

detach the most intelligent and worthy individuals from their tribes and absorb them in the white population. The experiment failed from want of co-operation on the part of the Indians, whose general sentiment appears to be that if members of their several communities should now or hereafter avail themselves of permission to sell their lands, white men of a low *caste* would flock in, and reside upon the reservations, and introduce temptations to intemperance and profligacy.

The Indians who would thus be enfranchised and separated would be men of good character and considerable intelligence, who naturally have influence in their tribe, and enjoy in it a higher relative status than they would be likely to occupy among the whites, who would probably treat them as inferiors. So far as I have been able to learn, it appears that all such plans for enfranchisement and absorption are likely to prove nugatory, and that the actual elevation of the Indians might be better attained by considering the right to dispose of their land as a question apart and distinct from enfranchisement, to which either the test of property or intelligence might be applied, thus admitting the most thrifty of them to the ordinary political rights of white men, without at the same time offering any inducement or opportunity for them to renounce affiliation with their own people, whose prospects of advancement would undoubtedly be injured if legislation should result in the withdrawal of the best men from the Indian communities. The tribes would thus gradually become little more than sub-municipalities or petty states, with some special characteristics, but in the main under the ordinary laws of the Dominion at large.

The recently enacted plan of enfranchisement, and permitting an Indian to devise his land to such of his children as he may choose, tends to strengthen paternal authority and the bonds of the family. It seems doubtful if this experiment will be more effective than its predecessors, or is better adapted to the actual state of the case. The Indian father may not be desirous of conferring upon his children the right to dispose of their land. But the humane motive of the enactment cannot be misunderstood, and the result will be regarded with great interest.*

* The peculiarities of the Indian character, and the special requirements of the semi-civilized condition in Canada, appear to create among the Indians sentiments and opinions seldom avowed, but which were admirably expressed by Captain Brant, who, in one of his letters, said:

"Your letter came safe to hand. To give you entire satisfaction, I must, I perceive, enter into the discussion of a subject on which I have often thought. My thoughts were my own, and being so different from the ideas entertained among your people, I should certainly have carried them with me to the grave had I not received your obliging favor.

"You ask me, then, whether in my opinion civilization is favorable to human happiness. In answer to the question it may be answered that there are degrees of civilization, from cannibals to the most polite of European nations. The question is not, then, whether a degree of refinement is not conducive to happiness, but whether you or the natives of this land have attained this happy medium. On this subject we are at present, I presume, of very different opinions. You will, however, allow me in some respects to have had the advantage of you in forming my sentiments. I was, sir, born of Indian parents, and lived while a child among those whom you are pleased to call savages. I was afterwards sent to live among the white people, and educated at one of your schools, since which period I have been honored much beyond my deserts by an acquaintance with a number of principal characters both in Europe and America. After all this experience, and after every exertion to divest myself of prejudice, I am obliged to give my opinion in favor of my own people. I will now, as much as I am able, collect together and set before you some of the reasons that have influenced my judgment on the subject now before us. In the government you call civilized, the happiness of the people is constantly sacrificed to the splendor of empire. Hence your codes of crime and civil laws have had their origin; hence your dungeons and prisons. I will not enlarge on an idea so singular in civilized life, and perhaps disagreeable to