

INDIANS AND STRONG DRINK.

BY ROBIN RUSTLER.

MINEGESHING, the Christian chief of the Chippewa Indians, visited some of the cities of the Eastern States a few years ago, and upon his return, the minor chiefs of the tribe gathered around him and said : "Tell us what of all you saw was most wonderful." Deeply he meditated and then said ; "When I was in the great church and heard the great organ, and all the pale-faces stood up and said "The Lord is in His Holy Temple ; Let all the earth keep silent," I thought ; "The pale-faces have had this religion all these four hundred years and did not give it to us, and now it is late. That is the most wonderful thing I saw." The chiefs looked upon him and said ; "That is, indeed, most wonderful ! Now, it is late. It is indeed noon." The red men hate the double-tongued Indian, and when they have been taught the holier principles and nobler virtues of the Book of God as possessed by the white man, they fail to understand the non-agreement of his principles with his practice. We do not find in all the native literature of the Indian tribes any Bacchanalian odes and songs in praise of intoxicating drinks. I have listened to Black-foot songs of love and war, but never have my ears been filled with the maudlin strains of drunken ditties, although many have spoken in its favor and drunk freely of the deadly potion. The Indians were indebted to the white man for the rum, brandy, whiskey and gin, whose poisonous vapors and death-dealing properties have slain, upon their native soil, countless thousands of the aborigines of our land. The drinking public called it *Aqua vitæ*, the water of life, but it was named by Act of Parliament, *Aqua mortis*, the water of death. The Indians did not look so kindly upon it, as they spake of it as *Fire water*, the white man's drink, and in a few instances it has been called *New milk*. In the Archives of the Seminary of Quebec there is a letter on the liquor question, probably the oldest document relating to that question as it affected Canada. It was written by a French Roman Catholic Missionary about 1705, and gave the history of French brandy in Canada. In the early history, during Bishop Laval's time and subsequent to that period, there were two parties in the Dominion on this question, the liquor party and the prohibition party. The liquor party consisted of the fur traders who were supported by the French governors ; and the prohibition party comprised the missionaries, who were sustained by the Church. Thus was Church and State arrayed against each other. The importers at Quebec sold the stuff to the small fur traders. The Missionary who makes these statements says that the importers adulterated it by putting in salt and water. Modern arguments were in use in those early times for the continuance of the traffic. The whiskey traders said that the brandy traffic was beneficial to the State, inasmuch as it collected the import duty. Brandy was