

While the condition of pupilage in which the Indians are settled on farms not too near the busy centers of trade has undoubtedly been hitherto the most favorable for the Indian, and saved some of the tribes from extinction, it is regarded in Canada as merely the step towards the desired end, and not as the proper object of the final policy in regard to them.

In 1849 that accomplished statesman the late Lord Elgin, who was held in equal respect on both sides of the boundary between Canada and the United States, not only proclaimed himself in favor of withdrawing from the Indians all presents tending to perpetuate a hunting life, of requiring those who have reservations to make roads through them, and generally to assume their share of the duties and burdens of civilization, and of setting apart farming lots for each family in every reservation, but also warmly expressed his opinion that the truest interests of the Indians required that habits of independence should be fostered among them, and that the period of tutelage should be as much as possible curtailed. Even at that time hopes had been commonly entertained, on behalf of both races, that such an improvement might be made in the condition of many of the tribes as would enable them to take their places among the ordinary population of the country, and free them from the charges incident to a constant and careful supervision.

I have not found any single line of more distinct demarkation between the past and present policy of British statesmen than that presented by a comparison of these recommendations made by Lord Elgin with those urged forty-three years previously, A. D. 1806, by the Duke of Northumberland, in a letter to his friend, Captain Brant. The Mohawk chief-tain was then engaged in encouraging the spread of civilization and Christianity among his people, with all the power of his strenuous exertions and influential example. The duke, imbued with the barbaric spirit of a feudal aristocracy, spared no force of words in recommending the Indians never to be changed "from hunters and warriors into husbandmen." He regarded tilling the earth as a most injurious enervation of the young men. "Nine hundred or a thousand warriors, inured to hardship by hunting, are," said he, "a most respectable and independent body; but what would the same number of men become who were merely husbandmen?" Happily for his own reputation and the welfare of the Six Nations, the Indians did not listen to these suggestions, and the earnest remonstrances of the Duke of Northumberland remain on record as a monument of errors otherwise passing into oblivion.

In 1857 a memorable act was passed for the promotion of the objects recommended by Lord Elgin, and in 1858 three well-selected commissioners, who had been appointed "to inquire into and report upon the best means of securing the progress and civilization of the Indian tribes in Canada, and on the best mode of so managing the Indian property as to secure its full benefit to the Indians without impeding the settlement of the country," laid before the public the conclusions at which they had arrived.

The commissioners found that the relations of Great Britain with the Indians had changed very materially within the fifteen years preceding the date of the report. They state that the alterations were rather the carrying out of a system of policy previously determined on, than the results of any new ideas. The object of the system had long been to wean the Indian from perpetual dependence on the government; and successive years even then showed an increasing loosening of the tie to which the aborigines clung. Many of the officers appointed to watch over their interests had been removed, and the vacancies were not filled