



NORTH-WEST HALF-BREED.

peg, on the north Saskatchewan, settled chiefly by English Crees. A considerable number of Half-breeds are scattered in smaller settlements, or roam over the plains.

With regard to general civilization, Half-breeds rank all the way from a little lower than the average Indian to a little higher than the average white man. It is astonishing to what a depth even a white man will sometimes sink with reference to civilization. This deterioration is particularly noticeable in the case of Europeans, who, having spent the greater part of their lives in roaming over the western plains, have finally married Indian women. An instance in point occurs to my mind. A man of my acquaintance had early in life come out from the Orkneys to enter the service of the Hudson's Bay Company as a laborer. After many years' service the Orkney man left the Company, took unto himself a squaw, and settled down as a farmer. Instead, however, of his raising the squaw to his level, she succeeded in dragging him down to her's. It is true that this man and woman lived in a log house containing two rooms—an unusual luxury; but in their food, dress and manners, they resembled the lowest caste of Half-breeds. The man, for his station, was fairly well off, yet he was content to live after the manner of his wife's forefathers. He was satisfied, provided he had his tea (without sugar), his bannock, and his pemican. As to the children, they were brought up much like Indians, and were by far more familiar with the Cree language than English. The Orkney man himself had become more accustomed to Cree than his mother tongue, and in his tastes and pursuits he had become essentially a semi-civilized Indian. Although he had not a drop of native blood in his veins, his very appearance had assimilated itself to that of a Half-breed. His skin had become bronzed by exposure, and his hair had been allowed to grow like that of the natives. In

short, in all but birth, the man was the lowest kind of Half-breed. Such cases are not uncommon in the North-west, yet they are by no means the rule.

On the other hand, some Half-breeds are, in their mode of living, quite up to the average white man, and even a little beyond; but instances of either are rare. Two of the best conducted and most successful farms at Prince Albert, the settlement already referred to, were owned and carried on by Half-breeds. The best sample of wheat in 1878 was produced by one of them, and the best house in the settlement was built and owned by the other. Most of the "commissioned" officers in the Hudson's Bay service, being men of fair education and superior intelligence, have generally succeeded in raising their wives near to their own level, *i. e.* as near as was possible. But it must be remembered that these officers had many of the appurtenances of civilization about their trading posts, which contributed in no small degree to elevate and civilize their Half-breed Indian wives. Further, most of these "Factors" and "Traders," being men of means, were enabled to send their children to Europe or Canada to be educated, and thus the whole family was in time fitted to take its place in civilized society. An Irish Chief-factor in the Hudson's Bay service has assured the writer that the only satisfactory way in which to bring up a Half-breed family is to send the children out of the country for their education. He spoke from experience having himself married a Half-breed.

Physically, the Half-breeds are inferior to the whites. Although usually tall, straight and well-proportioned, they do not possess the stamina and ultimate endurance of the latter, and more readily break up under disease. This is in a measure due 1st. To the impoverished blood inherited from their Indian ancestors, and, 2nd. To exposure and inferior nourishment. The writer was intimately acquainted with several medical gentlemen who had an extensive practice amongst the natives, and their uniform testimony was that lung complaints and other diseases were largely prevalent, and that scarce a single native was free from a scrofulous habit. As bearing upon this subject, it may be stated that some travellers have expatiated on the absence of lung complaints among the Indians of North America, attributing such immunity to their out-door life, and to their breathing through their nostrils, but the testimony of the physicians already referred to, and the personal observation of the writer go to show that no such immunity exists, at least in the North-west, but rather the reverse, and that Indians are quite as careless in their breathing as the whites, if not more so. But notwithstanding his disadvantages, while health and life last, the Half-breed is very lithe and active when out in the open plain. To use a paradox he is here at home. On the prairie, where he has been accustomed to travel since babyhood, his native instincts are called into play. He sits on his horse as if he formed part of the animal, and nothing gives him greater pleasure than to "run