

OUR INDIANS.

DISCUSSION AS TO THEIR CONDITION AND WANTS.

The following paper was read by the Rev. Dr. Bryce at a recent weekly meeting of the Y. M. C. A..

During the summer it was my lot to be for a considerable time in the country lying to the east of us, known as the Lake of the Woods and Rainy River districts. Though now the Canadian Pacific Railway runs through the region on its way from Winnipeg to Lake Superior, yet the most familiar sights that meet the eye are bands and parties of the aborigines of our country, not now decked in the fantastic garb in which the red man was wont to disport himself, but still forming a picturesque feature of the region. The Indian agent found here and there throughout that wide district, in charge of a certain number of bands, is a representative of the wise care taken under British control of the inferior races committed to our rule, while the Indian trade is a very considerable portion of the business done by the merchants of Rat Portage and Fort Frances. It is well for us who have come to the Northwest to take possession of the land to make homes for ourselves to remember that we have dispossessed the Indian. No doubt the Indian was failing fully to utilize and develop the country over which in canoe and snowshoe he roamed, and a certain school of political economists will tell us he has consequently no claim upon us; that the weaker goes to the wall; and it serves him right for being weaker. I am sure we endorse no such hideous defecation of Force as that. Since we have taken the red man's country we should remember our obligations to him. But in addition to this the poverty, misery and ignorance of the Indian appeal to the sympathy of any one who has a spark of generosity or pity in him. If men are impelled to cross the ocean to better the condition of heathen and degraded nations, surely the cry of the race disappearing before the onset of the white man, like mist before

the rising sun, cannot be unheeded by us. Let me name the

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around us. Winnipeg stands at a somewhat important point as the meeting place of two, if not three Indian peoples. East and west of us are the Algonquins. This great Indian family, coming up the Atlantic coast, on the east slope of the Alleghanies, has flowed west through rock-land and forest, despising the art of agriculture probably because its habitat was sterile. It crossed the St. Lawrence, crossed the Ottawa and ascended it to James Bay, displaced the peoples north of the Great Lakes and Georgian Bay, and then flowed on to the west. West of the Ottawa it has generally borne the name of Ojibway or Chippewa. Large-bodied, somewhat coarse in feature, but persistent in his advance, the Ojibway met the Hochelagaus and Hurons, and crushed them out against their enemies advancing from the south, the Iroquois. The Ojibways gradually occupied the rock country north of Lake Superior to Lake of the Woods, crossed Lake Winnipeg and took possession of the Saskatchewan, now taking the name of Kristinaux or Crees, until, gaining a footing on the prairies west of Lake Manitoba, they are henceforth known as the Crees of the plains, while those following the woody skirting of the river retain the name of the Wood Crees. A later portion of this western current settled on the borders of Lake Winnipeg and extended down the slope to Hudson's Bay, receiving the name Swampy Crees or curtly Swampies, and were called also by the French Muskegons, from their dwelling-place in the country of Muskegs. It was to a still later portion of the same stream that the early French voyageurs gave the name of Saulteaux, viz: to the Indians of Winnipeg river and contiguous districts in memory of the fact related by the Indians themselves that their ancestors came from far-