INDIAN CIVILIZATION: A LECTURE; PP. 1-47 (NOT COMPLETE)

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STANLEY PUMPHREY & JOHN G. WHITTIER

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INDIAN CIVILIZATION:

A

LECTURE

BY

Stanley Pumphrey

OF

ENGLAND.

WITH INTRODUCTION BY

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE present condition and future prospects of the remnants of the aboriginal inhabitants of this continent, can scarcely be a matter of indifference to any class of the people of the United States. Apart from all considerations of justice and duty, a purely selfish regard to our own well-being would compel attention to the subject. The irreversible laws of God's moral government, and the well-attested maxims of political and social economy, leave us in no doubt that the suffering, neglect and wrong of one part of the community, must affect all others. A common responsibility rests upon each and all to relieve suffering, enlighten ignorance, and redress wrong, and the penalty of neglect in this respect no nation has ever escaped.

It is only within a comparatively recent period that the term Indian Civilization could be appropriately used in this country. How little real progress had been made in this direction, may be seen by the reference in the following discourse to the visit of Commissioner John D. Lang, in 1844, to the Tribes now most advanced. So little had been done, that public opinion had acquiesced in the assumption that the Indians were not susceptible of civilization and progress. The few experiments had not been calculated to assure a superficial observer.

The unsupported efforts of Elliot in New England, were counteracted by the imprisonment, and in some instances the massacre of his "praying Indians," by white men under the exasperation of war with hostile tribes. The salutary influence of the Moravians and Friends in Pennsylvania, was greatly weakened by the dreadful

massacre of the unarmed and blameless converts of Gnadenhutten. But since the first visit of Commissioner Lang, thirty-three years ago, the progress of education, civilization and conversion to Christianity, has been of a most encouraging nature, and if Indian civilization was ever a doubtful problem, it has been practically solved.

The nomadic habits and warlike propensities of the native tribes, are indeed formidable, but not insuperable difficulties in the way of their elevation. The wildest of them may compare not unfavorably with those Northern barbarian hordes that swooped down upon Christian Europe, and who were so soon the docile pupils and proselytes of the peoples they had conquered. The Arapahoes and Camanches of our day are no further removed from the sweetness and light of Christian culture, than the Scandinavian Sea Kings of the middle centuries, whose gods were patrons of rapine and cruelty, their heaven a vast, cloud-built ale-house, where ghostly warriors drank from the skulls of their victims, and whose hell was a frozen horror of desolation and darkness, to be avoided only by diligence in robbery, and courage in murder. The descendants of these human butchers are now among the best exponents of the humanizing influence of the Gospel of Christ. The report of the Superintendent of the remnants of the once fierce and warlike Six Nations, now peaceable and prosperous in Canada, shows that the Indian is not inferior to the Norse ancestors of the Danes and Norwegians of our day, in capability of improvement.

It is scarcely necessary to say, what is universally conceded, that the wars waged by the Indians against the whites, have, in nearly every instance, been provoked by violations of solemn treaties, and systematic disregard of their rights of person, property and life. The letter of Bishop Whipple, of Minnesota, to the New York *Tribune* of Second Month, 1877, calls attention to the emphatic language of Generals Sherman, Harney, Terry and Augur, written after a full and searching investigation of the subject: "*That the Indian goes to war is not astonishing: he is often compelled to do so: wrongs are borne by him in silence, which never fail to drive civilized*

men to deeds of violence. The best possible way to avoid war, is to do no injustice."

It is not difficult to understand the feelings of the unfortunate pioneer settlers on the extreme borders of civilization, upon whom the blind vengeance of the wronged and hunted Indians falls oftener than upon the real wrong-doers. They point to terrible and revolting cruelties, as proof that nothing short of the absolute extermination of the race can prevent their repetition. But a moment's consideration compels us to admit that atrocious cruelty is not peculiar to the red man. "All wars are cruel," said Gen. Sherman, and for eighteen centuries Christendom has been a great battle field. What Indian raid has been more dreadful than the sack of Magdeburg, the massacre of Glencoe, the nameless atrocities of the Duke of Alva in the Netherlands, the murders of St. Bartholomew's day, the unspeakable agonies of the South of France under the demoniac rule of revolution! All history, black with crime and red with blood, is but an awful commentary upon "man's inhumanity to man," and it teaches us that there is nothing exceptional in the Indian's ferocity and vindictiveness, and that the alleged reasons for his extermination would, at one time or another, have applied with equal force to the whole family of man.

The lecture of my friend, STANLEY PUMPHREY, comprises more of valuable information and pertinent suggestions on the Indian question than I have found in any equal space; and I am glad of the opportunity to add to it my hearty endorsement, and to express the conviction that its general circulation could not fail to awaken a deeper and more kindly interest in the condition of the Red Man, and greatly aid in leading the public mind to a fuller appreciation of the responsibility which rests upon us as a people, to rectify, as far as possible, past abuses, and in our future relations to the native owners of the soil, to "deal justly and love mercy."

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

Oak Knoll, Danvers, 5th mo. 25, 1877.