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INTRODUCTION

IN gathering the lore of the Indian of the plains one hears only of yesterday. His thoughts are of the past; to-day is but a living death, and his very being is permeated with the hopelessness of to-morrow. If the narrator be an ancient nearing the end of his days, he lives and relives the life when his tribe as a tribe flourished, the time when his people were truly monarchs of all they surveyed, when teeming buffalo supplied their every want; and his wish is ever that he might have passed away ere he knew the beggary of to-day. The younger man, if a true Indian, is a living regret that he is not of the time when to be an Indian was to be a man.

Strong sympathy for the Indian cannot blind one to the fact that the change that has come is a necessity created by the expansion of the white population. Nor does the fact that civilization demands the abandonment of aboriginal habits lessen one's sympathy or alter one's realization that for once at least Nature's laws have been the indirect cause of a grievous wrong. That the inevitable transformation of the Indian life has been made many-fold harder by the white man's cupidity, there is no question.

Those who do not comprehend the limitations of primitive people protest, "Why sympathize with the Indians? They now have every opportunity that civilized man has, and more, for the Government grants them lands and renders them aid in many ways." The question might as well be asked, why the man born without eyes does not see. The Indian is an Indian not alone in name and in the pigmentation of his skin or his other physical characteristics. He developed gradually and through ages to meet the conditions of a harsh environment exceedingly well, but these conditions were so vastly different from those we have thrust upon him that to expect him to become adjusted to the new requirements in a generation or two would be much like expecting of a child the proficiency of ripe manhood.

Perhaps among no tribe has the encroachment of civilization wrought greater change than among the Sioux, or Dakota. A proud, aggressive people, they depended wholly on the chase and the indigenous vegetation. Powerful in numbers and vigorous in spirit, they roamed almost at will. But in brief time all was altered. The game had vanished; under treaty stipulations which the Indians ill understood they were

concentrated on reservations beyond the boundaries of which they must not wander, and became dependents of the Nation, to be fed and clothed according to our interpretation of the compact.

Of the present condition of the Sioux little that is encouraging can be said. They have small hope for the future, and a people without the courage of hope are indeed a serious problem with which to deal. In a few years will have passed away all who knew the old life when means of subsistence were near at hand and the limitless plains were theirs to roam. The younger generation, having no tribal past, may strive to carve a future, and their children, with even less of the instinct of the hunter, will make even better advance; but standing in the way of the present generation and of all the generations to come is the fact that they are Indians, and lack by many ages that which is necessary to enable them to meet the competition of the Caucasian race.

Brought suddenly in contact with the diseases of civilization, the blood of the Indian was particularly susceptible, and the change in food, and in mode of life generally, lessened his vigor and made it the more difficult to combat disease of any sort. In the mixed-blood element must be seen the greatest hope. The proportion of the pure bloods is steadily decreasing, and with each blending the handicap is lightened. The first generation of the amalgamation is on the whole discouraging, but succeeding ones will doubtless show a relatively rapid gain. Even in the West the stigma attached to the possession of Indian blood will gradually disappear, and this in itself will be a factor in the uplifting. The great change that now comes to the Sioux and to other tribes of the plains with the opening of their reservations to settlement and in the consequent increased contact with alien influences will, within the present generation, further demoralize and degenerate. This, however, is one of the stages through which from the beginning the Indians were destined to pass. Those who cannot withstand these trying days of the metamorphosis must succumb, and on the other side of the depressing period will emerge the few sturdy survivors.

In gathering the material from which this condensed text is selected, the Ogalala, Brulé, Miniconjou, Two Kettle, Sans Arc, Hunkpapa, Blackfoot or Sihasapa, and Yanktonai tribes or bands of the Dakota, and their ethnically close relatives, the Assiniboin, were visited by my assistants and myself. The first studies were made in 1905, the final researches in 1907 and 1908. It is to be regretted that it was not feasible to study the Santee Sioux before finishing the investigations

summarized in the present volume; but even had this been possible, the desire to extend the comparative work would have persisted. In order to carry out the original plan, the study for each part of the work must not be unduly delayed for further investigation; consequently the publication of the Teton material is not withheld pending the prosecution of field research among the eastern Sioux.

In collecting and arranging the ethnographic material in this volume I have had the assistance of Mr. W.E. Myers. Professor Edmond S. Meany has rendered special aid in compiling the historical data, and Mr. Edgar Fischer has transcribed the music both from his personal field notes and from phonographic records made by other members of my party. Mr. A.F. Muhr has continued his valued services in the laboratory.

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