

passed through the most critical era of transition from barbarism to civilization; and the assimilation of their habits to those of the white race is so far from threatening their gradual extinction that it is producing results directly opposite.

The official reports of the government, published in 1869 and many previous years, furnish cautious but deliberate and concurrent testimony to beneficial progress in the modes of life of the Indians in Ontario and Quebec, the provinces where they are most numerous. One of the most positive indications on this point is their numerical increase during the last quarter of a century.

Recent evidence as to this will be found in the tabular statement annexed hereto, (see Appendix A,) showing, during the last year, additions to their population in twenty-one of the settlements, and a decrease only in five. In every instance of diminution the amount is insignificant, except in that of the Manitoulin Island; and inquiry has fully satisfied me that migration, and not mortality, is the cause of the apparent decrease in it. The diminution in the other four tribes is in the aggregate only twenty-three in the number of individuals. Each of these tribes are so small as to compel frequent intermarriages, and thus induce disease; and there is reason to believe that migration, and absorption into the white race, have taken place to an extent sufficient to counterbalance the deficiencies.

In the first step from the original condition of the Indians, the disappearance of the larger animals on which they depend for food and clothing brings constant privation, and frequent famine. Even when not entirely ignorant of the methods of gaining a livelihood by agricultural and pastoral pursuits, their ancient and hereditary habits render them averse to the patient toil they have been accustomed to regard as dishonorable. The temptations and discouragement they encounter at this period render them an easy prey to vices, which not only further demoralize, but lead them to physical destruction.

As the Canadian tribes have escaped from the sufferings of the state of transition, have ceased to wander as destitute Pariahs on the borders of the civilization to which they were aliens, and have located on farms, the natural result of enjoying substantial habitations, comfortable clothing, and proper food, in sufficient quantities, has been to render epidemics less frequent, and less fatal, and to check the ravages of consumption, and febrile attacks consequent upon the severe hardships and despondency necessarily experienced, when former means of subsistence have been lost and no others have been gained.

Another prominent reason for an increase instead of a diminution in the number of these Indians is the provision made for adequate medical attendance upon them, by which they, to a considerable extent, escape the sacrifice of life consequent upon contagious and other diseases induced by proximity to our own race. It is the practice of the governmental department having the various tribes in charge, to require competent medical practitioners, at periods sufficiently near each other, to make so general a vaccination as to leave little room for fear of the visitations of small-pox, by which formerly whole families were sometimes swept away.

From year to year the progress of civilization has long continued to advance. In various parts of the newer regions of Canada, Indians for whose benefit lands have been set apart are evincing an increased desire to avail themselves of the opportunity of becoming settled, and they appreciate the establishment of schools as an additional inducement for occupying permanent homes. Education is prized among