The Red Indians and the American Government

Lizzie M. Holmes

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No race has been so systematically wronged as have the genuine American people—the original owners of the soil. From the time they ran down to meet the wonderful white men with gifts and smiling welcome on the Atlantic shores, to the last outrage committed against them on the frontier, their kindness has been met by robbery, their trust with treachery, their rightful demands with murder and extermination. They have been beaten back from their lands, cheated out of their rights, starved by rascally agents, made drunk with bad whiskey, inoculated with civilised vices and diseases, harrassed and provoked into some demonstration of resentment, that they might be more plausibly murdered. Men have gained riches and glory through dealing with the "Indian question"—some by being catchalls through which forced taxes were poured and small rations dwindled out, some by prophecying hostile intentions and nobly squelching unseen insurrections. Such men as William Cody (Buffalo Bill) of whom a Westerner once said, "there was sure to be 'Indian troubles' whenever he appeared on the scene," and the aspiring captain who longs for glory and little smoke, the capitalists who want their land, the agents who profit by furnishing the supplies of war, very easily believe a little fanatical dancing means an insurrection. Government is pursuing against this poor, weak, starving people the same course it has pursued toward all its poor and weak, whom a few greedy and powerful ones wished to profit by. Robbed, abused, provoked, then killed, and slandered as an apology for such conduct. The only thing that can be said in favour of the war on the Indians, is that they are sometimes very cruel to their captives, and that they will not receive our civilisation. The Indians bear a great deal of wrong before they retaliate. They have a feeling of honour about keeping their word. They consider treachery, breaking faith, the worst thing men can do, and deserving of any extreme of punishment. They have been deceived so often that their revengeful feelings are roused. They would have been kind in the first place, but white men have set them a fatal example. It is not safe to use a wild, free, natural race of men as they have been used.

As to civilisation, it is to their credit that they refuse to receive it, with all its attendant evils, vices, wrongs, disease, and poverty. They are too brave and free to take upon themselves the bonds that civilisation's poor must bear. An intelligent, free civilisation that recognised individual rights would reach them, for they have with them the possibilities of a great, strong, enlightened and noble people.

Whatever governments point their guns at, popular men denounce, and the rich abuse, you may safely set down as being in the right, and much superior to its respectable enemies.

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