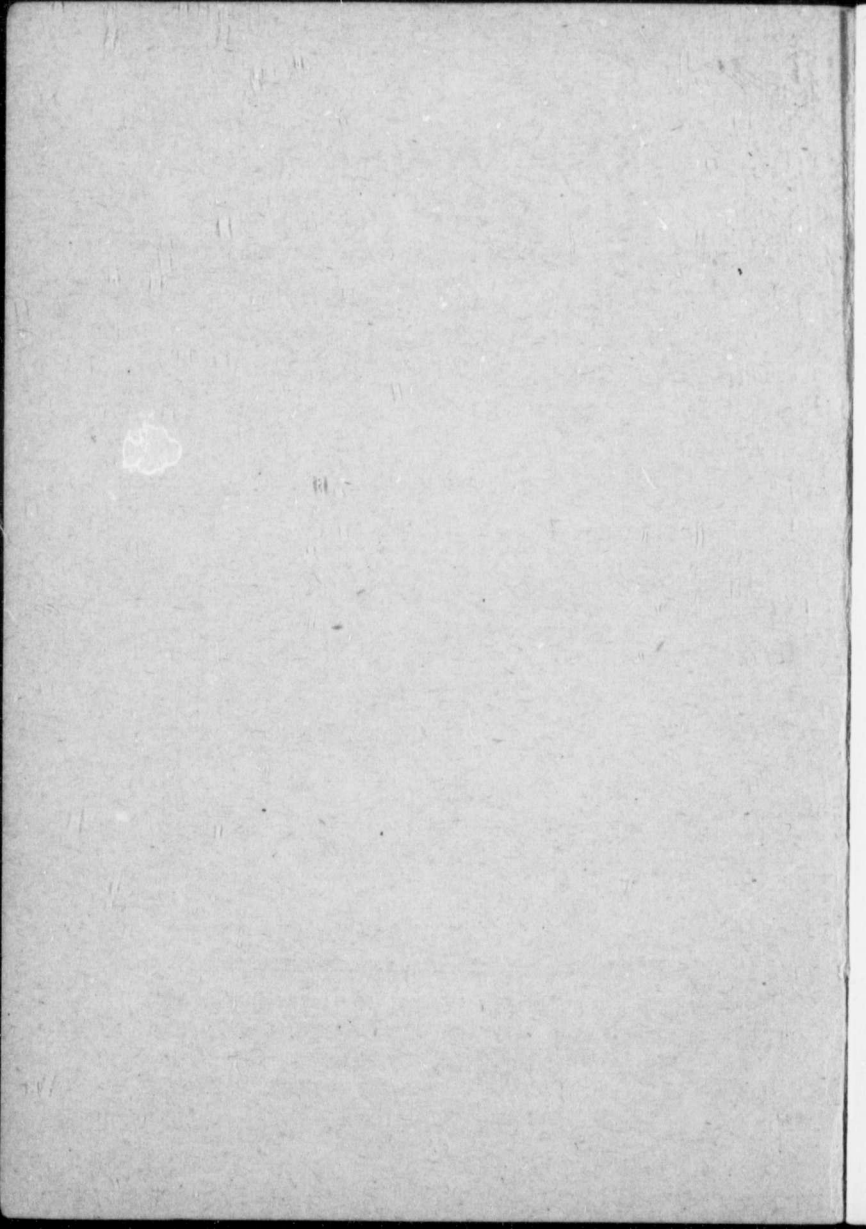


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THE
INDIANS
OF CANADA



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The Indians of Canada



IS there any department of our work we ought to have more at heart than our missions among the Indians? We fear that with many, the Indian Problem has been put aside as uninteresting, the Indian regarded as the degenerate survivor of by-gone days, while *our* obligation to *him* has never been considered for a moment.

When we remember that the land we **Our** now possess was once the home of the **Indebted-** Red Man, that he was disturbed by the **ness** trader, and driven from his picturesque solitudes farther and farther back into the wilds of the forest to make a new home for himself; when we remember also that in exchange for valuable furs and skins he was given only gaudy trinkets,

tin cups, strings of beads and other gew-gaws, the white man should feel towards him some sense of indebtedness.

It is not too much to say that we, who have dispossessed him, and have reaped untold advantages from our lives of freedom and opportunity in this beautiful land, owe it to the Indian to educate him, to Christianize him, to make him an intelligent Canadian citizen, and to protect him from those vices which, alas! have clung with choking pertinacity to the trail of civilization.

The Indian Character

In all our histories of North America, much has been said of the singular character of the Indian; his treachery, cruelty, his revengeful disposition towards an enemy, his savage rites, superstitious ceremonies, weird dances and his strange religious beliefs; but scant justice has been done to the noble qualities which he undoubtedly possessed.

Though cruel, he was brave, and was himself stoically indifferent to torture or pain; though treacherous, no one was

more faithful to his real friends; and though ignorant and superstitious, none could surpass him in keenness of perception, quickness of thought, or strength of purpose.

These savages of the primeval wilderness of America were called Indians because Columbus believed them to be akin to the people of the East Indies.

There were many great tribes. The greatest numerically were the Algonquins, who occupied the whole centre of the North American Continent, extending in scattered tribes from the Atlantic to Lake Winnipeg, and from Carolina to Hudson Bay. **The Largest Tribe** The names of some of the Algonquin tribes are familiar to us—the Delawares and Shawnees, who eventually settled on Canadian soil; the Ojibways, Pottawattamies and the Ottawas, who lived along the Canadian shores of the Atlantic and north and east of Lakes Michigan and Huron.

In this region also were the Sacs, the Foxes, and other smaller tribes.

The Nova Scotian offshoots have since been called Micmacs, those of Western New Brunswick Etchenuns, those of Quebec the Montagnais, those of the far north the Nipissings.

The Crees, who occupied a large district in the centre of north-western Canada, were fierce and warlike towards other tribes, but friendly to the British. From the English at Hudson Bay they got firearms in the seventeenth century. They refused to join the Sioux against the white man, but a few of them did take part in the half-breed Rebellion of 1885, Riel taking advantage of their superstition, and his knowledge of an eclipse of the sun. The majority of the half-breeds throughout the West are of Cree blood.

The Greatest Race

The great race of American History was the Iroquois—a powerful collection of savage tribes which combined the highest as well as the lowest traits of savage nature. The Iroquois were continually at war with the Hurons, another great tribe of Indians who occupied the re-

gions bordering on Georgian Bay and the country near Lake Simcoe. This latter tribe is recorded as a higher type than other savages of their time, and, like the Iroquois, formed settlements, cultivated lands to some extent, built villages, and for many years were the deadly rivals of the Iroquois, who eventually conquered them.

Garneau, in his "History of French **Numbers** Canada," estimates "the Algonquin population when the French came into contact with them at ninety thousand, the Hurons and Iroquois together at seventeen thousand, the Mobiles of the far South at thirty thousand, and the Cherokees, of what is now the centre of the United States, at twelve thousand." Including other scattered tribes he gives us a total for the greater part of North America of one hundred and eighty thousand.

This number seems small, but had the tribes been united, instead of at war with one another, their combined forces could

easily have made it a much more difficult matter for the French and English settlers to gain a foothold in Canada. As it was, the Iroquois present a striking picture on the pages of history, for with a force that numbered never more than five thousand warroirs, they harassed the French and engaged them in many bloody struggles during a period of two hundred years.

**Of Striking
Appearance**

Though there is no certainty as to the origin of the Indian, it is generally supposed that he is a descendant of migrating Tartars from the steppes of Central Asia.

In appearance, the Indian of early days was rather striking. He was as a rule, tall and slender form, and agile, with a face bronzed by sun, wind and rain. His expression was stern and sombre, his eyes small, sunken, keenly flashing, his forehead narrow, his lips thick, his nose sometimes flat, but more often large and prominent, his cheek-bones high and his hair dark and coarse. With him "the senses of sight and sound, smell and

feeling were developed into a sort of forest instinct, which seemed almost supernatural to the early white settlers, and finds such vivid expression in Fennimore Cooper's brilliant romances."

The Indian of Early Canada wore a costume of deer-skin, moccasins, necklaces of wampum and shells, ornaments of feathers, claws or scalps, and daubed his body and face in a most fantastic way with vermillion paint.

It is not improbable that they themselves had driven out and dispossessed a still more ancient race, judging from the mounds, buried cities and curious remains which still excite the wonder of the archaeologist.

Hunting and fishing was the occupation of the Indian; fighting his continual pastime.

**Religion and
Morals**

His religion was a peculiar mixture of superstitious ceremonies and mystic belief in spirits. In some tribes of the St. Lawrence, each man had his own god whom he worshipped in secret silence. The Indians however,

seem to have "usually worshipped something, whether the spirit of good, the spirit of evil, the spirit of storm, the God of war, the spirit of the mountains or the spirit of the waters."

"In morals, the Indian was far superior to most other savage races. He had one wife and though she was expected to do most of the work and to bear a full share in hardship and suffering, he did not wantonly ill-treat her, and was usually faithful to her, as she was to him."

The savage nature of the Indian showed at its worst in time of war. Struggles between rival tribes or nations were often determined on for the most trivial cause, and once they decided to go to war the Indian's joy was uncontrollable. Wild dances were followed by eloquent harangues, prayers, sacrifices, feasts, endless bravado and boasting. Then followed a period of absolute silence and secret preparation, departure at night and long days of patient waiting by squaws, old braves and children at home. Per-

haps the warriors never came back, but if they did with scalps and prisoners great was the joy. Then followed the frightful torture of captives, too horrible to describe but always borne with stoical endurance and pride.

Much the same as this is the picture we have of the savage red man, who occupied the country from Lake Superior, through the far west and north to the Pacific Ocean, but about whom the pages of Canadian history tell us little. We know they were great hunters and in time became expert horsemen.

The Dacotahs or Sioux were a nation of Allies, covering the southern regions of Manitoba and Assiniboia. **Tribes of the West**

Around them were the Crees and the Assiniboines, to the north were the Chipewayans and around Hudson Bay and the northern lakes were scattered the Chippewas.

“In British Columbia and the far north the Indians were a decidedly inferior race to those of other parts of the continent—a condition prob-

ably due to the milder climate and to the lack of necessity for severe exertion in order to obtain food." The Flatheads, the Haidas, the Mitkas and the Chinooks, comprise the chief divisions, and though in earlier pioneer days by assimilating the too-flagrant vices of the white man, they become greatly degraded, they have of late years been open to Christianizing influences.

Shall we not study this Indian Problem prayerfully and sympathetically?

We owe it to them.



