

TAMING THE SAVAGE.

There are two methods of dealing with the Indians. One is what may be called the manifest-destiny policy. This policy concedes to an Indian no rights which a white man or a white man's Government is bound to respect. It does not once say "turkey" to the Indian; it hardly is willing, in any division of the spoils of this continent, to give the red man the buzzard. It looks to no future for him but extermination. It remorselessly appropriates his hunting grounds, wantonly kills the game upon which he subsists, civilizes him enough to make him appreciate whisky, and then gets him drunk and swindles him out of every valuable he possesses; gives him Government annuities, blankets, and rations; in order that contractors and agents may grow rich by spoiling him; trespasses on his reservations, and when he resents it, declares war against him; closes in upon him on every side, and leaves him no resource but that which the wild beast has, who turns at last upon the dogs mercilessly pursuing him. It then calls him a savage, declares him incapable of civilization, and leaves him to the fate which an unfriendly and dominant race seem ever ready to believe is the destiny of an inferior people.

The other policy is that of humanity. It treats the Indian as a human being having rights clear and indisputable as an original inhabitant of the continent. It concedes to him a portion of the territory once occupied wholly by him. It recognizes his right to be governed by laws, and to have a chance at the real civilization of this century. It would keep faith with him—all the more rigorously because he is not able to make good his own claim to justice. While understanding that he is not always nor often the ideal red man of romance or imagination, it does not forget that he is a "man and a brother" as much as the darker-skinned race, over whose wrongs Congress legislates, parties divide, and armies are moved by an Executive vigilant in executing the laws. It does not see in him now the qualities of the model citizen, quiet, industrious, thrifty, intelligent; neither does it believe that his savagery is wholly his fault, or wholly incurable. It knows he has had small chance to be anything other than what he is; that white men, subjected to similar treatment would have developed some traits of a civilization characteristic of their remote ancestors; that Indians treated more like men with rights to be respected, have shown qualities of manhood and genuine progress in modern civilization; and it believes that, after all, the real ground of success in dealing with any man or race, in the long run, is to be found only in a respect for absolute justice.

It cannot be said that our Government has adopted either of these lines of policy. In theory it has professed to deal justly, even generously, with the Indian; in fact, it has generally treated him as an incumbrance to be got rid of in as summary a manner as possible consistent with our reputation as a nation. Pushed, driven, removed from reservation to reservation, the Indian has only known our border civilization, which we have no reason to believe is of the pious, missionary type, or that finds its highest enjoyment in temperance and peace. The contractor has not taught him honesty, the frontiersman has not instructed him in the art of agriculture; indeed, he has had more opportunities of learning from his white neighbors the mystery of draw-poker and the stimulating qualities of cheap and nasty whisky, than the arts of a peaceful, industrious people. And thus it happens that while the Government is paying six or eight millions annually to the small fraction remaining of the race once scattered over the territory now called the United States, only small numbers of these Indians are less savage than those who hunted in the unbroken wilderness of three centuries ago. To-day the Indian problem confronts us with difficulties much the same as those encountered by the colonies at Plymouth and Jamestown.

Gen. CUSTER's expedition to the Black Hills last Summer is likely to give a new illustration of our method of dealing with the Indians. That expedition, by its reports of the wonderful mineral richness of the country visited, has stimulated every daring adventurer, and already men accustomed to make good with the knife or the pistol their right to any pretensions they may make are mining in the Black Hills, or are on their way there with a miner's outfit—an outfit which, whatever else is forgotten, is never noticeable for the absence of a breech-loading rifle. Not unexpectedly, the Indians, who think that by treaty they have a right to the undisturbed possession of the country, are uneasy and meditate violence; and at Washington the situation is looked upon as possibly portending an Indian war. The Army, it is said, is at once going to remove these trespassing miners; the Interior Department is to send a geologist to examine the mineral deposit in that region; and we are told that, probably, a treaty will be made by which the Indians will sell to the United States this newly-discovered gold-bearing territory.

It is plain what is to come of this. Whether there is an Indian war or not, if the Black Hills prove rich in gold, the red man will be bought out or driven out, and the white man will take possession. This is not justice, but it is destiny. It would take an army to keep the gold-hunters out of that country. They would not, and probably could not, understand that our Government would respect the Indians' rights, or the stipulations of treaties. Even

if they suspected such a purpose at Washington, they would make a different policy or an Indian war inevitable. Deplorable as this state of things is, and hopeless as it leaves us of any solution of the Indian question not utterly repugnant to what ought to be the moral sense of the nation, the wretched policy of the Government hitherto not only makes this result probable but almost inevitable. It is the fatal inheritance of years of wrong-doing; yet it is now clamorously justified by the representatives of the whole Western frontier; and the great body of the people, although their blood can be brought to fever heat over the demand for equal rights to a race recently enfranchised, look with utter indifference upon this "struggle for existence" of the race once without a rival possessing the lands now embraced within the boundaries of the Union. It is too late, no doubt, to expect a different policy; it is not too late to point the moral of the one too long followed.