

and were put to good use. In November 1882 the agent writes that log-houses had 'gone up thick and fast on the Reserves, and were most creditable to the builders.' In many cases the logs were hewn, and in nearly all the houses fireplaces were built. In the same year another official—the Indian Commissioner—going through the Reserves, was surprised at the progress which he saw. He found comfortable dwellings, well-cultivated gardens, and good supplies of potatoes in root-houses. Most of the families had cooking stoves, for which they had sometimes paid as much as fifty dollars. He 'saw many signs of civilisation, such as cups and saucers, knives and forks, coal-oil lamps, and tables; and several of the women were baking excellent bread and performing other cooking operations.' Three years before these Indians were wild nomads, who lived in skin tents, hunted the buffalo, and had probably never seen a plough or an axe. These facts are recorded, not merely as gratifying to a sense of humanity, but for their bearing on the question of the natural capacity of uncivilised men. Impartial investigation and comparison will probably show that, while some of the aboriginal communities of the American continent are low in the scale of intellect, others are equal in natural capacity, and possibly superior, to the highest of the Indo-European nations. The fundamental importance of this fact (if such it is) to the science of anthropology must be the excuse for urging its consideration in connection with the present inquiry.

The Blackfeet have been known to the whites for about a century, and during that period have dwelt in or near their present abode. There is evidence, however, that they once lived further east than at present. The explorer Mackenzie, in 1789, found them holding the south branch of the Saskatchewan, from its source to its junction with the north branch. He speaks of four tribes—the Picaneux, Blood, and Blackfeet, and the Fall Indians (*Atsinas*), which latter tribe then numbered about 700 warriors. Of the three former tribes he says: 'They are a distinct people, speak a language of their own, and, I have reason to think, are travelling north-west, as well as the others just mentioned (the *Atsinas*); nor have I heard of any Indians with whose language that which they speak has any affinity.'

The result of Mr. McLean's inquiries confirms this opinion of the westward movement of these Indians in comparatively recent times. 'The former home of these people,' he writes, 'was in the Red River country, where, from the nature of the soil which blackened their moccasins, they were called Blackfeet.' This, it should be stated, is the exact meaning of *Siksika*, from *siksinam*, black; and *ka*, the root of *oqkatsh*, foot. The meaning of the other tribal names, *Kena* and *Piekanè*, is unknown. That they were once significant cannot be doubted, but the natives are now unable to explain them, and use them merely as appellatives.

The westward movement of the Blackfeet has probably been due to the pressure of the Crees upon them. The Crees, according to their own tradition, originally dwelt far east of the Red River, in Labrador and about Hudson's Bay. They have gradually advanced westward to the inviting plains along the Red River and the Saskatchewan, pushing the prior occupants before them by the sheer force of numbers. This will explain the deadly hostility which has always existed between the Crees and the Blackfeet.

It will seem, at first view, a perplexing circumstance that M. Lacombe, who, of all authorities, should be the best informed on this subject, and