

**A TREATISE ON THE  
SIX-NATION  
INDIANS**

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A Treatise on the Six-nation Indians by J. B. Mackenzie

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## PREFACE.

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THE little production presented in these pages was designed for, and has been used as, a lecture; and I have wished to preserve, without emendation, the form and character of the lecture, as it was delivered.

J. B. M.

A TREATISE  
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INTRODUCTORY.

As knowledge of the traditions, manners, and national traits of the Indians, composing, originally, the six distinct and independent tribes of the Mohawks, Tuscaroras, Onondagas, Senecas, Oneidas, and Cayugas; tribes now merged in, and known as, the Six Nations, possibly, does not extend beyond the immediate district in which they have effected a lodgment, I have laid upon myself the task of tracing their history from the date of their settlement in the County of Brant, entering, at the same time, upon such accessory treatment as would seem to be naturally suggested or embraced by the plan I have set before me. As the essay, therefore, proposes to deal, mainly, with the contemporary history of the Indian, little will be said of his accepted beliefs, at an earlier epoch, or of the then current practices built upon, and enjoined by, his traditionary faith. Frequent visits to the Indian's

Reservation, on the south bank of the Grand River, have put me in the way of acquiring oral data, which shall subserve my intention; and I shall prosecute my attempt with the greater hope of reaping a fair measure of success, since I have fortified my position with gleanings (bearing, however, solely on minor matters of fact) from some few published records, which have to do with the history of the Indian, generally, and have been the fruitful labour of authors of repute and standing, native as well as white. Should the issue of failure attend upon my effort, I shall be disposed to ascribe it to some not obscure reason connected with literary style and execution, rather than to the fact of there not having been adequate material at hand for the purpose.

#### THE INDIAN'S CONDITIONS OF SETTLEMENT.

The conditions which govern the Indian's occupation of his Reserve are, probably, so well known, that any extended reference under this head will be needless.

He ceded the whole of his land to the Government, this comprising, originally, a tract which pursued the entire length of the Grand River, and, accepting it as the radiating point, extended up from either side of the river for a distance of six miles, to embrace an area of that extent. The Government required the proprietary right to the land, in the event of their either desiring to maintain public highways through it themselves, or that they might be in a position to sanction, or acquiesce in, its use or expropriation



by Railway Corporations, for the running of their roads ; or for other national or general purposes. The surrender on the part of the Indian was not, however, an absolute one, there having been a reservation that he should have a Reservation, of adequate extent, and the fruit of the tilling of which he should enjoy as an inviolable privilege.

As regards the money-consideration for this land, the Government stand to the Indian in the relation of Trustees, accounting for, and apportioning to, him, through the agency of their officer and appointee, the Indian Superintendent, at so much *per capita* of the population, the interest arising out of the investment of such money.

*Sales* of lands among themselves are permissible; but these, for the most part, narrow themselves down to cases where an Indian, with the possession of a good lot, of fair extent, and with a reasonable clearing, vested in him, leaves it, to pursue some calling, or follow some trade, amongst the whites; and treats, perhaps, with some younger Indian, who, disliking the pioneer work involved in taking up some uncultured place for himself, and preferring to make settlement on the comparatively well cultivated lot, buys it. The Government, also, allow the Indian, though as a matter of sufferance, or, in other words, without bringing the law to bear upon him for putting in practice what is, strictly speaking, illegal, to *rent* to a white the lot or lots on which he may be located, and to receive the rent, without sacrifice or alienation of his interest-money.

Continued non-residence entails upon the non-resident the forfeiture of his interest.

The Indian is, of course, a minor in the eye of the law, a feature of his estate, with the disabilities it involves, I shall dwell upon more fully at a later stage.

Should the Indian intermarry with a white woman, the receipt of his interest-allowance is not affected or disturbed thereby, the wife coming in, as well, for the benefits of its bestowal; but should, on the other hand, an Indian woman intermarry with a white man, such act compels, as to herself, acceptance, in a capitalized sum, of her annuities for a term of ten years, with their cessation thereafter; and entails upon the possible issue of the union *absolute* forfeiture of interest-money. In any connection of the kind, however, that may be entered into, the Indian woman is usually sage and provident enough to marry one, whose hold upon worldly substance will secure her the domestic ease and comforts, of which the non-receipt of her interest would tend to deprive her. Should the eventuality arise of the Indian woman dying before her husband, the latter must quit the place, which was hers only conditionally, though the Indian Council will entertain a reasonable claim from him, to be recouped for any possible outlay he may have made for improvements.

The Government confer upon the Indian the privilege of a resident medical officer, who is paid by them, and whose duty it is to attend, without expectation of fee or compensation of any kind, upon the sick. His

relation, however, to the Government is not so defined as to preclude his acceptance of fees from whites resident on the Reserve, provided the advice be sought at his office. The Government, probably, being well aware of the stress of work under which their medical appointee chronically labours, and appreciating the consequent unlikelihood of this privilege being exercised to the prejudice of the Indian, have not, as yet, shorn him of it.

Another privilege that the Indian enjoys, and which was granted to him by enactment subsequent to that which assured to him his Reserve, is that of transit at half-fare rates on the different railroads. This is a right which he neither despises, nor, in any way, affects to despise, since it meets, and is suited to, his common condition of slender and straitened means. The moderate charge permits him to avail frequently of the privilege at seasons (which comprehend, in truth, the greater portion of the year) when the roads are almost unfit for travel, the Indian, as a rule, going in for economy in locomotive exercise (so my judgment decrees, though it has been claimed for him that, at an earlier period of his history, walking was congenial to him) hailing and adopting gladly the medium which obviates recourse to it.

#### HIS MEETINGS OF COUNCIL.

The Indian Council has a province more important than that which our Municipal Councils exercise. Its decisions as to disputes growing out of real