

On the Indian and His Introduction into the United States Army.

That a solution of the "Indian Question" whereby the Indian race may be preserved must come quickly few will question. That the Indian has received nothing but abuse and cruelty from the hands of the whites many doubt, but that this is a fact those who are most acquainted with the question will not attempt to deny.

This subject is of peculiar importance, as it affects the well-being of a nation and a race; it is of interest as it throws light or shadow upon the history of a world. Its solution may save a nation from disgrace, it may save a race from extinction, or it may do neither. The average American looks at it only as a matter of dollars and cents and the only thought he gives it is to how he can extort the most from his unlucky victim. The continuance of the present policy will soon solve the problem by leaving only the bones of this once proud race to bleach upon the hillsides of their former homes.

Now as a means whereby we shall be enabled to continue a little longer this grinding process let us look slightly to the history, character, and surroundings of the Indian. The tenacity with which he has fought the advance of the white man might be accounted for by the higher motives of love of liberty rather than innate barbarity and thirst for blood. I do not grant, and I think there are good reasons for not granting, the oft conceded ground of fickleness and treachery so often brought forward in condemnation of the Indian. If the firm resolve to protect what he considered his rights at whatever cost and by whatever means and an inflexible adherence to that resolve is treachery then the point must be conceded.

We have robbed them of their lands, their flocks and their children. We have taught them the vices of civilization, and in breaking our most solemn treaties have proved that we are a race of liars. In compensation for their losses we propose to give them a civilization which in many respects they may well detest and a religion which they do not want. We know as little about our

religion as they do about theirs. We are a race of money seekers and delight in soft raiment and luscious fruits. Heaven has been pictured to us as a city paved with silver and gold, with walls of precious stones, the river of life clear as crystal, and fruits at hand throughout all time.

The Indians are a race of hunters and warriors. In the Happy Hunting Grounds the deer and buffalo abound in plenty and song and war dance never cease.

"God is God," and the Indians way of worshipping him is as good as any body's. They worship the Great Spirit; what more do we? To use the words of Red Jacket, "You have become a great people and we have scarcely a place left to spread our blankets; you have got our country but are not satisfied; you want to force your religion upon us."

"Brother we do not wish to destroy your religion or take it from you; we only want to enjoy our own". Thus far our religion has been to them but a farce and a mockery, our civilization but a cheat.

Today the Indian has still less room.

For the millions of acres which he has ceded us he is now confined upon small reservations of the poorest land in America land that will never become productive till it is given up to the ranching business. Year after year the farmers of this region are starved out and year after year fresh supplies are given them and great, crocodile tears are shed on account of their sufferings. Yet the same persons who mourn most over the hardships of the western farmer are the same whose curses and beratings of the Indian, because he is not self supporting are the most prolonged and loud.

We have treated the man with the full possession of his powers as a cruel parent treats a child and it is but natural that he should resist. Past policy has been to extort from the Indian the greatest possible amount in the shortest possible time, and present indications do not seem to show a tendency toward a change.

That the extortionist may still gain rich rewards and that the future treat-

ment of the Indian may be more humane. I wish now to mention the introduction of the Indian into the regular army. There are various points in favor of this method. In the first place it is practical; second the Indian is ready and willing to join the army; third, it would dispense with the severe and oft recurring Indian wars; and fourth, it will add a most potent element to our army in case of war.

It is practical because we have a place in the army which the Indians and he alone can fill most effectually. It is practical because the Indian wants to enlist. It is practical because it will enable several thousands of people who are now idle, to support themselves and in time of war to support the nation. It is practical because by this means those who have been degraded by our contact may once more feel themselves and be men.

The Indian is willing to join the army because he has been bred and trained to the use of arms; because his love for the rifle is next to his love for the land of his fathers;

because it will give him something to do; because with the Indian as with all peoples the battlefield is the font of danger and the fount of honor; and because he will then feel himself a warrior and no longer a reservation dog. His traditions, his religion, and his hope of future peace are almost as intimately intermingled with the thoughts of the battlefield as ours are with the history of the Jews.

That this introduction into the army would dispense with Indian wars seems almost beyond doubt. Whenever the Indian has been engaged in our army he has shown unswerving fidelity and courage. In all the American wars whether fighting as an ally of the whites or for his own freedom I think it will be hard to find a case where the Indian has ever deserted or turned traitor. This method not only puts the Indian where his love of honor would prevent him from hostilities, but where his supply of ammunition, provisions, and equipments could be instantly cut off in case of insurrection.

Those who doubt the efficiency of the Indian as a warrior have but to look

at the history of america and note the cases where the Indian has not only out-fought but out-generalled the white man. Then when we remember the superiority of the white mans weapons over those of the Indian we may form a just comparison. His method of fighting on a skirmish line instead of in compact bodies has already been adopted by the armies of the whole civilized world. Again from their habits and methods of life and constant exercise the Indians have raised a body of cavalry which can ride faster, fight harder, and endure longer than any other troops in america. And as a paramount requisite of the soldier the Indian is ever cool and collected under fire and does his shooting with rapidity and precision. If more proof is needed you have but to obey the Seminole, and "so count your choppers when they fall beneath my laden rain".

I do not claim that making a soldier of the Indian would be a cure all but that it will come nearer it than any other one thing. We necessarily see the Indian as through a glass-darkly. We hold an un-

grounded prejudice which will probably never pass away. The Indian is known to most of us only through the words of those who despise him because he is an Indian and "hate him because he has beaten them in battle".

Although we may never forgive the Indian for the wrongs we have done him we should at least look enough to our own welfare to preserve him from extinction. If he is not capable of being a citizen he is at least a worthy soldier. If the study of astronomy is unknown to him he can at least use the stars to guide his troops to battle. If the science of Psychology is beyond his ken he can at least understand the science of war.

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