

OUR INDIAN PROBLEM

(Continued from page 1)

"Happy Hunting Ground," our progenitors imagined only "a gross paradise of immortal drunkenness." Both races considered it unworthy of their proud spirit "to acquire by labor that which might be ravished by arms." Improvidence, indolence and superstition were noted characteristics of both. If the Indian taught us the small vice of tobacco smoking, we taught him the greater vice of drunkenness; and if he sometimes substituted the bark of the willow (kin-i-kin-nick) for the real article, we have gone him one better by manufacturing a favorite brand from the leaves of alfalfa.

So, after all, the progress of the Indian has not been so slow, or that of the white man so rapid, as is sometimes supposed.

A MORE CANDID VIEW

The foregoing is the most charitable argument I have been able to formulate in defense of the Indian's slow progress and to bolster up the theory that long centuries are required for the development of a race in this day and age, from a state of barbarism to one of civilization. But when we consider the marvelous progress of the Japanese people during the past sixty years, we are made to doubt the truth of this contention. When Commodore Perry landed on the coast of Japan in 1853, the Japanese were perhaps but little farther advanced in the ways of civilization, measured by our standards, than were some tribes of American Indians in the sixteenth century, when Cortez began his conquest of Mexico. It was not until 1868, when the Japanese overthrew the Shogunate, that the cause of civilization in Japan triumphed over medieval barbarity, which has, in a little more than half a century, transformed a barbarous State into "the Sparta of Asia and the England of the Orient."

This unprecedented advancement of a race has been attributed to the racial characteristics of the Japanese people. They are quick to cast away old traditions and prejudices at the sight of new and better ways and things. Scores of their brightest young men and women go out every year to distant lands in search of new knowledge, cheerfully undergoing privations and social ostracism. These praiseworthy traits are directly opposite to the dominant characteristics of the Indian. In his "Race Contact," Professor Muntz says, "Nothing seems to have retarded the progress of the aboriginal American more than his innate conservatism and resistance to innovation." The majority of the Indians, particularly the full bloods, do not want the white man's civilization. The Japanese do, and there is the difference. The one big difference in the two races, however, seems to be in their mental develop-

ment. When we discovered the Japanese we found them with a literature and the fine arts developed to a high order of perfection, and while far behind the people of the Western World in a knowledge of the sciences and the practical arts of life, they are said to have been fully equal to them in the development of the mind. The Indian's mind has not yet been greatly developed. The old people are ignorant and many of them not only want to remain so themselves, but they have little desire that their children should be educated. So, while we find scores of Japanese, Chinese, Filipinos, Hawaiians and other brown races in our colleges and universities, it is rarely that we find Indians strenuously seeking the advantages of institutions of higher learning. As long as the Indian secludes himself and refuses to discard his old prejudices and traditions for better and more enlightened aspirations, just so long will his progress be slow and unstable. He must cease to look backward and turn his eyes toward the future if he would advance—yea, even survive.

HIS FUTURE HOPE

The only hope for the Indian, particularly the northern and middle western tribes, is assimilation—not necessarily amalgamation. They cannot much longer maintain their existence as a separate, distinct people. They must be merged into the general population of the nation and become citizens instead of remaining tribesmen. The Indians of this country are no longer a sovereign people even on their reservations, and they cannot become self-respecting and useful members of society while still maintaining the status of half-ward and half-citizen. It is the problem of our schools and other educational agencies to develop and preserve the best there is in Indian life, including his better racial qualities, his native arts and his natural talents, and at the same time prepare him to enter the race of life on equal terms with all other citizens.

The most discouraging thing in all this Indian business is the attitude of the Indian himself—his general apathy, indifference, and lack of desire and ambition to improve his condition through his own efforts. Buckle, in his "History of Civilization," tells us that the experience of all past ages should teach us that there can be no permanent improvement in any backward people until the *spirit* of that people has first been changed and a desire for improvement aroused. We must somehow inspire the Indian with courage and self-confidence, and we must teach him thrift and industry. He has not yet learned to work and to love work for its own sake and for the happiness and contentment it may give him. If he must work he would rather hunt or fish. He still, to a large extent, idealizes idleness, and thus, as Andy Gump would say, "he trails the ghost of a forlorn hope across the valley of dark despair." This is particularly true on those reservations where Indians own oil wells, valuable timber, or rich farm lands and live in idleness on unearned incomes, "nursed in the glowing lap of soft desire."

(Continued on page 4)