications of the case, and in part by the course taken by the Government. Yet one element in this Indian question should not be overlooked. Although to us the wrong of this position is so manifest, yet most of the Indians utterly fail to appreciate it. Thus, as we have from the first consistently fostered their natural love of national in-

* Law for the Indians. North Amer. Rev. for March, 1882, p. 279.

dependence, they do not, as we do, recognize the fact that their loss of it would be their greatest gain. So while *we* may see the wrong that is done by giving them no standing in our courts, they are anxious to administer their own rude law. This can not but be regarded as one of the great difficulties with which our Government has had to contend, a difficulty which can only be overcome by wise legislation, education, and time.

The conclusion then to which we have come, in our hurried examination of the condition of this people, is this :

The Indians are among us increasing in number. As we can not exterminate them without war, wholesale murder, great expense, and a violation of religion, justice, and humanity, which would never be permitted, the general interest demands their assimilation. There are two great obstacles in the way of this necessary assimilation—their race differences and the difference of their political position. It is therefore a matter of policy and necessity that these two differences should be done away with ; the first by education, the second by legislation. There is but one thing to add. I believe the facts show there is nothing in the Indian nature which renders such an assimilation impossible ; but however that may be, the duty and expediency of our doing our part remains the same.

Here I should perhaps end, but I can not help adding a reminder that there is another light in which this matter may be regarded. We have looked at it in the name of dollars and cents, and of a worldly expediency—but there is another wisdom than the wisdom of men and a law higher than the laws of men. There are those who call common honesty in this matter—sentimentality ; treaty-keeping—foolishness ; and a desire to give to these men the rights of men—enthusiasm. They glorify “the march of our civilization”—as the slang goes—though it has gone on like a car of Juggernaut over the bodies and souls of men ; though its handmaids have been oppression, cruelty, lying, robbery,

and murder. Though we stand here a representative of all the world has hitherto attained, heirs to an accumulated glory; that heritage of beauty, of wisdom, of self-sacrifice, of tenderness which poet and painter, philosopher and saint, all who dying have left a light behind them in the world, have bequeathed to humanity; though above all we are intrusted with the holiest message of Christianity, they say we can do nothing for these people, crushed and helpless as they are, but stamp them out as the strong brute stamps out his weaker brother. How pitiful, how awful does it seem, if we look at it in that other light, the light of the whiteness of the Eternal Righteousness, if we can—no, if we will—do indeed no more than this. For it is by that Righteousness and that Higher Law that this people of the United States of America shall be judged.

IMPRESSIONS

OF

THE SIOUX TRIBES IN 1882.

“WELL, sir, where’s your claim?” This salute from numerous eager fellow-passengers on the first morning after I left Chicago, made me feel I was at last nearing that Mecca of so many modern pilgrims, “The Great Northwest.” I looked through the car with unusual interest. Here was the stuff out of which the nation of the future was to be made. Behind me a burly, black-bearded Westerner was telling a characteristic story of “a joke he’d put up on the boys.” Around me were restless farmers from Iowa moving further West, Norwegians with red emigrant tickets in their hats, in one corner a trim, placid German girl, with smooth flaxen hair, and meaningless blue eyes. At the far end of the car a young foreigner was trying to play “Home, Sweet Home” on a mouth organ. As his conception of the tune was far from the conventional one, his rendering had a deep but inharmonious pathos. To that shadowy creature the American of the future, the colonizing of the wilderness by his enterprising ancestors will doubtless have a poetry and significance which we fail to find. To us, the Falstaff’s army of discontented, unsuccessful men, the gamblers, emigrants, and convicts that go out as representatives of our dominant race to conquer the wilderness, has not perhaps its real picturesqueness or meaning. Yet I felt that I was the spectator of a wonderful phase in the development of a great nation, and my nearness only increased my wonder. These were the men who were going out to build Rome in a day. In an unsettled country there is a fascina-

tion in standing in the midst of the strange mixture of disorganized human life. You are present at the birth of a nation. You see plainly the working of great underlying laws, as the confused whirl of life steadies itself, to crystallize in the forms of social order. The country on which we were entering took hold upon my imagination. There is no solitude like the vast vacuity of the plains. All day we pushed steadily into the level silence, yet at sunset there was nothing to tell us we had advanced a foot. The only change was that from long, flat, treeless stretches to a more undulating country, where the mighty plain gathers itself into grassy swells, full of free delicious curves and soft hollows. The earth seemed waiting, after the primeval fashion, for man to come in and possess it, and the great, clear dome of blue, big and tender enough to shut in all the world. Indeed the world seems not slow to come.

In a quiet valley in Dakota I saw the rude, mud-plastered huts of a colony of Russians, who had escaped from despotism into this free air. In one county, I was told, there were ten different nationalities. As we advanced the towns began to assume a ruder and more recent aspect. I soon grew familiar with the single street and its flare of yellow pine, with the groups of houses, many of them unfinished, huddled together as if to escape the loneliness of the plain. I came to greet, as a matter of course, the ubiquitous land office, the store with its prominent stock of plows and harrows, the frequent saloon.

In Dakota a saloon, or perhaps two, a blacksmith shop, and a law office, are said to make a town; indeed, the train once stopped at a house and a half. On inquiring, with perhaps pardonable sarcasm, what *town* it was, I was apologetically told by the conductor, "Oh! this ain't any place yet; it's agoin' to be *something City*." About the middle of my second day from Chicago I reached Chamberlain, Dakota, a town of perhaps one or two hundred inhabitants, whose single street climbs the steep ascent of a hill on the bank

of the Missouri. My first feeling was one of delight. Everything seemed so typical and so novel. On every side the rounded, flowing outlines of hills, that melted insensibly into one another with that indescribable air of heaving, sea-like motion. One side of the railroad, on a great slope, was a huge herd of cattle, a wonderful patch of moving color against the vivid green; on the other, the hilly street of Chamberlain, with its jumble of wooden houses. On a little elevation a group of Indians, the first I had seen, dressed in an unromantically civilized manner, regarded the train with a dignified stolidity. In another direction, on the edge of the town, a characteristic group of whites, near a white-topped plains wagon, crowding about a fire in evident anticipation of dinner. On a more intimate acquaintance, I found Chamberlain in no wise disappointing. I felt like a modern Gulliver, who had got to a land where the measure of time instead of space was different. To the good people of Chamberlain things that had happened in the early days of the city seemed already to have gained a halo of remoteness. They looked back to the A. U. C. with the historic pride of an ancient Roman. "Did they have any mayor or police? Why, yes; this town was incorporated three weeks ago." I inquired the character of a man I wanted to engage as a driver. "Trust that man—why I've knowed *that* man—I've knowed *him* all winter." Before very long I became acquainted with the editor of the *Chamberlain Daily*, from whom I learned that his paper was older than the town. "You see, sir," he said, with pardonable pride, "I knew that there was going to be a town started here, so I set up the type for the first copy of the paper myself at" (mentioning some town, whose name I have forgotten), "and there was a *Chamberlain Daily* before there was any Chamberlain." At Chamberlain, the railroad, with the motley crowd of settlers it brings, stops; for on the other side of the fierce waters of the Missouri is another race and another order of things. The Great

Sioux Reservation extends about two hundred miles along the western bank of the Missouri. Shut in here in absolute isolation, in the midst of the feverish push and hurry of so many contending races, is that strange and hitherto insoluble element—the American Indian.

The morning after my arrival at Chamberlain, I looked out upon the world from the new standpoint of an Indian reservation.

I was the guest of the Rev. Luke Walker, the Indian clergyman at Lower Brulé. It was Sunday, and a day of wonderful and quiet beauty. I heard with peculiar feelings the sound of the church-bell among those lonely hills. I watched with great interest the Indians assemble for service. Many of them came in wagons—the gay scarlet and plaid shawls of the women fluttering picturesquely in the breezy sunshine. Most of the men were on ponies, dashing and wheeling over the hills with a peculiarly Indian recklessness and grace. The men were dressed in civilized fashion—that is, in calico shirts and woolen trousers, roughly made, with the seams outside. Most of the Indians had blankets, which they wrapped round them in a singularly graceful way. They wore their long black hair in plaits. The Sioux are tall, fine looking men. The faces of many show great character and intelligence. Their figures are indicative of activity and endurance rather than great strength. The women have generally pleasant and gentle faces.

It was not long before the church was filled with a devout and attentive congregation. It was not a scene to be forgotten. The church, small but perfect in its appointments. The clear stillness and sunshine. Two priests, a white man and a Sioux, kneeling together at the altar. The wonderful reverence and earnestness of these people of a despised race. The strangeness of hearing the Episcopal service in the soft, musical Dakota, or some familiar hymn tune sung to strange words. I followed in English the Psalter for the day.

“Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered.” * * * “He is the Father of the fatherless, and defendeth the cause of the widows. Even God in his holy habitation. * * *

“O God, wonderful art thou in holy places, even the God of Israel; he will give strength and power unto his people. Blessed be God.”

In walking over the reservation near the Agency, I noticed that considerable progress had been made by many of the Indians in farming. A great number of families were living in huts quite as good as those occupied by the pioneer settlers among the whites. There was among them, especially among the more industrious and intelligent, a pitiful anxiety lest their lands should be taken from them. “If they move my people now,” the Indian missionary said, “they had better move us all into the middle of the Pacific Ocean.” Yet one had but to cross the river to hear from some swaggering fortune-hunter, “Yes, we’re a-gittin’ along pooty well. Ef we only can git that reservation opened up—the railroad’s jest a-waitin’ to run thro’ there. Them lazy Indians has elegant land.”

Here before my eyes was a long story in miniature. The two sides of the river and of the question; there needed but the entrance of the pliant Government with its lofty indifference to treaties, honor and honesty, and its support of the stronger side, to complete the play. I do not wish to give the impression that the Indians at Lower Brulé were all Christians or all farmers. The people seemed in a most painful and struggling state of transition. We, who have climbed to our present altitude through more weary centuries than we can well count, are surely thoughtlessly intolerant of what we foolishly think the slow progress of the Indian. To no nation is the first step an easy thing, and we have made—in many ways we are still making—the road hard for their feet. I saw here many instances of laziness and superstition. On the top of a hill near the Agency I found on a small stick a faded calico flag, which I was told was an offering to the thunder bird. This fabled monster dwells in

the mysterious canyons of the Black Hills. The thunder is its singing, and the lightning the flashing of its eyes. One man had his teepee fastened closely to the ground with huge stones. He was keeping a spirit in there, and was afraid it would escape. What he intended to do with his spirit, now he had caught it, I could not learn. Yet the general tendency of the people is clearly toward getting to work and taking up, as they call it, "the new way," I was much impressed with one man, a half-breed, who was about starting out with some of his friends to found a colony in a distant part of the reservation. He told me with great earnestness he wanted to support himself and be independent. He could not, of course, under the present system of tenure, take a claim *on* the reservation, as numberless white men were doing off it.* He went out with the discouraging knowledge that no labor or improvements on his part would induce the Government to respect what, in common justice, was his property. It seems, to say the least, a rather anomalous legal position.

Here are Russians, Norwegians, and the scum of many nations, complacently taking claims on land wrested from these very Sioux by the might of our Government, in shameless violation of its solemn treaty, yet an Indian can acquire no title in the little land we have kindly left him. Give him a title and you make robbery illegal.

"The good old rule
Sufficeth us; the simple plan
That they should take who have the power,
And they should keep who can."

After leaving Lower Brulé I visited several Indian schools and other reservations in Dakota. Santee and Yankton agencies it will be impossible for me to speak of in detail. The condition of things on these agencies was,

* It is true that the treaty with the Sioux of 1868 appears to give these Indians a right to take a claim on their reservations, yet no effort to obtain a patent under it has so far been successful, although repeated applications have been made.

roughly speaking, much the same as that I had seen at Lower Brulé. Though at Santee the Indian farms were, I think, more successful than any I saw elsewhere. From them I made my way to Rosebud, an agency south of the centre of the territory. I reached Rosebud by a drive of some thirty miles from Fort Niobrara, Neb., over an absolutely deserted stretch of prairie. There was neither tree, nor bush, nor game. An awful and interminable flatness. A sharp circle of horizon. A great hollow sphere of sky. Our little party, "crawling between earth and heaven," seemed the only living thing in a deserted world. In the midst of this blank solitude is Rosebud and its eight thousand human souls.

You come upon it suddenly. Hills, with sharp ravines and rough descents, break in upon the plain. You reach the top of one of these and Rosebud lies before you. A great hollow or basin in the hills—hills scored with yellow roads that wriggle their dusty course down the green slopes. But few houses are to be seen. On an elevation at a little distance a neat cottage built by the Government for old Spotted Tail and now occupied by his son; on another hill the Episcopal church with its tiny spire, and the parsonage. In the centre of the hollow the whitewashed buildings of the Agency, with their rough stockade, and the stores of the Government traders. Almost all the Indians live in tents, and their white teepees can be seen in every direction dotting the sweeping hillsides. There is about Rosebud a strange sense of remoteness and mournful stagnation. One can scarcely realize that but forty miles away is the railroad, that has pushed like a great wedge into the stillness; that there is the advance guard of a grasping swarm of life spreading like locusts over the land. No whisper, no influence for good or for evil comes to these people from that other world that is closing round them to disturb their dull inertness and fatal content. As I walked out at sunset the night of my arrival, the pity of it seemed to oppress me.

There seemed a mournful fitness in the cry of a woman wailing for her dead in the neighboring churchyard. There is something indescribably sad in the wailing of these women. In that clear atmosphere I could hear with wonderful distinctness the long, plaintive moan, followed by the quick, sobbing catching of breath. Long after the sunset had burnt itself out, far into the night, when I woke I could hear her.

What is to be the result of the Government policy of thus isolating a race so widely different from our own from every civilizing influence that is flowing round it? That the Indian question will never be settled by the simple dying out of the race is certain. The most indisputable statistics prove that the Indian is not yielding to the pressure of the higher race.*

Nor can the favorite policy of moving the reservations at the instigation of land hunters be indefinitely continued, as there will soon be no land, even the most barren, left to which to move them. This question, "What are we to do with the Indian?" will thus year by year more and more obstinately confront ourselves and our descendants. Yet it has been answered a hundred times, and the answers of honest and thoughtful men are substantially the same.

While admitting the original difficulties of the question, and the unfortunate complications, which the misdoings of

* As this is directly contrary to the general belief, I quote from a distinguished authority in support of my assertion. "The opinion that the Indian population is destined to disappear prevails to a great extent among the masses of our people. This is regarded as the unavoidable result of contact with civilization. A careful study of the census of the population through a series of years, with an examination of vital statistics for the past four years, will satisfy the reader that this opinion must be modified, and the conclusion will be reached that the Indians, instead of vanishing, are destined to be and remain with us for ages to come." After giving some statistics he concludes: "While these data may not warrant any definite conclusion as to the tendency and ratio of increase, there is sufficient in the figures to dispel the theory that the Indian race is vanishing, and from natural causes will soon disappear."

Our Indian Wards—Geo. W. Manypenny. Introduction, page 23.

the early settlers, and the weakness, vacillation, and crimes of the Government have introduced into it, there is an intelligent belief that certain radical changes would do much toward solving the problem. The necessity of these changes is so obvious, that to show why they should be made seems almost like trying to prove an axiom. They have been recommended in report after report of our Indian Commissioners, they have for years been urged in our public prints. They are the plain suggestions of practical men, based upon very ancient, simple, and well-recognized principles of right and good government. Think of the Indian as you will, their expediency and their justice is unaltered.

Acknowledge that the Indian is a man, and as such give him that standing in our courts, which is freely given as a right and a necessity to every other man. Grant him individually a fee simple title to land, when he shows himself worthy of it. Do not move the reservations. Strictly limit the power of agents, and as soon as possible abolish the agent system.

Finally, admit the Indians, man by man, as they qualify themselves, to citizenship. In a word, it is to our interest to make the Indians quiet, self-supporting citizens. If we want to make them like other people, we will never do it by studiously treating them differently from everybody else.

These changes are not made, because the Eastern States are indifferent; because the Western States can not see beyond their gain by the legalized robbery of the present system; because politicians, agents, and contractors have a direct pecuniary interest in keeping things as they are. I think we of the East, who are neither hot nor cold, do not realize that there are among us nearly three hundred thousand human beings, over whose lives and property one man at Washington has been given absolute power; who have no standing in court individually or collectively, being in law neither citizens, aliens, or a foreign nation; who

are therefore robbed and cheated with impunity. Yet if these men demand their rights by force, the only way we have left them, we have always greater force to stamp down those we have no law to uphold. This is in a Republic, the main article of whose creed is the liberty and equality of all men.

At Rosebud about once a week the trader issues to the Indians their supply of beef. These animals are not butchered in the usual way, but hundreds of them are driven out of the corral on the hills, where the Indians await them and shoot them down. The day after my arrival happened to be "issue day," as they call it. About ten o'clock, the Indians began to assemble on their ponies, armed with pistols and short rifles, and very soon the hills were bright with gay groups of horsemen. Suddenly there is a scattering among the riders, and over the sharp edge of the hill, plunging down the slope in a wild, irregular gallop, come the cattle, fierce Texas steers with huge horns. With remarkable precision each Indian selects his victim and separates it from the throng. The scene that follows is a quick succession of beautiful shifting pictures. The huge, maddened, clumsy brutes racing aimlessly over the steep slopes, lashing their tails and tossing their heads, foiled at every point by their nimble adversaries, who wheel about them glorious flashes of color. There is a stirring abandon and daring in the way the men dash up and down the tumble of hills. Every few minutes comes a puff of smoke, and the sharp crack of a rifle, then you wait and watch. Some heavy beast thunders on—staggers—stumbles—and his great bulk tumbles in a convulsive heap. After it is over come the squaws, like the stragglers on the field after a battle, knock those that are yet alive on the head with a tomahawk, and cut up the slain for their expectant families.

Rosebud, if it has some of the inaction, has also much of the gorgeous coloring of an Eastern nation. I saw there a number of men coming to a council. As they wound down a steep path, the moving file in scarlet and white and pur-

ple, through the green of the low bushes, made a magnificent effect of color. I saw many Indians riding enveloped, like Arabs, head and all, in white, who regarded me literally with a curious eye. Everything there is so primitive that the old world picturesqueness and contrast is not yet rubbed off the surface of life. I have brought away from there a gallery of mental pictures. The keen edge of a hill, white with crumbled limestone, against a clear, intense depth of blue, in the foreground a scarlet-cloaked Indian girl with mild, soft eyes; camp-fires red in a wonderful twilight, while the darkening hills stand sharp and black against the still, pale blue, and the sun sinks cloudlessly, Venus strangely brilliant above a cold radiance of yellow light. Yet its picturesqueness and beauty scarcely impress one as much as its sadness. Here are strong men effortless and purposeless, whose object in life seems to trick themselves out in tawdry finery and strut about the reservation; women ignorant and toil-worn; children—the saddest sight of all—growing up as untaught and dirty as their parents. The one hope in the midst of all this is the brave little church, telling in daily service the old message of holiness and Christ.

But the church pleads and struggles unaided. Although by the treaty of 1868 the Government bound itself to educate the children on this agency, * and to provide a school for every thirty children between the ages of six and sixteen, there is not to-day one school among these eight thousand people. I saw there many troops of children, dressed in cheap finery, the older boys wearing that long trailing strip of flannel which is the *toga virilis* of the Indian, roving aimlessly about the reservation. There was an unsettled, untamed air about them, that I had not noticed in the Indian children elsewhere. They had a strange furtive way of looking at us, half in suspicion and half in wonder, very different from the timidity of the children at Lower Brulé

* I have a very decided impression that the treaty of 1876 also guaranteed the education of these children in part payment for land taken from them after the Sioux war.

that soon yielded to childish confidence. Here and there at Rosebud I came across a trim, soldierly boy in a neat uniform of gray, and recognized the student at Carlisle home for vacation.

By a provision in the treaty of 1876 the Government agreed to support these Rosebud Indians until they became able to support themselves, with the proviso, that to insure this assistance they must see some effort on the part of an Indian toward self-support. This proviso has been persistently ignored by the authorities. With a kindness as mistaken as its severity, the Government practically says: "We will give you everything you want—plenty to eat, plenty to wear—you have your teepees which you are accustomed to live in—we will give you all this until you go to work; when you do we stop supporting you." This astonishing method of setting a premium on idleness finds a companion picture in the following: The Government, being somewhat afraid of the Sioux, and finding it, moreover, expensive and troublesome to kill them, has hit upon the happy expedient of keeping the wilder Indians in a good humor by giving them more blankets, rations, &c., than the quiet and industrious portion of the community, from whom less is to be dreaded. It does not, of course, matter to the Government that the better class of Indians are in a critical stage of the struggle from the old life to the new, and that they are sorely in need of judicious help and encouragement. This damning fact, that the more dangerous and unmanageable a band is, the more it gets from the Government, I found widely appreciated by the Indians on the reservations I visited. The wilder Indians, I was told, were constantly coming to those struggling to farm at Lower Brulé, and asking them why they didn't steal some ponies or threaten a disturbance, telling them if they did the great father at Washington would send them better supplies. When we add to this the despotic and unconstitutional powers placed in the hands of agents, and reflect that the salaries of these agents—often as low as twelve or thirteen hundred dollars

—are so pitifully small as almost to insure the appointment of inferior men, and invite dishonesty, the state of things at many of the agencies seems easily explained. Some agents are perfect exemplifications of the evils of the agent system as it is at present administered—men ignorant, conceited, and narrow-minded in their office, and openly irreligious and immoral in their private lives, yet controlling many thousand Indians, and looked up to by them as examples of white civilization for them to follow. The tyrannical power of these agents astounded me.

Here in the midst of us is an authorized power, so despotic as to be utterly irreconcilable with every principle of liberty we profess. The agent is given power to arrest and imprison Indians without trial. Here in America, in the nineteenth century, does our Government deny these men a right which Englishmen gained for themselves in the thirteenth. An agent has the power by his simple, autocratic word, of cutting off any man's rations for two, three, six months, or an indefinite period. I can bear witness, from personal observation, that this power is freely and carelessly exercised. These unhappy people, which the Government, with such a ludicrous tenderness, calls its wards, are certainly to be pitied, in that there is no power strong enough to repress the peculation, stupidity, and tyranny of their august guardian. These are but a few of the evils, and these I can but barely indicate. Yet there is one thing that lies like a gleam of light across this dark picture—the work of the church and of the schools. There is among the Indians a natural reverence and respect for sacred things, and their own belief in a Great Spirit, and the absence of idolatry among them makes them receive with readiness the principles of Christianity. It seems to come to them like a further declaration of that Unknown God, which before they had ignorantly worshiped. Of the schools, I wish I could say all that they deserve. Besides the Government schools, which in some reservations are doing much good work, I visited a number of church schools, established and

overlooked by Bishop Hare. The design and working of these schools is beyond all praise. Besides religious instruction and the ordinary English studies, the girls are taught sewing, cooking, and all the branches of housekeeping, while the boys make their own beds, chop wood, take care of the horses, and learn to farm. The value of their thus learning to work with their own hands is inestimable. I was also much impressed by what I saw of a large school established by the Congregationalists and carried on by Mr. Alfred Riggs.

Of the children at these schools I scarcely know how to speak. I can perhaps say nothing better than that they are *children*. The recollection of them is one of unmixed tenderness and delight. They are so happy, so funny, so bright, so childlike, so affectionate, so lovable, I believe the most dogmatic and uncompromising advocate of Indian extermination would forget in their presence all his theories about the ineradicable cruelty and treachery of the race.

Among all my remembrances of Dakota, there is one that has for me a peculiar and serene beauty.

The remembrance of one of those wonderful sunsets in an atmosphere of crystal clearness. A young moon that the red sun made look all the whiter. The shy stars coming, you could not see when, into the faint blue, and a twilight stillness. In front of a school house a ring of Indian children playing Jacob and Rachel. I can see now the free, unconscious grace of their motions, and hear the childish giggles and screams of laughter, and the funny little accent with which they shouted "Jakup," "Rashel."

I looked at them and thought of the hideous record of unrighteous greed and bloody retaliation that makes up the sad story of their race—and of the lives that lay before these children that they thought of so little. Yet to look at them was to hope. Mournful and oppressed as the condition of their race is, it may be that out of the darkness and the bondage "a little child shall lead them."





