

testimony, he becomes utterly confused, unsettled and suspicious—to the White man, as a white man, the Indian has no dislike, on the contrary he is pretty certain to receive him with kindness and friendship, provided always that the new-comer will adopt the native system, join the hunting camp, and live on the plains, but to the white man as a settler, or hunter on, his own account, the Crees and Black feet are in direct antagonism. Ownership, in any particular portion of the soil by an individual is altogether foreign to men, who, in the a course of single summer, roam over 500 miles of prairie. In another portion of this report, I hope to refer again to the Indian question, when treating upon that clause in my instructions which relates exclusively to Indian matters. I have alluded here to missionary enterprise, and to the Indian generally, as both subjects are very closely connected with the state of affairs in the Saskatchewan.

Next in importance to the native race is the half-breed element in the population which now claims our attention.

The persons composing this class are chiefly of French descent—originally of no fixed habitation, they have, within the last few years, been induced by their clergy to form scattered settlements along the line of the North Saskatchewan. Many of them have emigrated from Red River and others are either the discharged servants of the Hudson's Bay Company, or the relatives of persons still in the employment of the Company. In contradistinction to this latter class they bear the name of "Free Men," and if freedom from all restraint, general inaptitude for settled employment, and love for the pursuits of hunting be the characteristics of Free men then they are eminently entitled to the name they bear. With very few exceptions they have preferred to adopt that exciting but precarious means of living—the chase, to follow the more certain methods of agriculture. Almost the entire summer is spent by them upon the plains, where they carry on the pursuit of the buffalo in large and well organized bands, bringing the produce of their hunt to trade with the Hudson's Bay Company.

In winter they generally reside at their settlements, going to the nearer plains in small parties, and dragging in the frozen Buffalo meat for the supply of the Company's posts. This preference for the wild life of the prairies by bringing them more in contact with their savage brethren, and by removing them from the means of acquiring knowledge and civilization has tended in no small degree to throw them back in the social scale, and to make the establishment of a prosperous colony almost an impossibility—even starvation, that most potent inducement to toil, seems powerless to promote habits of industry and agriculture. During the winter season they frequently undergo periods of great privation, but like the Indian they refuse to credit the gradual extinction of the buffalo, and persist in still depending on that animal for their food—were I to sum up the general character of the Saskatchewan half-breed population, I would say: They are gay, idle, dissipated, unreliable and ungrateful, in a measure brave, hasty to form conclusions, and quick to act upon them, possessing extraordinary power of endurance, and capable of undergoing immense fatigue, yet scarcely ever to be depended on in critical moments; superstitious and ignorant, having a very deep rooted distaste to any fixed employment, opposed to the Indian, yet widely separated from the white man—altogether a race presenting, I fear, a hopeless prospect to those who would attempt to frame, from such materials, a future nationality. In the appendix will be found a statement showing the population and extent of the half-breed settlements in the West. I will here merely remark that the principal settlements are to be found in the Upper Saskatchewan, in the vicinity of Edmonton House, at which post their trade is chiefly carried on.

Among the French half-breed population there exists the same political feeling which is to be found among their brethren in Manitoba, and the same sentiments which produced the out-break of 1869-70, are undoubtedly existing in the small communities of the Saskatchewan. It is no easy matter to understand how the feeling of distrust towards Canada, and a certain hesitation to accept the Dominion Government, first entered into the mind of the half-breed, but undoubtedly such distrust and hesitation have made themselves apparent in the Upper Saskatchewan, as in Red River, though in a much less formidable degree, in fact, I may fairly close