

The Indian Women of the Western Provinces.

In the Canadian West, that is in Manitoba, the North-West Territories and British Columbia, there are 46,289 Indians, of whom only 10,061 are pagans. The rest belong to one or other of the Christian churches, the Roman Catholic Church heading the list with 16,606 adherents. The Indians live on "Reserves," scattered at considerable distances apart over the area named, and are cared for by the Government in a very paternal fashion.

Twenty-five years have elapsed since Canada adopted this policy, and the results of a quarter of a century's contact with civilization are as evident from the condition of the Indian woman now, as compared with then, as from any of the other changes that have taken place. The Indians belong to various tribes, the principal ones being the Crees, Bloods, Sioux, Blackfeet, and Piegans. All the tribes have different customs, which are, however, identical in principle, the differences being only of detail. It is evident, therefore, that all that can be attempted in the space at my disposal is a rapid glance at a few general characteristics.

In order better to recognize the present status of Indian women, it will be well to recall their condition before the civilizing influences began to operate,—twenty-five years ago. Their lot was indeed hard. Polygamy was the general practice. The richer an Indian was (his wealth being horses), the more wives he sought, or rather bought, for the maidens were sold by their paternal relatives to become the wives of those who proffered the greatest number of horses in exchange. The prices ranged from two horses to twenty, according to the attractions of the bride. There might be love on the part of the young couple, and indeed a sort of courtship was common, but the purchase had to be made all the same; and the Indian regards the white people's custom of giving a dowry as a

