The Red Man's Burden

By Francis E. Leupp

With Photographs by
Edward S. Curtis *

EDITOR'S NOTE.—What do you know about our real Indian problem? Are you concerned about extending the "square deal" to include the modern representatives of the first Americans? You have read, times without number, of Indians defrauded, homeless, hungry, and have doubtless ascribed it to the dishonesty of the agent. Wrong. His was only the finger that pulled the trigger. The cause goes back to the nation's statute-books, where confusion is spread broadcast, opening the door wide to legalized robbery and tying the hands of those who would do justice. Mr. Leupp, as Indian Commissioner, labored whole-heartedly to overcome the handicaps of his office; but the fault he found to be inherent in the system—in our misfit trusteeship. With an intimate knowledge of our many chapters of Indian scandals he tells how they are made possible and suggests such changes in our immemorial policy as will enable us in future to give the Indian even-handed justice

"WHY should you take from us by force what you can obtain by love?" asked Chief Powhatan of Captain John Smith, more than three centuries ago.

"Their lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent," said the Continental Congress, speaking of the Western Indians in its Ordinance of 1787, "and in their property rights and liberty they shall never be invaded or disturbed, unless in lawful wars authorized by Congress."

Have not Powhatan's peaceful counsels been heeded, and the Ordinance pledges fulfilled, to the letter? When the whites wanted something the Indians had, did they ever take it by force—unless the Indians declined to give it to them? Has the property of Indians ever been taken in time of peace without their consent—except where the whites were convinced that it really belonged to him who was strong enough to seize and hold it? And was ever a war waged against Indians that was not "just and lawful," and authorized by Congress—after the event, if not before?

So, when the editor of HEARST'S MAGAZINE asked me for an article on the wrongs of the Indians, what was there for me to write about? Nothing—I must admit—except that, with plenty of good intentions in the hold and honest hard work at the helm, our Ship of State has not made a brilliant success of her undertaking to transport our aboriginal race from barbarism to civilization.

Why? Because she was designed for a fighting craft and not for the passenger trade. A popular government like ours has no business trying to play the philanthropic guardian for three hundred thousand wards of alien ancestry and primitive standards. I do not say that what we call the Indian problem is not advancing toward solution. It is. But the forces most potent are non-governmental, and their operations too subtle for current observation. Meanwhile, we hear of the sufferings of the Indians even in this benevolent era. What is the trouble? To my mind, it lies in the confusion of responsibility resulting from the attempt of a big, unsympathetic political machine to handle an essentially human proposition.

Let us look at this machine. It consists chiefly of legislative levers and executive wheels, so assembled and articulated as to turn out the poorest results with the largest expenditure of energy. Congress passes laws to shape the destinies of the Indians. One law it directs the President to administer; another, perhaps dealing with concerns of the same class, it turns over to the Secretary of the Interior; a third it commits

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