

drunken orgies; more than sixty Blackfeet have been murdered, and if there can be a transcript of hell upon earth it is here exhibited." As the result of this bloodshed the Indians wreaked vengeance on the first white man they met, so that no traveller was safe on the plains.

Before the Canadian Government was able practically to assume police powers over the Indians, another severe blow fell upon this people, which prepared them to submit to the changes necessary for their advancement in civilization. This calamity was the disappearance of the buffalo. In 1872 the plains, thronged by these animals, had been laid open by three great American railways, and, as might be expected, sportsmen and hide-hunters poured in on these natural preserves. From 1872 to 1874 not less than five million head had been slaughtered for their hides. This havoc was in contravention of treaties made by the United States with the Indians; but it seemed to be no one's duty to put a stop to it. Thus came the death-blow to the American bison—and soon no trace of the once countless herds was left but piles of bones bleaching on the prairies. From the Indian point of view the extinction of the buffalo was loss incalculable. For centuries the red skins had lived upon the buffalo—with its pelt (as has been said) they covered their wigwams, wrapped in the robe of the buffalo they were safe from the cold, from the flesh they gained stores of pemmican and dried meat for time of dearth, by means of its ribs they fashioned sledges, in its sinews they had the strongest thread. Twice a year—North in fall and winter, South in spring and summer—the migration of these herds brought food, fuel, raiment and shelter to the red man's lodge. The wholesale introduction of whiskey and the disappearance of the buffalo in the early

years of Confederation mark a crisis in Indian history; relief must come, or the man, like the beast, was doomed to perish.

At this juncture deliverance came through the intervention of the Canadian Government. Destruction from the southern whiskey-traders was stopped by the red cordon of mounted police; and starvation was averted by the supply of food from the public purse. A new system of government was now introduced to which the wild Indians of the West had been strangers. Heretofore they had looked up to the Hudson's Bay Company as their guides and benefactors; and, speaking generally, perhaps no system could have worked better than that pursued by the Company in order to utilize the Indians, *as Indians*. The Company perceived the value of these people as hunters and trappers, and also perceived the dangers they ran from the presence of white settlers and other pioneers of civilization. Unable to compete with the white settler as an equal, the red man was too proud to work as an inferior. Thereupon interposed the paternal control of the Company and protected them from the whites and from themselves. It encouraged hunting, discouraged tribal wars, repressed the use of spirits, and in times of scarcity supplied food. But thus treated, the Indian made, and could make, no advance; he was kept stationary on a low level of humanity, as a mere Indian. But the Company being superseded, vast was the responsibility assumed by Canada in the adoption of the Indian population, in its debased and pauperized condition. Then arose the problem for the Dominion—*what to do with the Indian?*

Happily the colonial practices and traditions of old Canada were available for this new phase of the Indian question, and the answer came: *No*