

Having learned a little of the history and character of the man we were next to visit, I was prepared to set him right. He had been a professing Christian. It appears he now keeps two wives—not openly, however; he is lawfully married to one. In my experience I have found it almost always necessary to know something of the past history of the person to whom I wish to speak on religious matters for the first time; if not, I may come away with false impressions. We found this man and a neighbor building a small dwelling-house. We sat down on the logs for a chat. Having spoken to the neighbor I then turned to the person in question, and for over an hour talked to him. During this time he confessed many “petty” faults, and made excuses, but all I could do he would not hint at the great crime of his life. At length I was obliged to tell him plainly of his sin. This silenced him; and then I gave him a little plain talk. We then went into his tent to have prayer, after which we were prepared to move on. But receiving an invitation to “dine,” we sat down, and had placed before us a dish of wild rice boiled in *muchumawpy* (rice soup). There was but one dish and one spoon for myself and interpreter, with a tin cup for tea. In this way I got credit for eating and drinking my share, which I fear I should not have received under different circumstances. However I allowed this to suffice for a midday meal, and on we went.

I have seldom been asked by Indians to eat with them; but when I am, I don't like to refuse. Out of kindness they wish to share with us what they have, and should we refuse they are greatly wounded. There have been times when, if I had refused to appreciate such hospitality, my influence for good among them would have been greatly injured. During the rest of the day we were able to visit several families and had a very profitable and interesting time—talking, reading, singing and praying.

Next day, out again. We found some who enquired into our teaching, and wished to understand the plan of salvation; others, who were already professing Christians, promised to be more active; while others had no desire to change their way of living for that of Christianity. To give anything like a detailed report of the day's work would, I fear, occupy too much of your time; yet it would be fully as interesting, if not more so, than what I have already written. But, before dismissing this part of the subject, I wish to say a word more about Tommy Thomas, the pagan with two wives. On entering his house I spoke to him in Cree, and asked how he was. He replied that he was only poorly, for he had been sick almost all summer. Speaking then through the interpreter, I asked what his mind was in reference to spiritual things which

I had already spoken of more than once? He replied:

“Tell the Praying Chief I am glad to have him come to see me, and pray for me; I am a poor, helpless creature. Tell the praying people to pray for me. I want to be right and do right. Pray for me, pray for me,” etc.

I then pointed out to him the only path of duty and safety. It seemed almost impossible that such a change could take place in the mind of any one as I witnessed in this man. But two years ago, or a little more, he positively refused to have anything to do with our Christianity.

Having completed these visits, a public service was held in the new schoolhouse, which, although not finished, was fitted up for the occasion. It is a fine, commodious building. Would do credit to any civilized community. It has been built wholly by the Indians.

From the outset I have been trying to educate these people to support those who are sent among them as missionaries. They commenced by assisting Bro. Bear over a year ago, which they did in no shabby way.

At the close of the meeting I stated that, as they had no teacher nor missionary, I would try to visit them often during the winter—say once a month. But as this would increase the expenses which the committee might not allow, I would ask them to aid in lessening the expenses. They had displayed such courage and self-denial in the erection of the house, that I could hardly press for much, but if they could to begin, promise to supply fish for dog-feed it would be an item, which in the end would count. But, as I had not previously mentioned this, I would allow them time to consider and afterward report. Experience had taught me not to expect sudden responses to such requests. I once proposed something like this at Norway House, and waited for a reply, but was met with a silence which did not mean consent, and was told afterward that the proposition was right, but came upon them too sudden. If they had had time to talk the matter over, there would have been no hesitation.

But on this occasion I was surprised to hear one say: “I don't think in a matter of this kind we need to hold a council meeting before saying what we can do; for my part, I shall do what I am able.” Another and another spoke in like manner. When I visited Poplar River in the early part of December, the fish were on hand at the H.B.C. store. I then asked them to supply fish for a week or two in January next and a home for my man, and I would stay with them longer than I had done on any previous occasion. To this they willingly agreed. I have some hope of Poplar River yet.