

The Indian Service has been aided by sincere and sane criticism, for which it is grateful, but its work is too often seriously impeded through misrepresentations to the public by speakers and writers of superficial knowledge or excessive zeal, and what is more unfortunate, by selfish adventurers of both the white and Indian races who are chiefly concerned for personal gain and who seek a condition that would enable them to profit at the expense of those who, if unprotected, would be duped by their clever rapacity. These go to the people, perhaps with imposing testimonials, and with ready-made resolutions to be presented in fluent and picturesque rhetoric, probably followed by a collection to cover "necessary expenses." They should meet with a conservative reception. The public should be led by no one to draw conclusions from less than careful and impartial inquiry.

The Indian is moving forward. He is progressing numerically. His population is greater than at any time in the last half century. He is improving in health and knowledge of how to keep well. He is accepting hospital facilities that have been more than doubled in the last seven years, as shown by an increase of 10,000 patients treated annually. His medicine men are retiring from practice. Fifty thousand Indian families live in permanent homes and take an interest in sanitation. The women are becoming better housekeepers; their babies are better cared for, and infant mortality is decreasing.

The Indians are growing in knowledge and general intelligence. Three-fourths of their children eligible for attendance are enrolled in some school, federal, state or mission. Nearly two-thirds of their entire population speak English and about one-half read and write English. Their gain in the use of civilized speech has been remarkable in the last seven years.

Too much has been said about Indian school graduates going back to the blanket. Any assumption that more than a negligible percentage of such students are non-progressive is unwarranted. In some instances where pupils not long in school have returned to backward home conditions the results have been disappointing but by no means an entire loss. If these boys and girls carry no more than a speaking use of English into homes still under the thrall of barbaric ignorance, they have started a lifting force and planted imperishable seeds of civilization. Considering the effect of previous environment, habits and prejudice, the school-trained Indian compares favorably with the average white student whose home surroundings as a rule are generally to his advantage.

The Indian's progress is too frequently measured by his garb. We want the Indian to cut his hair and wear citizen's clothes. We urge him to live in a white man's house, but if he does not entirely and

promptly respond in all of these respects it is not proven that he is not a progressive man. Sometimes young men returning from our schools to the reservations resume certain outward forms of tribal fashion as a matter of expediency or social deference to their elders, but their activities show what they are; their farming, their stockraising, and their desire to have their children go to school, are the best evidences of their progress.

Recent careful investigation shows that the product of the Indian schools is so generally successful and of good standing, that the conclusion is overwhelmingly against any adverse criticism of the government's system of Indian education.

The war service of 10,000 young Indians brought them distinct educational value in a better use of English, greater self-confidence, respect for authority, and disciplined industry that will add strength and character to their citizenship.

The social and domestic life of the Indians is steadily improving. Marriage by tribal custom is notably giving way to legal rites. At present there is hardly more than one-fourth the drunkenness among Indians that prevailed ten years ago. The missionary workers have been a powerful aid. Their number among the Indians has doubled since 1900, with a corresponding increase of churches and church attendants.

The Indian's industrial progress is especially noteworthy. Their individual funds on deposit have increased in the last eight years in excess of \$20,000,000. During that period they have expended for homes, barns and modern farm implements \$18,000,000 and have added \$13,000,000 to their capital in livestock. The Indian's transformation from a game hunter and wanderer to a settled land-holder and home-builder is everywhere evident. Nearly 37,000 Indian farmers are cultivating almost a million acres, 47,000 are engaged in stockraising and their livestock is worth close to \$38,000,000. Their last year's income from the sale of crops and livestock was approximately \$14,000,000. The Indians are dependable wage-workers. Their annual earnings in public and private service exceed \$3,000,000. Their number receiving rations and supplies not paid for in labor has decreased one-half in the last seven years.

There are not many defenders of the earlier processes of treaty making and treaty breaking, but the constructive plan, followed now for nearly a third of a century, of allotting the Indians land in severalty, of conducting hospitals and schools for physical and mental betterment, and providing them guidance in the productive use of the soil and its related industries, if not a perfect one, is the best plan yet devised for a dependent people and is amply justified by results.

Sincerely yours,
CATO SELLS,
Commissioner.