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## Indians Becoming White and Delightful

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**Abstract:** The author argues that the Indians of North and South America are making spiritual and “material progress” and becoming “white and delightful,” thus fulfilling a prophecy of the Book of Mormon.

# THE LATTER-DAY SAINTS' MILLENNIAL STAR.

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## EDITORIAL.

### INDIANS BECOMING WHITE AND DELIGHTSOME.

ACCORDING to the Book of Mormon, the ancestors of the American Indians were, at one time, a white race, exceedingly fair and delightsome. Because they hardened their hearts against the teachings of God, and committed all kinds of sin and iniquity, a curse fell upon them, and gradually, as their minds were enveloped in darkness, their skin became dark, too. Their mental state of ignorance and love of wickedness was reflected in their complexion and features. But, according to the same sacred record, the time will come when the Indians will hear the gospel of Jesus Christ, and when they accept it, the "scales of darkness shall begin to fall from their eyes; and many generations shall not pass away among them," before they shall again become a "white and delightsome people" (II. Nephi 5: 21; 30: 3-6).

It should be remembered that the Book of Mormon was given to the world in its English version at a time when human wisdom could not foresee such a change in the moral and physical condition of the American aborigines. In the United States they were driven from pillar to post, according to the real, or supposed, interests of the white settlers. Their hunting-grounds were being encroached upon, and if their braves endeavored to make a stand for their territory, they were soon overwhelmed. To scarcity of food were added, in many instances, the destructive influence of liquor and the diseases of civilization, and the Indians were fast vanishing from the face of the earth. It was the general impression, until a few years ago, that the Indians in the United States were doomed to extinction, together with the buffalo and other wild tenants of the boundless prairie. It was contrary to this general impression that the Book of Mormon announced that the red man would not become extinct, but that, through the influence of the gospel, his race would flourish as a "white and delightsome people," and the remarkable fact is that, for some years, it has become evident that the prophecy in the Book of Mormon will, in all probability, be literally fulfilled. The Indians in the United States are increasing in numbers instead of dying out. Many of them are being educated and are occupying responsible positions. They are gradually becoming a "delightsome" people, as Nephi, centuries ago, prophesied about them.

The subject was brought to our mind the other day by an article

in the *Liverpool Post*, in which attention was called to the progress of the American Indians during recent years. One of the evidences of this progress is the change of clothing. Four years ago one hundred and sixty thousand Indians had discarded their picturesque blanket for the ordinary attire of the white race; now the number is nearly two hundred thousand, and side by side with this came the increase from fifty-five thousand to seventy thousand in aborigines who can read and write. Not only so, but complete courses of education, from the elementary to the technical, have been arranged, the full term occupying ten years. Mr. Sells, Commissioner of Indian Affairs for the United States, reports that the "vocational" course of study "marks an epoch in Indian education, and through the emphasis of such education and training, the beginning of a new era in Indian life and accomplishments." Besides this mental ascent, there is much material prosperity to record. Four years ago the Indians under the Commissioner's control had a total income of £4,500,000; now they receive £5,625,000. Their live stock property has grown in value from £4,500,000 to £6,500,000, and the acreage under Indian farmers has nearly doubled in five years, the present area being 678,500 acres, worked by 35,820 men, as against 29,200 men at the end of 1912. As a result of this general growth of mind and estate, the Indian is taking better care of his family, and conforming in manners and modes of life to the needs of changed environment and the duty owed to those about him. In other words, the American Indians are becoming "white" in their mode of living, their education, their occupation, their ideals and aspirations. There is no doubt that this radical change will, ultimately, affect their complexion and general appearance.

Less than two years ago about two hundred Sioux Indians in South Dakota were made full-fledged American citizens and given patents to the land allotted to each of them. They invited Secretary Lane, of the Interior Department, to be present at the function, which was held at Yankton. In their invitation they wrote, in part:

"Thirty or forty years ago we were living in wigwams in our primitive ways, with the idea that the government owed us a living, and therefore we had no thought for the morrow. But in recent years there have grown up, superseding the wigwam, fine dwelling houses, and instead of our ponies being turned out on the prairies to graze, we have fine barns, with two or three work teams each, with lofts full of hay, cribs of corn, bins of wheat, coops of geese, ducks, and chickens, and where thirty or forty years ago were stretches of wild prairies, now grow beautiful wavy fields of corn and wheat, the industry of us Indians. We have come to know that instead of the Government owing us a living, the world owes us that living, and we have started out to collect it."

This is another indication of the material progress the Indians are making.

Secretary Lane attended, and a beautiful ritual was employed by which the importance of the new citizenship was deeply impressed upon the Indian mind. Each Indian was called out by his "white" name, and asked to tell his Indian name. Then he was handed a bow and arrow and directed to shoot the arrow. After this, the secretary said to him, calling him by his Indian name: "You have shot your last arrow. That means that you are no longer to live the life of an Indian. You are from this day forward to live the life of a white man. But you may keep that arrow; it will be to you a symbol of your noble race, and of the pride you feel that you come from the first of all Americans." Then, calling the Indian again by his "white" name, Secretary Lane said to him. "Take in your hand this plow." As the Indian took the handle of the plow, the Secretary said: "This act means that you have chosen to live the life of the white man—and the white man lives by work. From the earth we all must get our living, and the earth will not yield, unless man pours upon it the sweat of his brow. Only by work do we gain a right to the land or to the enjoyment of life." The Indian was then presented with a leather purse, a small flag, and a golden-colored badge bearing the inscription, "A Citizen of the United States," and the secretary impressively explained what each meant. Thus the purse means "that the money you gain from your labor must be wisely kept"; the flag ("the only flag you have ever had or ever will have") that the Indian must give his hands, head and heart to the doing of all that will make him a true American citizen.

In the same way, the Indian woman was handed a work-bag and a purse, and told what are the ideals of the American family and home. The ceremony was repeated with each man and woman, and, as it concluded, the audience shouted its greeting to each new citizen, hailing him by his "white" name.

It is impossible to contemplate the great change that has come upon the red race in America, without feeling convinced that the prophecy in the Book of Mormon has begun to be fulfilled. There are only a few Indians in the United States—less than a million, but there are others in Mexico, and the various republics of Central and South America, perhaps ten or eleven millions. All these will, in due time, come under the influence of the gospel and become white and delightsome. All accidental and imaginary race boundaries must be eliminated, through the gospel, before the coming of the day of the universal brotherhood of man, and that is the leveling work which is going on to-day in the United States, where the gospel was first proclaimed to the Indians, and where many of that race have embraced it joyfully, and are, in many instances, a credit to the Church.

J. M. S.

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LIFE is not so short but there is always time for courtesy.