

GENERAL LITERATURE.

THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIANS.

[The following remarks are extracted from the Rev. Mr. Slight's New Work—which will shortly be ready for delivery. Orders for copies of the Work will be received at this office.—CHR. MIRROR.]

Having given as brief an account as I could of the various efforts to benefit this interesting class of men, especially so far as the Methodists have been concerned in them; I must now proceed to examine the benefits the Indians have realized by the introduction of Christianity among them. To any Christian philanthropist, it must be interesting to contemplate the blessings Christianity confers upon any heretofore pagan people. The difference between the pagan and Christian Indian is very striking, and only fully appreciated by such persons as have duly contemplated the appearance, manners, and domestic comforts of both classes. Leaving religion out of the question, and considering the Christian Indian in reference to temporal matters only; it would appear that they have repaid all the expense, labour, and pains bestowed upon them. But many of them are also truly pious and devoted Christians.

The Gospel is suited and adapted to man; and wherever there is a man there is a Saviour, no matter what circumstances may be attached to his condition. It is rather too late in the day to echo the outcry which used to be made concerning the hopelessness of attempts to evangelize the heathen. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation wherever it is faithfully and fully preached, and whenever cordially believed and received; and so many are the triumphant proofs of its power actually realized in the salvation and elevation of savage Indians, that it would require a greater degree of effrontery than is generally possessed, to reiterate the assertion. The Negroes, the Hottentots, and, lately, the North American Indians, have been excepted by men, who are wise above what is written. But, happily, we can make our appeal to facts, and to facts selected from different portions of the family of man, so as to form a wide induction, and from which a solid conclusion may be drawn. The eloquent Watson said, when he contemplated the rising state of the spiritual temple,—“It is a joyful sight, as it opens the gate of the most splendid and delightful hopes. What light breaks upon the gloom of ages, and the gloom of millions! What sweet and refreshing verdure springs up in the desert! What sounds of praise fall upon our ears from Negro huts and Indian cottages; the hum of schools, where heathen children read of Christ; the happy families that have been created by Christian truth and renewing grace; the eye of age lighted up with celestial scenes; the bed of death made soft with hope! ‘Where?’ say you? ‘Wherever you have made the attempt.’”

In the face of all this evidence and unvarying experience, Sir F. B. Head had the hardihood to come forward, and make assertions highly derogatory to Missionary operations. “The men,” he says, “having lost their hardihood, perish, or rather rot in numbers by consumption; while, as it regards the women, it is impossible for any accurate observer to refrain from remarking, that civilization, in spite of the pure, honest, and unremitting zeal of our Missionaries, by some accursed process, has blanched their babies' faces; in short, our philanthropy, like our friendship, has failed in its professions. Producing deaths by consumption, it has more than decimated its followers; and under the pretence of eradicating from the female heart the errors of a Pagan's

creed, it has implanted in their stead the germs of Christian guilt.

“What is the reason of all this?—Why the simple virtues of the Red Aborigines of America should, under all circumstances, fade before the vice and cruelty of the old world, is a problem which no one among us is competent to solve—the dispensation is as mysterious as its object is inscrutable. I have merely mentioned the facts, because I feel that before the subject of the Indians in Upper Canada can be fairly considered, it is necessary to refute the idea which generally exists in England, about the success which has attended the Christianizing and civilizing of the Indians. Whereas, I firmly believe every person of sound mind in this country, who is disinterested in their conversion, and who is acquainted with the Indian character, will agree,—

“1. That an attempt to make farmers of the Red men, has been, generally speaking, a complete failure.

“2. That congregating them for the purpose of civilization has implanted more vices than it has eradicated; and, consequently,

“3. That the greatest kindness we can perform towards these intelligent, simple-minded people, is to remove and fortify them, as much as possible, from all communication with the Whites.”

This is a daring blow at all missionary operations. While Sir Francis appears to yield some meed of praise to the missionaries, he boldly intimates, that the “errors of a Pagan's creed,” and the “simple virtues” of a drunken, cruel, barbarous, savage people, are superior to the blessings of Christianity; and the still bolder assertion that the idea of success having attended the efforts to Christianize and civilize the Indians is refutable, and that more vices have been implanted thereby than eradicated. Whereas, there is no proof attempted for all this, only a *belief* expressed that all *disinterested* persons of *sound mind*, will agree with him. Now I happen to know, that there are many persons not at all biased, and who might make some pretensions to sanity, who will not agree to the assertion. I for one, at the risk of having these imputations applied, and the addition of want of *accuracy of observation*, will not shrink from coming forward to *disagree*.

If these assertions are facts, then they falsify all our statements and nullify all our efforts. We must cease at once all our operations, and we can never more, either on a platform or in a report, state that good has been effected. No facts are mentioned; but we have facts to offer counter to the assertion.

I have already considered the last of these propositions, which Sir F. has deduced from his previous remarks, in a former chapter. This is the result at which His Excellency aimed all his statements. The intention of his Excellency was to form a pretext to banish the poor Indians from their lands, their improvements, and their comfortable homes. But I think I have sufficiently demonstrated that it would not be the greatest kindness which we can perform towards them; but an absolute and glaring evil, and injustice!

If the premises Sir Francis has laid down were true, still his conclusion would not follow as a matter of course. The conclusion ought to be: endeavour to find out the reasons why these attempts do not produce the desired end; and having discovered the cause, remove it, that the effects may cease. But mine will not be a hard task to prove, that the premises themselves are *false*. This is the task which now devolves upon me.

Lord Glenelg, himself a pious Christian, and for many years the warm friend of Christianizing the world—to whom, as Secretary of

State for the Colonial Department, the Despatches were addressed—was better instructed, and better disposed, than to credit all these assertions; and, therefore, thus rebukes Sir Francis: “I should most reluctantly yield to the conviction, that, in the prosecution of the object, we must abandon the hope of imparting to the Indian the blessings of Christianity, on the ground, that those blessings were necessarily more than counterbalanced by the evils with which they have been unhappily associated. I shall rather be disposed to attribute those evils to the counteracting tendency, which, under unfavourable circumstances, ordinary intercourse with white men has had on the instruction and example of Christian teachers, than to any inherent inaptitude in the Indians for the reception of a religion, in itself peculiarly qualified to elevate and raise the standard of morality.”

Let us consider,

1. Their industry, and, consequently, the increase of the comforts of life, and their elevation in society, are promoted by their instruction in Christianity. Their capability and willingness to cultivate the soil, has in these Despatches, been denied; yea, the contrary has been taken for self-evident:—“The attempt,” it is affirmed, “to make farmers” of them, is in general a complete failure—“it is against his nature to cultivate the soil.” I grant it is against his habits; but a habit for such an employment may be—has been acquired. Every one must believe, that it is a difficult matter, and must be a work of time, to take a wandering savage, and to bring him to such a state as to possess all the diligence, regularity, and application necessary to be a successful farmer. And we do not blush to say, that the Indians are not, in this respect, every thing we could desire. Those who are acquainted with history well know the great difficulties which always have attended the bringing of roving tribes to the condition of settled husbandmen. Gibbon affords abundant evidence to substantiate this remark. He states, that the highly-cultivated lands of Europe, which were overrun by the barbarians, were suffered to become wastes. And let it be remembered, that the Indians, when first emerging from a state of barbarism, *have forests to subdue*; but this, to a certain degree, they accomplish. We do, however, without fear of reasonable contradiction, say, they, as a body, are gradually and regularly *advancing* to such habits, and to a respectable standing in society.

The Credit Indians had nearly nine hundred acres enclosed for pasturage and tillage. The whole Reserve is, I am informed, three thousand acres in extent. This, therefore, forms nearly one-third of the whole Reserve—which is as much, or more, than the major part of the settlers in a new country have cleared, in the same number of years. Each man has fifty acres allotted him. There is scarcely one who has not some improvements on his lot. Chief Sawyer said, the young men have been a little backward for the last year and a half, in consequence of the discouragements they have received. They did not feel a wish to improve lands from which they might be immediately removed, and in which in fact they had no permanent possession. They raise grain of all kinds, hay, potatoes, and other roots, apples, and vegetables. They also raise pork and beef, have milk and butter. They possess cattle, horses, and pigs. They own two public stores, in which they receive produce and goods as forwarding merchants—two saw mills, one blacksmith's shop, one carpenter's shop. They are the proprietors of two-thirds of the shares in the Credit Harbour Company. They had built eight or nine barns, and twenty-four or twenty-five hou-