

The Cree Syllables.

In these days, when so many Indian-children are enjoying the advantages that are offered, not only by day schools, but especially by the Boarding and Industrial Schools, where they can learn English so as to have the gates of knowledge, as it were, thrown open to them, it is interesting to look back and think of the work that has been accomplished in the past, by earnest and devoted men, who labored under great disadvantages for the good and advancement of the Indian race, long before railroads were even thought of, and while this country was not known as anything but the abode of wild beasts and savage Indians. Among those pioneers of the Cross, none has done more, or is more deserving of honor, than the man who invented the syllabic system of the Cree language.

In the early days of missionary work in this country, the only white men were the missionaries and the fur traders. The Indians lived entirely by hunting, and only visited the trading company's posts occasionally for purposes of barter. None understood any English, and we can easily understand how helpless a missionary must have felt when he first came among them. He longed to deliver his message, and he has at first to do it in a lame and halting way through an interpreter, if he could get one. He went to work and learnt the language; then he was able to speak to them directly, but he would soon find that his opportunities were few and far between, and he would wish that his hearers could carry with them, in their wanderings in the wilds, something that would remind them of the truths that he had endeavored to make known to them, or from which they could go on learning and also teach others. He would, as soon as he knew enough of the language, commence to translate portions of scripture, hymns, prayers, etc., and then the next thing would be to teach the Indians to read. But was it possible to teach an Indian to read? It certainly was no easy matter. We all know how long it takes to teach most children to read even English. The spelling is the great difficulty, especially with the long words. But what are long English words compared with Cree words? Take the simple sentence, "God is love"—in Cree "Muneto sakihiwaniwow." What hope was there that an untutored Indian, with opportunities of receiving instruction few and far between, could ever learn to spell out words of eight, ten or twelve syllables? Some method other than the English must be devised to enable him to read in his own tongue, and it fell on the lot of the Rev. James Evans, missionary at Norway house, of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, to be privileged to confer the boon of a written language on the Cree nation, by his invention of the Syllabic characters. The Cree syllables are so simple and so suited to the language, that any intelligent Indian can, in a week, acquire a sufficient knowledge of them to be able to perfect himself without any further instruction.

It was over fifty years ago that Mr. Evans invented the Cree Syllables, and all other religious bodies, laboring among the Indians, soon availed themselves of the use of the system. The late Bishop Horden of Moosonee was an enthusiast in favor of

the Cree Syllables. He adapted them to the Esquimaux language also. Mr. Evans' own connection with the work was brought to a close by a somewhat tragic occurrence. He was on his way up to Churchill river, they had reached a point about midway between where the Church of England Mission at Stanley, and the Roman Catholic Mission at Isle A-la-Croise are now situated. The accidental discharge of a gun in his hand caused the death of one of his canoe men, an attached and faithful follower, and the shock of this accident affected Mr. Evans so greatly, that he not only felt unequal to continuing that missionary voyage, but shortly afterwards retired from the mission field altogether.

The exact spot where the accident occurred, was pointed out to the writer, more than thirty years afterwards, by an Indian who was one of the canoemen at the time.

J. A. MACKAY.

"I made my first long Indian missionary journey with Bishop Hare in Dakota; After that journey a lady said to me, 'What are the Indians like anyway?'

I replied, 'They are browner than I am, though not much, but otherwise they are just like us.'

'What do you mean?' she said.

'They eat the same as we do when they get anything to eat, they dress the same as we do when they get anything to wear, they like the same things, and they need the same things; and the great thing they need is work.'

* * *

"When I was going to Washington a woman came to me and said:

'When you go to Washington, you ask Government help me?'

'The Government help you?' I said.

'Why should the Government help you? What do you want?'

'We want money. Ask Government give me some money.'

'What you want money for?' I asked.

'Buy things, help along.'

'Well,' I replied, 'I have lived fifty years and the Government has never given me a penny. Why should it help you?'

'Government not help you? Government not give you money?' she cried in surprise.

She thought, and the most of them thought, that the Government supported us all only that we were greater favorites with it than they are.

No, they are not lazy. They will work if you give it to them; but it goes a great way with them if you can let them see that you work, too."

—MISS SYBIL CARTER in The Red Man.

In speaking of Indian education, Thomas J. Morgan, United States ex-Commissioner of Indian Affairs says that one reason for retaining the pupils in Industrial Institutes for a considerable length of time is that the influences of the school which are necessarily cumulative, may have their full force in broaking up the bad habits acquired on their Reservation and in establishing correct habits of regularity, industry, thrift etc: in their stead. It is no easy matter to change the habits of any class of people after they have become at all fixed, and it is particularly difficult in the case of those who, like the Indians, have been accustomed to ways so entirely foreign to those which it is desirable for them to adopt as they pass from heathensim to civilization."

A Knowledge of Indian Character

We often hear the expression made use of "knowledge of Indian character." So and so has a good knowledge of Indian character." "He knows how to deal with Indians," and so on. Indian character is simply human nature, and the man who knows best how to deal with Indians, is he who endeavors to follow the precept that is of as wide application as the salvation offered by Him who uttered the words, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you even so do ye unto them."

We make a mistake when we fail to inculcate an element of Christianity into our civilization.

To ensure a safe dwelling place: Let Prayer be the key of the morning, and the bolt of the evening.

What is worth doing at all is worth doing well. Do everything well: make that the rule of your life, and live up to it.

Idleness is a great curse, Industrial education is a remedy for idleness. Life does not consist in mere pleasure, but we must live to improve ourselves and try to make the world better.

AN UNTRUTH.

Two young masons were building a brick wall—the front wall of a high house. One of them, in placing a brick, discovered that it was a little thicker on one side than the other. His companion advised him to throw it out. "It will make your wall untrue, Ben," he said.

"Pooh" answered Ben, "what difference will such a trifle as that make? You are too particular."

"My mother," replied he "taught me that the truth is truth, and ever so little an untruth is a lie, and a lie is no trifle."

"O!" said Ben, "that's all very well; but I am not lying, and have no intention of lying."

"Very true; but you make your wall tell a lie, and I have read that a lie in one's work is like a lie in one's character—it will show itself soon or late, and will bring harm, if not ruin."

"I'll risk it in this case," answered Ben, and he worked away, laying more bricks, and carrying the wall up higher till the close of the day, when they quit work and went home.

The next morning they went to resume the work, when, behold! the lie had wrought out the result of all lies. The wall, getting a little slant from the untrue brick, and more and more untrue as the wall got higher, and at last, in the night, had toppled over again. Just so with ever so little an untruth in your character; it grows more and more untrue, if you permit it to remain, until it brings sorrow and ruin. Tell, act, and live the exact truth always.

An amusing story of Gladstonolatry is told of a man, one of the tourists who visited Hawarden in the summer. He picked up a splinter of a tree as it fell from Mr. Gladstone's axe, with the remark that it should be buried with him in his coffin. To which his wife retorted "If you'd worship God half as much as you worship Gladstone, you'd stand a better chance of not getting your chip burnt."

China has lost her only sailor. May he rest in peace. Poor Ting.