

The tribe is scattered as in the days of Cartier, and spreads through the region over which Nicolas Denys held patent as lieutenant governor in 1658 from "the Cap de Campseaux as far as the Cap des Roziers." There are fifty-six small settlements or reservations scattered all the way from the Gaspé peninsula to Cape Breton, the largest of all being at Ristigouche, the seat of the Capuchin monastery and church of St Ann and the metropolis of the tribe, where they number 506. Their segregation into widely scattered but numerous settlements is unusual in the present disposition of the Indian tribes and might seem to expose them, by the very fact of freer contact with the whites, to variation and change. They speak the French in French communities and the English in English, but for business purposes only. Among themselves their own language alone is spoken and without variations, no matter how wide apart their homes may be. "It is certain that the race is not disappearing either by extinction or by absorption" (F. P.). This fact is all the more noteworthy because these Indians have been in no wise exempt from the curse of alcohol,¹ tuberculosis and syphilis. These evils have played havoc here, as they have and do today elsewhere among the aborigines. It may be that their general poverty (for there is a total absence among them of the occasional prosperity one sees among the other tribes) and their ignorance of hygienic living will eventually make inroads on their vitality which the life out of doors may not be able to combat — and here lies at the hand of their legal guardians and of their white neighbors an immediate duty.

I could not venture to write even in summary the part the Micmac tribe has played in history. It is knit close to the story of early French settlement of Acadia. The enmities of the French were ever its enmities, and this hostility to the English was not based on religious grounds alone. The difference in the attitude of the French and the English toward the Indians is of common knowledge. By the French they were never regarded as subjects of the French king so much as his wards and so by the French clergy they were ever treated not only with gentleness but with

¹ Long ago Denys painted in vivid colors the fearful effects of the Frenchman's liquor on these savages. For this, in those days of the 1600's, they spent their very lives; all the spoils of the winter's hunt were exchanged for liquor and the summer was one long debauch till the fishermen sailed away from the coast. All this has passed and yet today with them, as with all the aborigines, firewater makes the Indian into a savage again and brings out to the surface all that religion has helped to bury.