

THE INDIAN PROBLEM.

REV. D. M. GORDON, the zealous and public-spirited minister of Knox Church, Winnipeg, was for some time in the North-West as one of our Chaplains. He travelled much and observed closely, and he has vindicated for himself the right to be heard on the Indian question. Any views enunciated by him will carry great weight. Mr. Gordon considers the Half-breed troubles virtually settled. They never had grievances that justified rebellion, and the swift and sure punishment which has fallen upon them will teach them a lesson for the future. Attention is now directed to the Indians. Mr. Gordon thinks the marvel is that the restless tribes, deprived of the buffalo, did not find an earlier occasion for disturbing the peace. The buffalo vanished with the suddenness of a tropical night. To the Indian this meant the loss of his old employment and nearly all his old sources of food and comfort. Any who are familiar with the remarkable success of Mr. Duncan in his mission among the Indians at Metlakatla, on our Pacific coast, know that his success was due in no small degree to the introduction of a variety of occupations among the Indians. Although he found that some of them were skilful in carving and in some few other kinds of work, yet their great occupation was fishing, just as the great occupation of our prairie Indians was hunting. He, himself, learned various trades in order to teach the Indians, and sent some of the Indians to Victoria to learn other trades, and by degrees he built up a community with all the variety of occupations to be found in any village of Ontario, except that of whiskey trading. It is as yet premature to speak of the success of the industrial schools among the Indians; but if a variety of occupations be taught to the boys and girls, it will go far towards making the rising generation useful and self-supporting citizens. The tribal relation must be broken up and abolished. This will take time, but the sooner the family relation and individual responsibility are recognized as the basis of society among the Indians, as they are among the whites, the better for all concerned. Let the land be held and cultivated by them in families and in severalty; let the community of goods be done away with; let those that are willing to be restricted to their own fair proportion of the reserve hold it as their own; and let there be introduced a wholesome rivalry among families and among individuals in the

cultivation of the soil and in other improvements, and a great gain will have been secured.

But now the crowning step, the most important of all, is to Christianize the Indians. Far too little has been done in this line, especially by the Presbyterian Church. The remarkable thing in connection with our missions, whether Anglican, Methodist, or Presbyterian, is that the results have been so gratifying and encouraging as compared with the labor expended upon them. But while not withholding the credit that is due to those at present engaged in the work, there is need of more laborers, who must, of course, live among the Indians, and not be mere occasional visitors, as is the case in some missions. The power of the Gospel must be exemplified as well as preached among them, and this not merely by the life of the missionary, but by the constant light of a Christian home. We have come among the Indians with a higher civilization, but we have almost entirely failed to make them partakers of it, while they have, in many cases, received from their white neighbors, especially near the railway, little but vice and disease. But what opportunity have they of seeing what is meant by a Christian home, or of learning the power of the Gospel in purifying domestic and social life?

They are not an inviting class; far from it; but neither are the heathen of Africa nor the heathens in the slums of London or of New York an inviting class. It is only at a distance that Christian missions appear specially attractive; close at hand they mean hard, prosaic, unattractive work—unattractive, that is, except to those who are fired with the love of Christ and of human souls. But we need not for a moment doubt the power of the Gospel upon the Indian. We dishonor Christ by any such doubt. Surely what has been done in the Fiji Islands or New Hebrides among cannibals can be done among a far better class upon our prairies; what has been done by M. Duncan at Metlakatla among Indians on one side of the Rocky Mountains can be done among Indians on the other side of the mountains. If the Christian people of Canada can be led to see their duty to the Indians—if they can look on it with eyes that He has opened, or can hear Him, as He gives us the blessing of our Christian civilization, and pointing us to the Indian, say, "Give ye them to eat,"—if they can aim not merely at elevating the Indian to the position of self-supporting citizens, but to the ranks of citizens of the kingdom of God, the first step shall have been taken towards fuller performance of our duty. It may be one of the good results of the recent cam-