

Missionary.

Great Missionaries.

DAVID BRAINERD.

How one earnest life influences another is illustrated in the case of David Brainerd, who first became interested in missions through reading of the work accomplished by John Eliot, whose career was sketched in last month's ERA.

David Brainerd was born in Connecticut, New England, in 1718, and was brought up in the strict doctrines of Calvinism. From a child his mind was deeply impressed with religious truths, and he frequently prayed that God would open up his way into the Christian ministry.

In the year 1739 he became a student at Yale College, but his naturally frail constitution could not stand the strain of hard study, and he was sent home to die. Recovering, he returned to college, but soon got into difficulty. With other students he had felt the influence of the revival under Wesley and Whitfield, and had developed an intense religious enthusiasm, which was not altogether discreet. In the heat of discussion he had said that one of his tutors "had no more grace than a chair." Upon this being reported to the faculty, the culprit was called upon to make public confession and retraction. This he declined to do, and the authorities expelled him from the institution. Strong, but ineffectual efforts were made for his restoration. Shortly after this he commenced his labors among the Indians at a place called Kent. He had scarcely any acquaintance with the Indian language, and yet the people seemed greatly impressed by the earnestness of his preaching. The Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge, of Scotland, having heard of his missionary enthusiasm, engaged him, and he commenced his labors under their direction at a place called Kanaumek, near Albany.

He was in an extremely bad state of health at this time. He would often become so weak as scarcely to be able to stand, and the pain from which he continually suffered showed that he already possessed the seeds of a terrible lung disease. In this state he arrived in Kanaumek, riding and wading through swamps, forcing his way through the luxurious vegetation of the forests, and toiling over the rocky mountains which surrounded his future halting place.

His lodging was in the hut of a Scotch family recently arrived from the Highlands, but their coarse fare and straw beds were ill suited for one of his frail constitution. But of his health he had no thought.

For some time he lived among the Indians altogether away from the whites, but he was wholly dependent on himself for his means of sustenance. He would not enter into a wigwam and partake of even the poor fare which sufficed for the Indians' meal; but, like Eliot, compelled himself to provide for his wants: and we

can well imagine the straits into which he was driven in his efforts to supply himself with food. He was forced to go ten or fifteen miles for all his bread, and when he laid any quantity by for the future, it would get sour or mouldy before he ate it. Sometimes he complained that for days together he had none at all, not being able to send any one for it, nor able to catch his own horse in order to go himself. Once, when in a dilemma such as this, he made some cakes out of Indian meal he had by him, and fried them, and then "blessed God as much for my present circumstances as if I had been a king."

His life among the Indians was a terribly hard one, yet, when entering upon his work, he had sold all his personal effects, and devoted the proceeds towards the maintenance of a pupil at the college; and now, by depriving himself of almost the necessities of life, he was able to save a considerable sum to be devoted to charitable purposes.

The hardships and perils through which Brainerd passed are almost incredible. Of him it may be truly said, "He died daily." Death seemed to stare him constantly in the face, and met him at every turn of the way. The constant fear of breaking down spurred him on to win as many souls as possible before the end should come. Often sorely stricken with sickness, he was always urging himself to do more, and to do it quickly lest it should be too late. Much of his preaching seems to have been thrown away since the good seed was not carefully tended, and his visits were too transient to be entirely successful. Yet at last the cloud showed the silver lining, and darkness began to flee before the rising sun.

At a place called Crossweeksung, in New Jersey, he had the intense joy of witnessing a most remarkable religious awakening. The power of the Holy Ghost was upon him, and as he preached the Indians were impressed in a wonderful manner. Scarcely had he been in the settlement two or three days before everyone was making the enquiry, "What shall we do to be saved?" The penitence of these poor Indians greatly affected the missionary. When they gathered for their evening meal in the wigwam, they would wait until he came to bless the food. Each sermon which Brainerd preached seemed to be productive of increasingly satisfactory results, and many were savingly converted. Brainerd himself says that a most surprising concern fell upon the whole Indian population. From all parts the people came streaming in, holding his bridle, and crowding round his horse to catch a few words of instruction. He stood among them and talked about the love of God, while the air was filled with their cries for mercy. One of the striking features of this revival was the fact that the preaching to which they listened had nothing of the terrors of the law in it. Brainerd specially observes this, and expresses surprise to find the hearts of these Indians so melted by the story of the love of Jesus. He thus describes this awakening:—"I stood amazed at the influence which seized the audience almost universally, and could compare it to nothing more aptly than the irresistible force of a mighty torrent, or swelling deluge, that with its insup-

portable weight and pressure bears down and sweeps before it whatever is in its way. Almost all persons of all ages were bowed down with concern together, and scarcely one was able to withstand the shock of this surprising operation. Old men and women who had been drunken wretches for many years, and some little children, not more than six or seven years of age, appeared in distress for their souls as well as persons of middle age. It was very affecting to see the poor Indians, who the other day were hallooing and yelling in their idolatrous feasts and drunken frolics, now crying to God with such importunity for an interest in His dear Son."

The reality of this great spiritual awakening among the Indians was proven by the thoroughness of their change of life. They asked the missionary for instructions, and were willing to do anything which would conform their conduct to principles of the Christian religion. They began to pay their debts, to lay aside all exhibitions of temper, and to live with each other in brotherly love.

In February, 1746, he opened a school for children. About thirty entered it and made surprising progress, several being able in five months to read the New Testament. He also conducted a night school for the older people. The spiritual work, which of course was his chosen concern, continued to show signs of real success. He adopted the method of taking with him on his missionary journeys half a dozen of his more earnest and capable Christian converts, and these were of great assistance. Of his converted Indians Brainerd speaks with evident confidence: "I know of no assembly of Christians where there seems to be so much of the presence of God, where brotherly love so much prevails, and where I take so much delight in the public worship of God in general, as in my own congregations; although not more than nine months ago they were worshipping devils and dumb idols. Amazing change, this! effected by nothing less than the divine power of Christ. This is the doing of the Lord, and it is justly marvellous in our eyes."

He found his work greatly hindered by the condition of his health. The hardships he had to encounter had broken his constitution, and he was well aware that his incurable disease must soon prove fatal. Frequently he was obliged to sleep in the woods at night, and this caused him to spit blood, and often was so feeble that he was scarcely able to sit on his horse. Upon consulting a physician he was frankly told that he had not the slightest chance of recovery. Such a statement to most men would lead to deep depression, but to this man of God it did not interfere in the slightest with his cheerfulness of heart and brightness of conversation.

His physicians, possibly recognizing that his habit of incessant activity was a necessity to his life, now gave him the advice that if he would continue riding as much as possible it would tend to prolong his life. He acted upon this recommendation, and almost until his death he was constantly in the saddle, and swiftly passing from place to place, although the effort caused him exquisite