

terprising foreign settlers, to its political relations, and the prospect of its future importance as embracing a commercial and powerful nation, for the purpose of pressing on your minds the more deeply the critical situation of the present occupants of the soil, and leading you to make more prompt and strenuous exertions, and to offer more fervent prayers, that the gospel may have free course among them before the intercourse of unprincipled men shall corrupt them by their vices, or the grasping hand of avarice shall despoil them of their lands, and either exterminate them at once, or by successive steps, perfidiously drive them, filled with prejudice against all who bear the name of white men, back to the mountain fastnesses, almost inaccessible to christian benevolence.

Respecting most of the tribes occupying the country to which you are destined, we possess little information worthy to be relied upon. When first visited, in 1790, the country, especially along the coast, was regarded as being populous for an Indian country; and though the numbers were undoubtedly diminished by the wars provoked by the traders, and by the diseases, the murderous weapons, and the more murderous liquors, which were introduced among them from this source, yet large tribes were then found along the shores. Lewis and Clarke, however, suppose that at least fifteen years earlier than the date first named, the small-pox, that destroyer of every savage people which it visits, and which is even now said to be depopulating whole tribes east of the mountains, had swept over most of these western tribes. The old Indians, scarred by the disease, told the mournful tale, and pointed out the ruins of villages, then visible, which had been thus unpeopled. These explorers enumerate thirty-nine tribes, which they visited, or of which they received accounts, embracing in all about 80,000 souls. This estimate probably embraced but a part of the tribes occupying the country west of the mountains, which is usually regarded as belonging to the United States; and with respect to the numbers of these, can be considered but an approximation to the truth.

The Rev. Mr. Parker, who visited the country two years ago, under the direction of the Board, mentions nineteen tribes residing between the mountains and the falls of the Columbia, embracing about 20,000 souls; and between thirty and forty bands below the falls, and stretching along the coast between the forty-second and fifty-fifth parallels of latitude, numbering about 36,000; making the whole Indian population between those parallels, and west of the mountains, about 56,000. But in these estimates also, nothing more than an approximation to accuracy can be expected. All recent travellers agree that six or eight years ago another wasting disease swept along the coast, cutting down from one half to three quarters of many tribes, and leaving others almost extinct. The terrible disease which is now raging among the tribes on the head waters of the Missouri, and northernly towards lake Winnipeg, according to recent intelligence, which appears to be entitled to credit, has probably proved fatal to 25,000 of those neglected and injured men, sweeping them from their beautiful prairies by thousands in a stroke. The overflowing scourge is now passing through, and who can tell where it shall stay? What the Lord proposes to do with this unhappy race is known only to him. He brought us to their shores, bearing in our hands

the gospel, and all the other means requisite to secure to them intelligence and happiness in this life, and holiness and salvation in the life to come; he has kept them lying as it were at our doors for two centuries; given us access to them and influence over them, to see whether we would stretch forth our hand to befriend and save them; and after waiting long, and seeing that, excepting a few feeble and intermitted efforts, we have done nothing but defraud, and oppress, and waste them, he seems now to be taking from us the opportunity of performing this work of mercy, and is calling them to the judgment, not to testify to our beneficence and paternal care, but to our persevering indifference and wrongs. Never did another christian people have so noble a race of savage men placed so within their reach and control, to whom they might impart the blessings of civilization and Christianity, and whom they might preserve to all future ages, a monument of the elevating and improving tendency of their arts, and the purifying and saving efficacy of their religion. How have we executed this philanthropic trust? Go back and search for the many tribes which covered New England and the Middle and Southern States two centuries ago, and which by contact with us have vanished from the earth like the morning dew,—and there find a reply. Instead of remaining, honorable monuments of our good faith and guardian care, the story of their wrongs and extermination must go down to all future ages, a memorial of our perfidy and abuse. What true friend of his country but must weep at the thought, how great our honor might have been, and how great our shame is!

But, even at this late day, we must do what we can. A few remain. Let us, as far as possible, make amends for past neglect, by increased exertions in future. If they are all to be hurried from the earth, and after an age or two more, not a tribe is to remain, let us offer Christ and salvation to as many as we can reach, hoping to prepare a remnant, at least, to enter a better land above, and thus mitigate the curse which impends over us for our past injustice and neglected duty.

But it is said daily. Do what you will for the Indian, he will be an Indian still. If it is meant that their habits and character cannot be changed in a year, or completely in a single generation, it may be true; and so it is true of every other race of men. But if it be meant that a persevering course of kindness and instruction will not effect this change, the implied charge is both unphilosophical and unchristian, and it is in opposition to historical facts. What band of savage men were ever more rapidly and thoroughly transformed in character and habits, than Elliot's colony at Natick? The Stockbridge Indians, a large portion of the Senecas and Tuscaroras, the Cherokees and the Choctaws, are living examples of this transformation. Men who bring this charge, expect too much, and expect it too soon; without reflecting how entire the change must be, in taste, estimates of things, habits, prejudices and possessions; and without reflecting how ill-adapted, inadequate, and intermitted have been the means used to effect the change. It is fairly questionable whether any race of men were ever more able to understand the disadvantages of their own habits and manner of life, or more ready to adopt a change which appeared to them practicable, than are the North American Indians.