

must, I fear, deepen into more positive enmity. The buffalo, the red man's sole means of subsistence, is rapidly disappearing; year by year the prairies, which once shook beneath the tread of countless herds of bison, are becoming denuded of animal life, and year by year the affliction of starvation comes with an ever increasing intensity upon the land. There are men still living who remember to have hunted buffalo on the shores of Lake Manitoba. It is scarcely twelve years since Fort Ellice, on the Assiniboine River, formed one of the principal posts of supply for the Hudson's Bay Company; and the vast prairies which flank the Southern and Western spurs of the Touch-wood Hills, now utterly silent and deserted, are still white with the bones of the migratory herds, which, until lately, roamed over their surface. Nor is this absence of animal life confined to the plains of the Qu'Appelle and of the Upper Assiniboine—all along the line of the North Saskatchewan, from Carlton to Edmonton House, the same scarcity prevails, and if further illustration of this decrease of buffalo be wanting I would state that, during the present winter, I traversed the plains from Red River to the Rocky Mountains without seeing even one solitary animal upon 1,200 miles of prairie. The Indian is not slow to attribute this lessening of his principal food to the presence of the white and half-breed settlers, whose active competition for pemican (valuable as supplying the transport service of the H. B. Co.) has led to this all but total extinction of the bison.

Nor does he fail to trace other grievances—some real, some imaginary—to the same cause. Wherever the half-breed settler or hunter has established himself he has resorted to the use of poison as a means of destroying the wolves and foxes which were numerous on the prairies. This most pernicious practice has had the effect of greatly embittering the Indians against the settler, for not only have large numbers of animals been uselessly destroyed, inasmuch as fully one-half the animals thus killed are lost to the trapper, but also the poison is frequently communicated to the Indian dogs, and thus a very important mode of winter transport is lost to the red man. It is asserted, too, that horses are sometimes poisoned by eating grasses which have become tainted by the presence of strychnine, and although this latter assertion may not be true, yet its effects are the same, as the Indian fully believes it. In consequence of these losses a threat has been made, very generally, by the natives, against the half-breeds, to the effect that if the use of poison was persisted in the horses belonging to the settlers would be shot.

Another increasing source of Indian discontent is to be found in the policy pursued by the American Government in their settlement of the countries lying South of the Saskatchewan. Throughout the Territories of Dakota and Montana a state of hostility has long existed between the Americans and the tribes of Sioux, Blackfeet, and Peagin Indians. This state of hostility has latterly been characterized, on the part of the Americans by a war of extermination; and the policy of "clearing out" the red man has now become a recognized portion of Indian warfare. Some of these acts of extermination find their way into the public records, many of them never find publicity. Among the former the attack made during the spring of 1870 by a large party of troops upon a camp of Peagin Indians close to the British boundary line will be fresh in the recollection of Your Excellency. The tribe thus attacked was suffering severely from small-pox, was surprised at day break by the soldiers, who, rushing in upon the tents, destroyed 170 men, women, and children, in a few moments. This tribe forms one of the four nations comprised in the Blackfeet league, and have their hunting grounds partly on British and partly on American territory. I have mentioned the presence of small-pox in connection with these Indians. It is very generally believed in the Saskatchewan that this disease was originally communicated to the Blackfeet Tribes by Missouri traders, with a view to the accumulation of robes, and this opinion, monstrous though it may appear, has been somewhat verified by the Western Press when treating of the epidemic last year. As I propose to enter at some length into the question of this disease at a later portion of this report I now only make allusion to it as forming one of the grievances which the Indian allirms he suffers at the hands of the white man.

In estimating the causes of Indian discontent as bearing upon the fu-