

The four acts have evidently been based on the conviction that if the Indians were indiscriminately permitted to alienate or convey the lands they own as occupants, many of them would soon be reduced to a state of pauperism, while others might safely be trusted with the same rights of proprietorship as the whites now possess. Individual character asserts its peculiarities of strength or weakness among the Indians in as marked a manner as among any people in the world. Industry, ability, and integrity are strongly developed in many members of every tribe; and these traits, like other similarities, are to a considerable extent hereditary in certain families. Hitherto the original system of government by the Indians themselves, as well as the policy adopted towards them, has tended to maintain the improvident as well as the careful and industrious, to check the accumulation of wealth in the hands of individuals, as well as to prevent the extreme of poverty. Those who are impatient of the slow progress made towards civilization will see reason to moderate their ardor when they reflect upon the long lapse of the many centuries through which our own race has attained its present pre-eminence.

A suggestion has lately been made to the Canadian government, and is said to be under its consideration, that, for one generation, the Indians, or some of them, should be allowed to sell land, but only among themselves. It has been thought they would thus by safe degrees be further initiated into habits of forethought and thrift. Even this intermediary proposal seems liable to serious objections, unless accompanied by various restrictions, such as that no contract for sale of real estate should be binding unless made before the visiting superintendent of the district where the land is, and renewed at a time when ample opportunity has been given for reflection. To this might be added an adequate legal scrutiny into the sufficiency of the consideration or purchase money given and received for the land, and into some other circumstances attendant on the transaction.

The Canadian commissioners of 1858 stated, as one of the results of their inquiries, that they were unable to discover any reason why the Indians should not in time take their place among the rest of the population in Canada. A laborious and impartial investigation, conducted with the benefit of their observations and the additional data of the last twelve years, has led me also to the conclusion that although the Indians cannot be suddenly transformed from their original condition of savage hunters to that of farmers and mechanics, they are capable of civilization, and that the well-directed and persistent efforts made in Canada have been so far successful as to leave little room for doubt that their future triumph will be complete. Whatever may be the ultimate result, those who have aided in this honorable effort may safely be assured that their country will be known in history as having striven to do justice to the aborigines, whom the white man found in posses-

you, and will only observe that among us we have no prisons; we have no pompous parade of courts; we have no written laws; and yet judges are as highly revered among us as they are among you, and their decisions are as much regarded.

"Property, to say the least, is as well guarded, and crimes as impartially punished. We have among us no splendid villains above the control of our laws. Daring wickedness is here never suffered to triumph over helpless innocence. The estates of widows and orphans are never devoured by enterprising sharpers. In a word, we have no robbery under the color of law. No person among us desires any other reward for performing a brave and worthy action but the consciousness of having served his nation. Our wise men are called fathers; they truly sustain that character. They are always accessible—I will not say to the meanest of our people, for we have none mean but such as render themselves so by their vices."