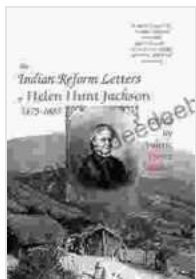


# The Indian Reform Letters of Helen Hunt Jackson: A Voice for the Voiceless



## The Indian Reform Letters of Helen Hunt Jackson, 1879–1885 by Helen Hunt Jackson

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 7353 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 396 pages



Helen Hunt Jackson was a prolific American writer, poet, and activist. She is best known for her groundbreaking series of articles on the plight of Native Americans, which were published in the 1880s under the title "The Indian Reform Letters." These letters played a crucial role in shaping the future of Indian policy and sparked a national movement for Native American rights.

### Jackson's Early Life and Work

Helen Hunt Jackson was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, in 1830. She was the daughter of a prominent academic and spent her early years in a privileged environment. However, Jackson's life was marked by tragedy. She lost her mother at the age of 10 and her father 10 years later. In 1852, she married Edward Bissell Hunt, a U.S. Army officer. The couple had two sons, but their marriage was unhappy and they divorced in 1869.

Jackson began her writing career in the 1860s. She published several novels and short stories, but it was her work on Indian reform that brought her enduring fame. In 1879, she published "A Century of Dishonor," a scathing indictment of the U.S. government's treatment of Native Americans. The book became a bestseller and helped to raise awareness of the plight of Native Americans.

### **The Indian Reform Letters**

In 1880, Jackson was appointed special commissioner by the U.S. government to investigate the condition of Native Americans in California. She traveled extensively throughout the state, interviewing Native Americans and gathering evidence of the injustices they had suffered. The result of her investigation was a series of 20 letters that were published in the New York Times and Boston Advertiser between 1879 and 1885.

The Indian Reform Letters were a powerful indictment of the U.S. government's Indian policy. Jackson documented the forced removal of Native Americans from their ancestral lands, the theft of their resources, and the widespread violence and corruption that plagued the Indian reservations. She argued that the government had a moral obligation to protect the rights of Native Americans and to compensate them for the wrongs that had been done to them.

### **The Impact of the Letters**

The Indian Reform Letters had a profound impact on the American public. They helped to raise awareness of the plight of Native Americans and sparked a national movement for Indian reform. The letters also influenced President Grover Cleveland, who in 1887 signed the Dawes Act, a major piece of legislation that aimed to assimilate Native Americans into white

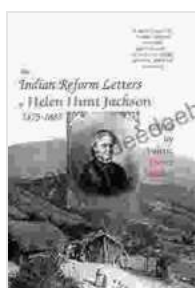
society. However, the Dawes Act ultimately failed to achieve its goals and led to further dispossession and poverty for Native Americans.

## Jackson's Legacy

Helen Hunt Jackson died in 1885, but her legacy continues to live on. Her Indian Reform Letters remain an important historical document and a powerful reminder of the injustices that have been done to Native Americans. Jackson's work helped to raise awareness of the plight of Native Americans and inspired others to fight for their rights. She is considered one of the most important figures in the history of Indian reform.

## Further Reading

- Helen Hunt Jackson: A Voice for the Voiceless (National Park Service)
- Helen Hunt Jackson (Nevada Writers Hall of Fame)
- Helen Hunt Jackson and American Indian Reform (California State University, Fresno)



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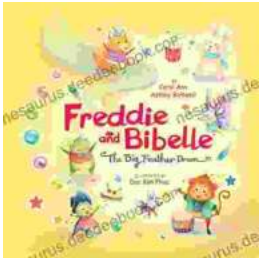
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