The Indian on the Reservation

George Bird Grinnell

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WHEN an Indian tribe had given up fighting, surrendered to the whites, and taken up a reservation life, its position was that of a group of men in the stone age of development, suddenly brought into contact with modern methods, and required on the instant to renounce all they had ever been taught and all they had inherited; to alter their practices of life, their beliefs, and their ways of thought; and to conform to manners and ways representing the highest point reached by civilization. It is beyond the power of our imagination to grasp the actual meaning to any people of such a condition of things. History records no similar case with which we can compare it. And if it is hard for us to comprehend such a situation, what must it have been for the savage to understand it, and, still more, to act it out?

On no two reservations was life precisely the same, yet on all of them it was the same in this: that it was different from old times; that the people no longer came and went at their own pleasure, but were confined by metes and bounds, and were subject to the orders of persons whom they themselves had not chosen to obey as chiefs. With the irksomeness of confinement came a change in physical conditions and health. The toils of the warpath and the hunting trail had ceased. Men who had been active in all the ordinary pursuits of their earlier life had now no occupation. They took no exercise, but sat about grieving over the good old times which were gone, and brooding over the present.

Cut off from their old free life of roving hunters, the Indians were forced to endure an existence without interest or occupation, and to see their people, old and young, dying about them faster than they had ever died in former days. They saw before them no prospect save of an indefinite continuance of the same state of things. They had nothing to look forward to nor anything to hope for. They were like men sentenced to life imprisonment, with blank walls all about them,—walls which they could never hope to pass. Yet, as the years went by, the Indians grew more or less accustomed to these miseries and felt them less acutely, though to the older men and women memory still made life a bitter thing. But the people came to regard the hardships as unavoidable, and accepted them with a sad stoicism as a part of the new and incomprehensible situation.

The Indians had been brought to a reservation and were to be civilized. Let us see how they were handled,—what sort of men were set to instruct these grown−up children; to persuade, to urge, and to command them to do white men's work; to perform the difficult and delicate task of changing wild savages and roaming hunters to civilized laborers. To be successful, such work calls for infinite patience and tact, together with the constant realization that the tasks required of these people are wholly new and uncomprehended by them. Before they can perform them, they must understand why and how their work is to be done.

It is obvious that the Indians can be taught the white man's ways only by actual contact with white men, and that this contact can be had only with those living on the reservation to which the Indians are confined. Such white men are the employees of the Indian Bureau and the missionaries.

The task of civilizing the Indians really depends almost wholly upon the agent who is set over them. He represents the Great Father; he alone has authority. It is for him to explain to them the benefits of toil, to reward there the employees of the Indian Bureau and the missionaries.

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represents the Great Father; he alone has authority. It is for him to explain to them the benefits of toil, to reward the industrious, to punish the refractory, to encourage the unsuccessful, and to direct the ambitious. He can lead the tribe to see that work is necessary, and can induce them to work; or he can let the Indians take their own way, and face their problems without assistance. If he has enthusiasm for his work and a real desire to see the people advance, he can infuse into them some part of his own energy, and make them believe that actual benefits to themselves and to their children will follow their efforts.

An Indian agent has absolute control of affairs on his reservation, subject only to the approval of the Department of the Interior at Washington, which two or three times a year may send out an inspector to look after him. His position is one of great responsibility, for he has to administer a business representing each year from $50,000 to $200,000. His power on the reservation is more nearly absolute than anything else that we in this country know of. He has not the authority to order out his Indians to instant execution, but in practice this is the only power that he does not possess. Over property, liberty, and the actions of every−day life he has absolute authority. No Indian can receive food, no Indian can obtain a tool, no Indian can live in his home, unless the agent is willing. He holds in the hollow of his hand the welfare of the tribe and of each one of its individuals.

The man who bears these responsibilities and is clothed with these powers over his fellow men should be of high character and good abilities, such a one as would be chosen for the manager of a considerable business. He should feel the responsibility of his position, and not be satisfied merely to get along as easily as possible and to draw his salary regularly. The good agent really stands in the relation of a parent toward his Indians; and as a father instructs, punishes, and rewards his children, so the agent should firmly, but kindly, govern the people who are under him. They recognize this relation, and often speak of the agent as their father. In the ordinary pursuits of life, a man qualified by training and temperament for such a place would receive a good salary; he ought to receive it here,—at least thrice the pittance that is now paid to Indian agents. Such a man ought to be retained in office so long as he would remain, and should not be turned out with the coming in of each new administration.

But the Indian service long constituted an important part of the spoils which until recently belonged wholly to the victors in the political contest. The position of agent is still a part of these spoils, and at present most of the offices are portioned out to the Senators and Congressmen of the various states. There are a few army officers acting as Indian agents,—among whom there has rarely been one who was incompetent,—but a large share of the civilian officials have been political appointees, minor ward or county politicians who obtain the office as a reward for vote− getting, or else "good fellows" who have failed in every business that they have undertaken, and now fall back on this place for a living. Men of this class cannot be expected to care for their people; often they are concerned only for their pay and their perquisites. Perhaps, in a vague way, they advise the Indians "to follow the white man's road," and then leave them to find out for themselves what that road is and whither it leads. Some Indian agents are men of high character, but none are well paid; for they receive only from $1500 to $2000 per annum,—small compensation for the never ending worries and detail of their position, to say nothing of the isolation of life at an Indian agency. The unwisdom of paying so poorly men who have such important work to do has long been understood, and many years ago, during President Grant's administration, some of the religious dominations, to which the control of the Indians had been intrusted, chose as Indian agents men fitted for the task, and themselves added to the government salary a further compensation from their own funds.

The position of Indian agent is one full of annoyances, full of temptations. He should be a man of patience and shrewdness, kindly yet firm; a man of character, absolutely truthful. He must be willing to make over and over again the same elaborate explanations of the simplest matters; to resist attempts to impose on or to frighten him; to take a decided stand and never recede from it; to incur the lasting hostility of the white men, Indians, and men of mixed blood who received special favors from the previous agent, and who now expect the same from him. Most agents appear to imagine that their position is one which calls especially for office work, and much of their time, therefore, is spent in the office, overseeing the making out of papers; giving out orders for flour, sugar, coffee, sacks, and other things requested by the Indians; acting, in fact, much like a retail country storekeeper. The truth is that an agent should spend the greater part of his time in the saddle or in his wagon, traveling about among his people; learning the personality of each; finding out how each family lives, what improvements the man has made on his place, what property he has, how he is taking care of it and what use he is putting it to. The agent thus learns what each man requires and how far he is deserving. He also appears to his Indians to be taking an active interest in their welfare and to be more or less in sympathy with them; and there is nothing that an Indian

appreciates more, nothing which is to him a stronger incentive to try to do well, than the exhibition of such sympathy.

The agent is assisted by a force of clerks, farmers, and other employees, each of whom is brought into closest contact with the Indians, and thus may wield a tremendous influence for good or for evil. These men, as a rule, take their tone from the agent. If he is energetic and enthusiastic, they follow his lead at the pace he sets. If he is rough, brutal, and profane in his dealing with the Indians, they are so too. If he is dishonest, they are dishonest. If he is weak, a stronger man soon gains an ascendency over him, and becomes practically the ruling power on the reservation. Often the clerks appear to regard it as an imposition that they have to attend to the Indians' wants, and are harsh in their intercourse with them, cursing them freely and treating them with the greatest indignity. Often, too, the agency farmers, whose immediate duty it is to instruct the people in the pursuits of civilization, do anything rather than that. They potter about the agency, or they are stablemen, or they work in the blacksmith shop, or put up new buildings, or paint and whitewash old ones, or spend much of their time at the butchering and the issue,—do anything, in fact, except to teach the Indians farming and oversee their work.

The United States army has given us by far the best class of men who have ever held the position of Indian agents; they have usually had a training in military business, and work on a system; they have no private ends to serve, and no affiliations with the white population adjacent to the reservation. When detailed to the service, they go to the posts assigned them to do their duty as they understand it; that duty being to make the Indians self−supporting and civilized, to protect them from white aggression, and, in general, to govern them according to the principles of justice and right. This view is different from that held by the average Indian agent, and so the work done by army officers is very different from that of most civilians, and very much better. Among the civilians are notable exceptions to the rule,—a few men who have done work that could hardly have been excelled; but for all that such men are the exceptions; the rule remains. Among the army officers, on the other hand, a careless or incompetent agent is rare.

First and last, much has been done for the Indians by missionaries sent out by the various denominations. Many are earnest men who try hard to do their whole duty by the Indians; but a missionaries, after all, are only men, some of them are careless, lazy, and inefficient, while a considerable portion lack any understanding of how to handle men. Of the least efficient among them it may be said that if they do no good, they at least do little harm, while there are many whose services to Christianity and to civilization are very great. I have in mind an army chaplain whose work among some Indians who incidentally came within the sphere of his influence was so effective that it will never be forgotten by them. The man was a true follower of the Master, and instead of attempting at once to force upon the Indians the acceptance of religious doctrines, he showed them only sympathy and friendliness. When he had won their good will, they readily gave ear to the simple religious precepts that he taught. Admirable missionary work is done, too, by the Roman Catholic priests and sisters who are stationed on many of the Western reservations. They accomplish in a silent, unsuspected way a great deal of good.

It may obviously be objected to all purely religious work among the Indians that it is caring for the soul before the body is cared for. It is hard for a man to pray with a good heart when he is hungry, nor is it easy to concentrate the attention on the doctrine of the Trinity when his little ones are crying for food. Before the Indian can be Christianized he must be civilized and taught how to earn his living; after he has learned this lesson, and has acquired some of the mental habits of civilized people, the ground will have been prepared for the sowing of the seeds of religion.

There is a practical form of missionary work, seldom seen, which cannot be too highly applauded. I have seen it practiced on the Blackfoot reservation by the Rev. E. S. Dutcher. This good man preaches on Sunday to those who come to hear him in the little church which his own hands built, and on other days of the week he takes his tools—for he has learned the carpenter's trade—and goes about over the reservation, helping the Indians to hang the doors and set the window frames in their houses, or to set the fence posts and stretch the wire for their pasture fences. Often his wife goes with him; and while he works out of doors with the men, she is busy within, teaching the women how to bake good bread or make the family clothing. Missionary work such as this, where practical religion is made a part of the daily life, and soul and mind and body are cared for at once, accomplishes lasting results.

For many years good people have been endeavoring to devise plans which should at once transform the Indian from a rover and a warrior to a sedentary laborer. Men of various trades and professions, from the soldier to the

theologian, have studied the Indian problem, and many different methods have been suggested for rendering the wild man civilized and self−supporting. The author of each has had most perfect confidence that his remedy was the one certain to cure all ills brought to the Indians by contact with the white man. Some of these projects have had fair trial; yet the progress of the race has not been so rapid as to justify the faith that any of these means of civilization—except when engineered with unusual energy and wisdom—would do the work claimed for it, while in some cases the experiments have brought disaster to the Indians.

The sincerity and earnestness of a majority of such philanthropists cannot be doubted, but in all their reasoning about Indians there has been one point of weakness: they had no personal knowledge of the inner life of the people they were trying to help. Their theories appear to have assumed that Indians are precisely like white men, except that their minds are blank and plastic, ready to receive any impression that may be inscribed on them. These friends of the Indians had little acquaintance with Indian character; they did not appreciate the human nature of the people. They did not know that their minds were already occupied by a multitude of notions and beliefs that were firmly fixed there,— rooted and grounded by an inheritance of a thousand years. Still less did they comprehend the Indian's intense conservatism, the tenacity with which he clings to the beliefs which have been handed down to him by uncounted generations.

The plans of the philanthropists who were anxious to benefit the race were based on the general proposition that all Indians should become farmers. As most civilized men earn their living by tilling the soil, they took it for granted that the Indian could do the same, and must become civilized in that way. They were profoundly ignorant of the surroundings of the Indian and of the land he dwelt in, and did not know that over a very large part of the West no crops can be grown unless the soil is well irrigated. They seem to have imagined the great plains a fertile country— perhaps like the prairies of Illinois—where, if land were ploughed and seed sown, bounteous harvests would be sure to follow. They did not understand that many of the Indian reservations consist of the most arid and barren lands that the sun ever shone one,—a waterless, desolate, soul−withering region, whose terrors are incomprehensible to those who have never traveled over it. They did not know that many of the reservations are situated in the land of thirst, where water is the one priceless thing, and its lack the greatest horror. Many years and much effort have therefore been wasted in trying to teach the Indian how to raise crops in regions where white farmers could not possibly make a living; yet, up to a short time ago, the authorities, clinging to the antiquated notions of those who would make all Indians agriculturists, continued to insist that the Indians should sow in the desert, even though they could never hope to reap. Only within a few years has it been learned that in a country adapted for stock−raising Indians should raise stock, and in a farming country they should farm. Yet ever since these tribes have been known to us, the Pueblos and others, who have always practiced irrigation, and the Navajoes, who have long been herdsmen, have furnished examples of this adaptation to environment, and have shown us that different peoples should be treated according to the different conditions which surround them.

One civilizing idea has by this time become impressed on all the Indians of this country: they comprehend to−day that they must work if they would live. The time when food, a blanket, a gun, and some ammunition satisfied the Indians' wants has gone, never to return. Association with civilized people has brought the need for the things of civilization, which can only be had for money. The Indians see that, under the new conditions, money is as necessary to them as it is to the white men. They recognize that the government will not support them forever. So they are intensely anxious to work, to earn money. On many reservations they wear out the patience of the agent by continually asking him for work, when he has no work to give them. On the reservation of the Northern Cheyennes, for the last two or three years, there has been an opportunity for a few men to secure work as laborers on the great irrigating ditch in course of construction on the adjacent Crow reservation. So long as men were wanted for this work, the Cheyenne agent was kept busy giving out passes to his people who wished to labor on the ditch. All the able−bodied men in the tribe would have gone, if there had been work for all. On the Blackfoot reservation, agents have told me of having fifteen or twenty applications a day for the job of going into the mountains to cut wood and haul it away for fuel. The Indians are ready to hire out to any one who will pay them, and they will work as hard, as long, and as faithfully as any laborers. Usually, there is little or no work to be had. Even the students who come back from the Eastern boarding schools equipped with knowledge of English and a trade, and fitted for a place in the blacksmith's or wheelwright's shop or for a position as industrial teacher at the agency day school, are only occasionally employed about the agency in the various positions which they might fill.

This, then, is one of the chief obstacles to the Indian's progress, the difficulty of earning a livelihood. After he has succeeded in doing this, he must learn how to keep his money when he gets it,—in other words, the lesson of thrift. The old−time Indian was hospitable, open−handed, and generous, to the last degree. The new Indian must learn to be close−fisted. As he progresses toward self−support, it is not very hard for him to accumulate horses, cattle, tools, and furniture; but to deal with money merely as money is as yet a very serious problem. If he has money, it burns in his pocket, and he feels that he must spend it. The time will come when Indians will have bank accounts, but that time—except among the civilized tribes—has not yet been reached.

Under the most favorable circumstances—with instruction and encouragement—it is hard enough for the Indian to change himself into a patient laborer, willing to toil day after day at his unpleasing task. Too often, in addition to the difficulties which are inevitable, his advancement is retarded or stopped by his being robbed of his lands by methods which he is powerless to resist. The courts protect citizens; but the Indian is not a citizen, and nothing protects him. Congress has the sole power to order how he shall live, and where. Most thoughtful people believe that in the past the Indians have been greatly wronged by the whites, but imagine that this is no longer the case. Let us see.

The greatest corruption of our Indian affairs took place not very long after the close of the war of the Rebellion. In those days, to be an Indian agent, trader, or contractor was to be on a highroad to fortune, if one made the most of his advantages. The contracts for supplies of every sort were in the hands of a small group of men, who controlled them all, and, what was more important, to a great extent controlled the agents and employees of the Indian Bureau, in the field. Attacks on the Indian ring were made from time to time with more or less success, reforms in the service and its methods were gradually introduced, and the opportunities for robbery grew less. The actual wholesale stealing of the food and clothing provided by the government has ceased, for the most part, or has degenerated into petty pilfering.

Nevertheless, methods are still found by which the money of the Indians may be diverted from its proper objects to find its way into the pockets of white men. One of these is the hiring of unnecessary attorneys for them. There are on file before the Court of Claims in Washington many thousands of dollars' worth of claims for alleged Indian depredations, and suits against various Indian tribes and the United States are being carried on before that court. These suits are defended by the Attorney−General's office, and any judgment recovered runs against both the Indian tribe and the United States. If the tribe has no money to pay a judgment rendered against it, the United States must do so. But of late years most of the treaties made with Indians provide that none of the money appropriated under the treaty shall be used to pay depredation claims, and the ratification by Congress of an agreement of this nature puts the money of the tribe out of the reach of the Court of Claims, and so protects the Indians. Moreover, under a ruling of the Interior Department, made a number of years ago, it was determined that no tribes, except two, have any money available for the payment of such claims, and this ruling has hitherto been sustained. Nevertheless, it is a form of legal industry recognized in Washington, for a lawyer to visit an agency and inform the chiefs that claims amounting to many thousands of dollars have been filed against the tribe, and that they may have to pay these claims. By alarming them about the safety of their money, it is not difficult for the lawyer to induce them to make a contract retaining him as their attorney to defend the suits. Contracts of this kind are invalid until approved by the Secretary of the Interior, who is constantly pestered by the lawyers and their political friends to give his assent to them. But since the Indians have no funds which can be used to pay such judgments rendered against them, since the law specifically forbids the use of their funds for such a purpose, and since, therefore, they can have no money interest whatever in the suits, it is manifestly a great wrong that these contracts should be approved by the department, and that the money appropriated for the Indians' support should go to fill the pockets of lawyers. Yet I have in mind a single law firm in Washington which, by its contracts with different tribes of Indians, who are protected by their treaty and so in no wise need attorneys, is likely to receive this year over $8000,—and for doing nothing. There was absolutely nothing for them to do. The defense they pretended to give the Indian did not require. There was nothing for them to defend him against. The real defense he needs is against the lawyers themselves. It is hardly necessary to add that a large proportion of the depredation claims filed against the different tribes are barefacedly fraudulent.

Indians are now subject to encroachments, conducted, not by an Indian ring, but by the government, which, in its ignorance, does injury to this race as serious as ever was done by any group of individuals. These encroachments are begun by white people living near the Indians, who covet the land possessed by them, and

usually secured to them by pledges of the government's faith, and who endeavor to gain possession of it by lawful means; that is, by inducing the government to break that faith and violate those pledges.

Wherever its reservation may be, an Indian tribe is bitterly opposed by local popular feeling. Its people are hated because they are Indians, and envied because they hold lands that white men might own. In thought, if not in words, its white neighbors say of a tribe, "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Local prejudice and local greed combine to force the Indians—who have no representative in Congress—from their homes, where perhaps they may have made some improvements, and to which often they are deeply attached. The people who wish them removed do not care where they are taken, if only it is away, somewhere else. Their object is to secure the land which they hope to have thrown open to settlement.

This is how the plan of expulsion is carried out. A treaty having been made with a tribe of Indians, a certain tract of country is assigned to them as a permanent home. After a time the land near them becomes settled, and the white people crowd about the reservation. The reservation may be good for something: it may be imagined to contain mines of coal or precious metals, or it may be a good cattle range, or the land may have valuable water on it. When this is the case, the people living in the neighborhood begin to urge upon their delegate, or their Congressman, or their Senator, the importance of moving the Indians, and throwing open their reservation to settlement. Both Senator and Congressman naturally wish to oblige their constituents, and forthwith a bill is introduced or a section is added to the Indian Appropriation Bill, providing for the desired removal. Most members of Congress, knowing nothing of the rights or wrongs of the measure, take it for granted that the local member must know what ought to be done, and are very likely to assent to it.

Less than ten years ago, I was present on a reservation in the Indian Territory when a commission was negotiating with the Indians to induce them to take their lands in severalty, and to sell the surplus. The commissioners made no secret of the fact that the administration had urged them to carry through the sale, because at the next election they wished to go before the people with the statement that they had thrown open to settlement by the public a certain number of acres of Indian reservations. This statement would influence many votes in the West; it would be a good political cry. The negotiations began, and by persuasion, promises, and at last by threats, about one third of the Indians were induced to sign the agreement. After that signatures came in very slowly. The commissioners hired their interpreters to assist them to obtain signers. The attorneys, who claimed that they had been retained by the Indians to defend their rights, worked hard to induce the people to sign. These attorneys were working on a contingent fee,—"the usual ten per cent for collection,"—and of course would receive nothing unless the treaty went through and the sale was made. Indians who were corrupt were hired, I was told, to vote more than once; signing first the name by which they went at the time, then the name which they had borne earlier in life, and later perhaps some still earlier name. The names of absent schoolboys were added to the list, on the mere statement by some Indian that they were in favor of the sale. So, by cajoling, promising, bribing, browbeating, bullying, and using illegal votes, the sale, which was bitterly opposed by one half the tribe, was at last carried through by a bare majority.

Even to−day the same thing is going on. Among the measures recently before Congress was one looking to the removal of the Northern Cheyennes from their present reservation in Montana to "some other place." The territory occupied by these people, although very small, is a fine stock range, which the neighboring cattlemen long to possess for their herds. Besides working with might and main on their representatives in Congress to secure the removal of these Indians to another reservation, these cattlemen endeavor to manufacture a public sentiment against the Indians by continually sending out press reports of the ill doings of the Northern Cheyennes, and two or three times a year Montana press dispatches to the newspapers tell of threatened outbreaks by these people. As a matter of fact, the Indians are entirely well disposed, but they realize that an attempt is being made to take them away from their old country, and are uneasy and fearful lest it should succeed. Yet when these Indians surrendered, nearly twenty years ago, General Miles, representing the government, solemnly promised them that they should reside here on this piece of land so long as they should be friendly with the United States. This promise was subsequently repeated by high officials in Washington; yet to−day these Cheyennes fear that they will be moved, and are prevented from working on their homes by the apprehension that as soon as they accomplish anything these homes will be taken from them. Several years' work has been necessary to convince the authorities at Washington that the title of these Indians to their reservation should be confirmed, and that the white men settled on the reservation should be moved away.

There is now in contemplation a measure to take from the Metlakahtla Indians of Alaska—on the ground that there are mines on it—a large portion of the island allotted to them by the government more than ten years ago. This is a case of great hardship,—that of a tribe of Indians who, with the help of one intelligent and devoted white friend, have become civilized and self−supporting by their own exertions. They moved from British to United States territory in search of freedom, and in their new home they have built a town, have a sawmill and a salmon cannery, and govern themselves. They ask nothing from any one, save the poor privilege of living undisturbed on the rock where they are settled. But now it is proposed to take a part of this away from them, and so to deprive them of the water power which runs their sawmill and their cannery, of most of their timber land, and of the stream which furnishes the salmon on which they subsist.

Last spring, on the day of my arrival at the Blackfoot agency I found there two strange Indians, who told me that they were Kutenais, living on the Flathead reservation; that their chief had heard that I was coming out to see the Blackfeet, and that I was the man who helped Indians, and therefore he had sent them as messengers, on foot, across the mountains, a distance of 150 miles, in order that they might tell me of the hard lot of the Kutenais, to see if I could not help them. They said that there were over eighty families of Kutenais living near Dayton Creek, on Lake Macdonald; that they received no rations from the government; that they had been told to take up farms on their reservation, and had done so; but that after they had built their houses, fenced in their land, and planted their little crops, the white people had come to them and told them to move away, that their homes were not on the reservation and did not belong to them. At first they had refused to move, but at last, when the whites had said that if they did not go the Great Father would send troops to move them, they gave up and went away. Now there is no place left on their reservation where they can farm, as all the country is rocky, timber−covered mountains. The faith that had led these men to take this long, toilsome journey to tell me their story was pathetic enough, and the sense of my utter inability to help them was humiliating, but there was nothing that I could do.

A search through the reports of the Indian commissioner shows that these Indians were recently ejected from lands which they had occupied since 1855, on account of a mistake made by a surveyor in locating the boundaries of the reservation. The farms that they had striven to cultivate proved to be without the corrected boundary line, and as soon as this was discovered the neighboring whites insisted on the removal of the Indians. As the land did actually lie outside of the reservation, the Indians of course had no claim to it, and were forced to give it up. After this, in 1891, the agent for the Kutenais, acting under the Dawes Severalty Act, allotted to eighteen of the Indians claims off the reservation and upon the land from which they had been expelled. Of these claims, three were allowed, while fifteen have for seven years been suspended by the Land Office. White people have settled in the valley of Dayton Creek and built their fences about the plots held by the Indians, who have now no means of reaching their claims except by trespassing on the land occupied by the whites, which they are warned not to do. within the white men's fences can be seen still standing the rotting rails and posts of the inclosures built years ago by the Indians when these claims were first allotted to them, and they strove to work as the white man works, and to improve their little farms as he does his. No wonder they are discouraged and hopeless at the result of their efforts, and it is hardly to be imagined that they will ever again make any real effort to become self−supporting so long as the memory of this wrong remains. Some method of repairing this injustice and of helping these Indians ought to be found.

No argument is needed to prove the discouraging effect on Indians—or indeed on men of any race or color—of such uncertainty about their location. If a white man were given the fairest tract of wild land on the continent, with the understanding that he might be ejected from his tenancy at any moment, he would have little motive to improve it, and would put on it just as little labor as he could get along with. Indians feel and act in precisely the same way. Whether they are moved or not, the uncertainty under which they live takes away from them all motive for industry and self−help.

Indians are perfectly capable of making progress in the arts of civilization. This is shown by what has been accomplished during the last nine years by the Blackfoot Indians of northern Montana, with whose affairs I have long been closely familiar. A dozen years ago I won their confidence and regard and became deeply interested in them, and ever since I have acted as their counselor and next friend. To bring about the results obtained, it has been necessary to watch them carefully, to advise them against the commission of follies, to persuade them to industry, to reprove them for wrong−doing; in fact, to try to teach them to exercise what white men call ordinary common sense in the affairs of life, checking them or spurring them on as circumstances required. When I first

knew the Blackfeet they were wild Indians, wearing blankets and robes, living for the most part in lodges and on a reservation remote from railroad or civilization. Except their ponies they had no property. They had no desire to work, nor any belief that it would be to their advantage to do so.

The country which they inhabit lies on the flanks of the Rocky Mountains, just south of the parallel of forty−nine degrees, at an elevation of 3000 or 4000 feet, and is far too high, cold, and dry for the successful practice of agriculture. For years the Indian Bureau had been trying to induce them to farm, but nothing had ever been grown on the reservation except an occasional crop of oats and potatoes. The region, however, is an excellent cattle range. In 1888 I determined that if these Indians were ever to become self− supporting it must be by cattle−raising, and a statement of the conditions convinced General Morgan, then Indian commissioner, that the experiment was worth trying. My visits of the next two years to the reservation were devoted to elaborate explanations to the Indians of the value to them of cattle; of the importance of never killing them for food, and of caring for them in winter, so that they should live, do well, and breed. It was explained that at the end of four years those who followed the advice given would have animals which they could sell, and that the money received for the beeves would be theirs to use as they might please. The idea of having cattle which they should own individually, and not as a tribe, was wholly new to them; when it was understood it was very welcome, and the prospect created quite an excitement in the community. A majority of the men cut hay for the stock that was to come, and built sheds and shelters to protect it from the winter's storms.

In 1890 about 1000 cattle were issued. Some families received only a single cow, others two, and others four or five. All went well with them. The succeeding winter was mild; no cattle died, and the calf crop was large. The people took great pride in their new possessions, and watched and tended them with much devotion. At intervals of a year or two more and more cattle were issued to them, until they had received about 10,000, and in the year 1897 it was estimated that, with the increase, the Blackfeet had between 20,000 and 22,000 head of cattle. Besides this, for three years past they have sold a great deal of beef; and their faith in the promises made to them, which led them for four years to refrain from eating their cattle and to take good care of them, has been abundantly justified. They have found a way by which money can be earned, and have come to understand that their future depends on their cattle and the care they take of them. It must not be supposed that all the men of the tribe have done equally well. While many have been unfailingly faithful, some have neglected their stock, or traded it off, or let it wander away. But, on the whole, they have done well, wonderfully well for Indians, and have been as steadfast and industrious as white men would have been.

The branding of the calves and the round−ups have been in charge of the agency employees, and this work has often been very much neglected. The Indians are not permitted to brand their calves, and they have suffered heavy losses by the failure of the government employees to brand those born in the fall of the year. These autumn calves, having been weaned and separated from the mothers, by spring become mavericks, animals whose ownership is not known, and so they are branded by any one who may find them, chiefly by the half−breeds and white men living on the reservation, who are more familiar than are the Indians with the white cattleman's way of accumulating a herd.

The years during which the Blackfeet have had cattle have not been years of ease and comfort. The people have had their troubles and perplexities, but the effort has been made to give them aid and direction by letters, by frequent visits, by consultations, by encouragement and advice, and by praise or severe reproof as either was needed. Often from old White Calf, long the chief of these people, a message is received something like this: "I want you to come to us quickly. There are many things to be talked over. We are blind once more. We need you to open our eyes." Thus, what the Blackfeet need, and all other Indians with them, is, not the good will to labor and to strive, but proper direction, in order that they may labor and strive effectively. They lack that discretion and judgment in dealing with every−day matters which inheritance, training, and experience have brought to most middle− aged business men, and these must be exercised for them. The power to look at things through the white man's eyes must be supplied to them. They must be made to share the wisdom of the white race. If the Indian Bureau at Washington can be induced to see that the Blackfeet cattle are properly handled, the future is assured; but the Indian Bureau, being really a clerical office for the transaction of Indian business, often knows little about the actual condition of the people.

The wish to better their present condition is not peculiar to any particular tribe nor to any section of country. If they can be convinced that it will be for their advantage, all Indians are ready and willing to put forth effort; but

when only failure rewards the work they perform, they become discouraged and think that they can never succeed. The Indian of to−day is living his life on the reservation, where he occupies a house and has acquired a certain degree of self−control. He is anxious to have a better living than he gets now, and is willing to work hard to secure it. He has given up many of his old wild ways and beliefs. He is a savage who has been more than half tamed. Civilization has brought to this Indian many hardships; it has abridged his liberty, has caused disease, has weakened or broken down many of the fine savage qualities that he once possessed, and has introduced him to liquor. As yet it has not brought him much that is good except humility and some self−control. His rights are little safeguarded, except so far as the Indian Rights Association can occasionally protect him. He has been taught but little of the individual's responsibilities. He is sometimes subjected to gross injustice.

His inability to speak our tongue or to think our thoughts must always be remembered in considering the Indian. He is voiceless; he is unable to claim any rights for himself or to tell his side of any story, for he has no method of communicating with civilized people except through an interpreter. He cannot speak for himself, and he has no one to speak for him, no one to advocate his cause. Even the young men who have been away to school and have learned how to speak good English speak it as a foreign tongue. They think in their own language, and translate their Indian thoughts into English, which is often not to be understood without further explanation. The Indian's psychological condition is bewildered and confused. Inheriting the beliefs of his people, developed through thousands of years, he is suddenly told that all these beliefs are false. His faith in his own creed is destroyed; but while we have taken from him his old beliefs, we have not known enough to give him new ones which he can understand. Thus his mind is in a whirl, and he feels that there is nothing sure, nothing that he can depend on.

What the Indians require to−day is something more than mere food and clothing. They need to be directed with some intelligence and interest. The conditions of each tribe or each agency should be studied by a fairly intelligent and experienced person, and the particular method thus determined to be the one best suited to the needs of the people should be employed. Agents and agency employees who are careless or indifferent should not be retained in the Indian service, and it should be the business of the inspectors actually to learn how far the employees residing permanently on the reservation are sincerely interested in the Indians under their charge. It is gratifying to notice that the force of inspectors has recently been increased, and that a number of those holding the position feel a deep interest in their work, and are willing to follow up the agency employees so that they will be obliged to do their duty. The farmers employed on reservations where agriculture can be practiced should be real farmers. They should not pass their time in loafing about the agency. They should spend seedtime and harvest out among the camps and settlements, teaching the Indians how to perform the various operations of farming. The farmers on reservations where the Indians are stock−raisers should be practical cattlemen. They should understand their duties, and have something of the loyalty of the old−time cowboy. The cattle should be really cared for; stray cattle belonging to neighboring whites should be kept off the reservation, and the Indians' cattle held on it. The Indians should be taught how to brand and care for their own stock. They should not be allowed to sell or kill it except by the agent's permission.

Liquor should be kept off the reservation, and those dealing in it or using it should be punished with extreme severity; in other words, the law should be enforced. The Department of the Interior and the Department of Justice must act together in this matter. In the past it has rather been the practice of each of these departments to throw the responsibility on the other.

We can do no more for the Indian than fit him to fight the battle of life, and we must begin by teaching him about its material things. He will readily learn industry and the white man's way, if he sees before him a reward for his work. The task of teaching him saving, thrift, is more difficult, since all his training leads him to share whatever he has with others. In order that he may compete with the white man, he must be taught to speak English and to read and write. This can be taught only to the children, but a part of whom at present attend school. There is the widest possible difference in the efficiency of the agency schools, and very great diversity of opinion exists as to the relative advantages of reservation and of Eastern boarding schools. The subject is a large one, and not now to be treated; but it is obvious that the Eastern schools cannot care for any great proportion of the children, and that good reservation schools are imperatively required.

We need not inquire here what is to be the ultimate fate of this race. Much more to the purpose is it to consider their present perplexities and immediate needs, and to endeavor as well as we may to help them along

over the steep, rough trail by which they are climbing upward toward civilization and self−support. The obstacles which lie in the path are many, but they are not insuperable, and they may be greatly lessened by intelligent aid and encouragement. Interest in the Indian is steadily increasing. Many thoughtful people are coming to recognize that he possesses qualities that are worth studying. Writers take him for their theme, sculptors model him, and painters use for subjects scenes from his old wild life. Intelligent people who study him wish to know more about him, and soon learn his true character and give him his true place, demanding for the race the consideration which it ought to have.

The task of giving help to the Indian is one worthy the best thought and effort of the country. The noblest work that any man can do is to make life easier for some of his fellows, and in the visible results which follow the stretching out of a hand in help and sympathy to an Indian tribe may be found rich reward and ample encouragement to renewed activity. I know of no field in which he who is really interested in his fellows may labor with a surer prospect of appreciation by those he is trying to help, or a more abundant certainty of answering effort by them. When once the Indian's confidence has been won, he strives earnestly to live up to the standard set before him by his white friend, and to repay by aspiration and endeavor all that has been done in his behalf.

The Indians must still do battle, but in conflicts unlike those of the olden time. They may still win victories, but the victories will be of peace. The day has passed, too, when one may achieve glory by a campaign against hostile Indians, but worthier triumphs and more lasting rewards await him who shall fight by their side in this new and desperate struggle.