



AN INDIAN CAMP.

methods that have been practised for generations by a race, and adopt, without even elementary knowledge, an entirely new mode of life?

Energetic settlers in the districts newly opened up for occupation, full of the accumulated velocity of nineteen centuries, stigmatize the Indian as lazy, when he is only dispirited and ignorant.

How are the old, or even the middle-aged among them, who have been trained only to ride and shoot, suddenly to turn to the arts practised by the invaders of their hunting-grounds, and provide for their own wants and the wants of their own families? It is much easier to ask this question than to answer it, still I have seen, on reservations where missionaries have been at work for ten or twelve years, many cheering signs, that the Indian had the ability and the will to help himself, in very fair proportion to the amount of encouragement and assistance bestowed upon him. I have seen Indians, both men and women, who had families about them when the missionaries arrived among them, and who, therefore, had passed the age when it is easy to *begin* to study, yet had manifested sufficient perseverance to learn to read, and who did read diligently their Bibles and the newspapers printed in their language. These too were the ones who had made most progress in the arts of civilization; these were the men who had enclosed fields under cultivation, and who provided winter food for their animals, instead of turning them out on the wind-swept prairie to look for it themselves, and live or die as a mild or severe winter might determine.

These were the men who cut and hauled wood for sale or for family use, and these studious women were the ones who made the best attempts at cleanliness and order. Their number was not

at all discouragingly small, and it was yearly increasing.

What the native religion was I never could clearly understand; they were averse to explaining its mysteries to people who like missionaries entertained such very different ideas. I think it is a vague and vanishing superstition, many of its rites being suppressed by agents as having a tendency to excite discontent, and to retard their material progress. Their favorite fetish is an oval stone, such as may be occasionally picked up on the prairies. This is painted in a particular manner and placed upon an earthen mound with raised approaches, also of earth, and hedged round with pebbles or shells, and to it offerings were made done up in bags and tied to a pole. They were always a melancholy set who had these sanctuaries, either

morose, or more than usually afflicted with the scrofulous disorders so common among them. They all had enough to make them melancholy, when they chose to think of the past, the present and the future, yet their dispositions on the whole seemed cheerful and kind. These were Sioux,—other tribes may be different. The young girls were very merry, and the older women very fond of a joke, the men more grave.

The position of the women did not seem to be much if at all, inferior to that of the men; they did very much as they pleased, and the older women seemed to command much influence in family matters. To be sure, women carried water, and chopped wood, but that seemed quite natural when the men were absent fighting or hunting, and the women had not very complicated house-keeping to look after.

Now that fighting and hunting are things of the past, the men do these things in nearly all cases. But the real hope of the race lies, of course, in the children, and if one saw nothing but the schools, he would find it hard to believe that there was any doubt of capacity of Indians to receive education. They learn to read and write as readily as any children, and look as nice and keep as neat, and are quite as well behaved and easy to manage. Though there is hardly any native music, worthy the name, they can nearly all be taught to sing, and there is always an eager group around the organ, upon which they have not the slightest difficulty in picking out the hymns they hear in church, not altogether by ear; they learn the notes from each other, and play them from the book. They are very imitative, and it used to be a source of much amusement to us to watch the performances of the new arrivals. After a bath, a visit to