

Indians who, with better opportunities, are further from supporting themselves now than they were twelve or fourteen years ago. They have lost ambition and self-reliance and are content to remain pensioners upon the Government. And yet it is doubtful if any material modifications would not impair rather than help the system. What is needed is good men to carry out the regulations rather than any tinkering of the regulations themselves. Owing to their isolated position and to their distance from headquarters much latitude must be allowed to the Indian agent and his subordinate. The agent, therefore, wields a great deal of power and if he is the right kind of a man his personal influence goes far as a civilizing force. But the right kind of a man is hard to get, and a great deal of his work is disagreeable and thankless. It is his duty to teach the Indians to earn their own living by farming, a kind of work for which they have no natural aptitude, and for which they have a traditional contempt; to use the rations he distributes, for the relief or averting of distress and not for the staving off of the importunate threats of able-bodied loafers; to deprecate the criticisms of a party press, always watchful and not always just; to act as a buffer between the red-tapeism of a departmental officer and the impatience under all rule and control which marks savages who know no "must" save that of hunger and the elements; to remember always that above the issuing of rations and the tabulating of returns, his work is to make the Indian a worthy citizen and a better man. Such a man, says some incredulous reader, is a missionary, not an Indian agent. Are there agents of this kind? There are. Not so many perhaps as there are of the other kind whose description is familiar to newspaper readers, but there are some. For men of this stamp the duties may be difficult but the issue is not doubtful. The Indians under such care show that they are capable of civilization. Good regulations are important enough but good men to carry them out are of even more value. For the vital question must always be that which every father must settle in his own family—how to mingle firmness with leniency, constraint with freedom. We call the Indians the wards of the nation; they call themselves the children of the Great Mother, and astute as they are in many things their relation to the Government for the present at least can only be that of minors. The Government,