

Missionary Work Among the Indians.

As has been said in last issue, the first thing to do in undertaking missionary work among the Indians is to please them—to win their esteem and affection. The Indians must fully understand you and see that you are animated with feelings most devoted to their interests. You must also understand them, understand the Indian ways and manners, and for that purpose you must be acquainted with their language. In these districts it is very easy to communicate with the Indians through the means of the "Chinook Jargon," which is learned in a very short time. But with that alone you cannot become thoroughly conversant with the Indians; you must also learn the Indian language, otherwise you will never be able to know the Indians properly and to understand them entirely. They will hide from you everything they have an interest in, and they can speak between themselves, behind your back and even in your face of things which would be very important for you to know, and yet you do not understand the first word of it. Unless you know the language you are like a man in a strange land who needs to have everything interpreted to him, and who does not know the first thing that is going on about him. The benefit and enjoyment derived from a knowledge of the language of the tribe among which you are is too evident to require more comment.

Even while you preach to the Indians through the medium of an interpreter, it is necessary to have a certain knowledge of the language, otherwise you cannot know how much the Indians understand of what you have to tell

them. You do not know whether your interpreter translates your words properly or not. Very often the interpreter himself does not see the meaning of what you say. How can he convey it to the others? Yet he has to speak, and rather than show that he does not understand you or that he is mistaken, he will go on telling the Indians often the opposite of what you want them to hear. Most interpreters translate the Chinook word for word, which makes a very queer meaning, if any at all, in the Indian language. Besides, they speak a kind of Indian Chinook which is as different from the genuine Indian language as it is from French or English. They are so intent on translating your words mechanically that they do not pay the least attention to the meaning, and they will be the last ones to give an accurate account of what they have heard you say and interpret it to the Indians.

We could relate a great number of amusing anecdotes to illustrate this subject. One wants to make the Indians understand that our Lord lived many years in Nazareth with Mary and Joseph. Now, the Chinook word for *year* is *snow*, which word has two meanings in the Jargon. The interpreter takes one meaning for the other and tells the Indians that *there was plenty of snow at Nazareth!!!*

One says: "I am very much obliged to Captain John for some valuable services and I am going to give him a *chapelet*," which means *prayer beads*. The interpreter mistakes the word *chapelet* for *sapplet*, which sounds somewhat alike to unaccustomed ears, and tells the Indians that the priest is going to give Captain John a *sack of flour*.