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Wm. Howe Esq.

A BRIEF STATEMENT

RESPECTING THE

MICMAC MISSION.

For the satisfaction of those who are interested in the spiritual and temporal welfare of the Indians, the following brief statement has been drawn up :—

The Mission has not been abandoned, though no public meetings have been held in Halifax for several years to advocate its claims, and no Annual Reports have been published.

In looking back over the past thirty years, during which, whatever other work has engaged my attention, the welfare of these poor people has been the main object of my life and labors, I am truly astonished, and cannot but admire the grace and goodness of God, who, as I never have doubted, first led us to engage in

the work, and who has sustained us through an amount of difficulties, labours, discouragements and hardships, that, now that they are past, appear truly appalling. I am amazed that I did not break down and abandon the work years ago. I ascribe it solely to the sustaining goodness of God.

As this statement is intended to be little more than a private circular for Christian friends, I may be allowed to refer to myself, and to my labours and trials without reserve: my readers will, I feel persuaded, make all due allowance under the circumstances.

First, then, I may say that I had almost no assistance in learning the Micmac language, and it would have been a difficult task even if I had been supplied with every needful aid. For it has always been a difficult task for me to remember foreign words, and names, and numbers; though charmed with the study of languages, and easily recalling the meaning of words when I saw them. I could soon master a foreign language so as to translate from it into English: to translate from English into the other was always a difficult task. But in order to *speak* a language, you must not only be able to remember the words and grammatical niceties, but you must be able to do this without effort. To attain this end, in the case in question, was an arduous task,—but thanks to Him who once said: “Who hath made man’s mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? Have not I, JEHOVAH? Now, therefore, go and I will be with thy mouth and

teach thee what thou shalt say," (Ex. 4, 11, 12)—it was accomplished.

But the difficulty of remembering and using in a correct manner long difficult Indian words, was only a tithe of the trouble. To master the language, to reduce it to writing, to compose one's own Grammar and Dictionary, and to translate the New Testament, would have been a formidable task, had I had the advantage of a thorough collegiate training, and all the advantages of money and leisure. But neither of the three had fallen to my lot. Up to the time when I was in my twenty-third year, my *school-days* had been few and far between, and my teaching of the flattest imaginable kind. *Reading, writing and arithmetic* were all that any of my instructors professed to teach, and of the latter branch there was precious little, for I learned to cipher by myself after I was seventeen years old, during the winter evenings, after the toils of the day were over. And the school teacher to whom I went longest in my childhood could not even *write*—peace to her memory! for she was an intelligent, noble-hearted, christian girl, nevertheless, who could teach us to *pray*, and show us the way to Heaven, by her bright and living example, even though she could only teach us our "Dilworth," and our "New England Primer." I had, however, when I commenced the study of *Micmac*, mastered the difficulties of Latin, Greek, Hebrew and French, with such assistance as came within my reach, without attending a regular institution of learning. And, perhaps, a training of

this sort was a better preparation after all for my special life work—than a regular Collegiate course would have been. One gets accustomed under such circumstances to grappling with difficulties single-handed and overcoming them.

But *time* for the labour was needed, and *bread* for already quite a large family. How were these to be obtained? Alas, this was a question I could not for a long time answer. For be it remembered, that when we ventured to appeal, in the year 1849, to the public in Halifax for aid, and the Christian community were aroused and came up generously to the work, a good deal of progress had already been made. I could then hold conversation, to a small extent, with the Indians in their own tongue, and had, with the assistance of an Indian who spoke tolerable English, translated the Gospel of Luke into Micmac, with some other portions of Scripture.

But there were greater objections still in the way. The very people for whom I was laboring, and on whom I had to depend for all the aid I could get in learning the language, and in translating the Bible, were led to look upon me as a deadly foe. Violence was sometimes offered to my person by the Indians, and often threatened. I was once attacked and pursued by a crowd of Indians, men and women, the men putting the women forward with their clubs, and I escaped bodily harm only by the good hand of God upon me, and by flight.

Then I was sometimes insulted in the most gross

manner by others besides Indians,—by white men, priests, and white women, too, whose terrible revilings and curses it was grievous to hear, let alone to bear, even though their clubs, axes, and fire-brands were merely brandished over my head, or hurled into the air, in such a manner as to demonstrate how successfully those weapons would be used if they only dared.

I had to bear harder words still from a different quarter. “For it was not an enemy *now* that did it; *then* I could have borne it. But it was thou, my friend, mine equal. We had taken sweet counsel together, and had walked to the house of God in company.” I had laid the matter before the Baptist denomination, but they were unable to undertake the mission, being burdened with their literary institutions, &c., and I was advised to appeal to the Christian public generally. This was done. But no sooner had the Christian public, ministers, and people of the different denominations, taken hold of the work of raising funds, in the most generous manner, requiring no concession on my part, except that in translating the New Testament the words referring to “Baptism” should be *transferred*, and not *translated*, than a storm was raised by the Baptist denomination; and article after article appeared in the *Messenger* and *Visitor*, denouncing me and the Baptist members of the Committee, in the most fearful manner, and treating our Pedit-baptist friends, as well as myself, in such a style, that, on looking back upon it, I cannot but wonder that they did not desert us altogether in perfect disgust. I have no

wish to revive animosities, nor to remember any of these things, except to admire the grace that enabled us to bear them, and to persevere in our work in spite of them. But it is always trying to suffer for well-doing, tho' certainly much better than to suffer for *evil-doing*. And it is a satisfaction to remember that however zealous for the truth individuals or bodies of men may be, and however confident that they are right, they are not infallible, and we can differ from them in opinion without sin. Still, it was exceedingly trying and hard to be borne, to be denounced as a traitor, accused of prevarication, and held up to scorn and ridicule, as I was repeatedly, especially in the *Christian Visitor*, at the time, and in the *Messenger*, too, tho' the *Messenger*, I am happy to say, was much more moderate than the other. I was also overhauled at the Baptist Association at Onslow, and cross-examined and blamed; but though a few of the Baptist ministers always continued to manifest their displeasure, and to stand aloof, it amounted to very little; and the greater portion of the denomination always treated me kindly, and aided me.

But there were other troubles. We made great and self-denying efforts to assist the Indians in their temporal affairs. With few exceptions, our labours in this department ended only in disappointment, vexation and harm. Time, and money, and anxiety, and toil, as it turned out, were worse than thrown away. Our kindness was misrepresented and misunderstood; and the Indians were exasperated, because we did so

ago, will prove to any one that a wonderful change for the better has taken place among them. And we may boldly ask, if this improvement has not been mainly owing, under God, the author of all good, to the Micmac Mission, to what other great work has it been due? What other agency has been at work in their special behalf? I know of none. It is well known that the Romish priests have made efforts only to keep them in ignorance and to prevent any change in their habits. They never gave them the Scriptures, never attempted to civilize them, never taught them to read. They made no efforts to provide schools for them, but, on the contrary, set themselves in deadly opposition to those who would have done so. Thirty years ago an Indian that could read, was, in Nova Scotia, Cape Breton, and P. E. Island, the domain of the Micmacs, an almost unheard of thing. As for the Bible, they knew not that there was such a book, and had they known there was such a book, there was no possibility of their knowing what was in it. Their knowledge of English even now scarcely allows one in a hundred to understand a book in that language, although the most of them speak the language much better than they did thirty years ago. *Now* the whole New Testament and several books of the Old, are translated into Micmac, are circulated freely among them, multitudes of Indians everywhere can read them, and they receive them and retain them despite all the efforts made to prevent it. And I am happy to add that I can ask for no more kindly treatment than I have been in the habit of

receiving for several years past among the Indians of these Provinces. They treat me everywhere with respect, listen with great interest and attention to the doctrines of the Gospel, and in not a few instances, individuals have given evidence of having received the truth in the love of it ; for they have lived consistent lives, or died happy, triumphant deaths.

I have never baptized but one Indian. A much more worthy Missionary than I can claim to be, has said, strangely as the doctrine sounds to modern ears : " I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius"—" For Christ sent me, not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel!" (See 1 Cor., 1.14-17.) And I humbly trust that *I myself* have never made a single convert ; but I am satisfied that God has made a good many converts among the Micmac Indians, as well as among other tribes. Nor have I ever had any reason to complain of the one that I had the happiness to baptize about twenty years ago. That Indian up to the present time, has been a most consistent Christian, so far as I have been able to ascertain. It may cause some surprise to learn that that Indian's name is " BEN. CHRISTMAS"—but it is *Mrs.* not *Mr.* Ben. Christmas. She still lives, and I-trust she may hold out to the end. That is not all. Their eldest son died several years ago of consumption, at Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. He was about eighteen years of age ; and the testimony of his mother and the Christian friends who knew him, is, that he was a child of God, and that he died happy in the Lord. Another of her children—another Christ-

mas—Harriet Christmas, who died in Truro some years ago, gave such evidence of faith in the Lord Jesus, and triumph in the hour of death, that the white friends who saw and heard her, were astonished beyond measure. The Rev. Mr. Dimock published an extensive notice of it in the *Christian Messenger*. I could mention several more among the sleeping and the living, but let these suffice.

For the last three years, while never losing sight of the Indians; I have not been attending as exclusively to them as formerly. I have been compelled to rest. The labor of translating and correcting the New Testament, and of transcribing it, and of correcting the press while the printing was going on, crowded too much brain work upon me, and I broke down under it, and had an attack of fever in the autumn of 1875, just after the whole work was done. The doctors enjoined rest from work of that kind; and change of labor is rest. But I cannot and do not lose sight of the Indians. I can tell them in their own tongue wherein they were born, the marvellous story of the Cross, and as long as the Lord keeps me here, I hope to be able to continue to tell that story to those people, and to others. May the good Lord enable me to do so with more earnestness and power than heretofore.

What has been accomplished, when looked at from a mere human standpoint, is certainly not much; but when looked at in the light of eternal truth, it is much. The salvation of one soul is of more value than the conquest of kingdoms, or the discoveries of

the richest mines of silver and gold. "Thy word is better to me than thousands of gold and silver." An aged Indian to whom it was my privilege, many years ago, to make known the Gospel, and whom I taught to read, and furnished him with the whole New Testament in his own tongue, lately held the book up in my hand and said to me: "I have read that through, I suppose, fifty times;" and regretted that the Old Testament was still locked up from him in a language which he could not understand. His English enables him to transact a little business in that language, but, like the mass of his brethren, he cannot understand a book composed in English. It is pleasing to be able to add, that in all directions now, Indian children attend the schools, which are now open to them as to all classes, and they are cultivating a better acquaintance with the English language, as well as with the customs of civilization. This is one of the minor blessings resulting from the Micmac Mission, and since the Word of the Lord goes forth freely among them, we need not despair of the blessed results.

Now, I must remind our friends that their pecuniary aid is needed just as much as ever. I am more and more in favor of the voluntary system. For nearly sixteen years I have followed the system of receiving *unsolicited* aid, and I like it. No personal applications are made, nor have been, for the last fifteen years and more. But there has been no lack. Paul could boast of being *poor*. Some of us, his successors, are happy to be able to do the same. Laying

up money has formed no part of our life labor. It is just and right to state this, that all whom the Lord may move to send us aid, may know that their offerings are needed, and will be thankfully received. As for myself, I am now *old*, nearly seventy. My work is nearly done. But now that I am old and gray-headed, my belief is that I shall not be forsaken. I can commit all into the Lord's blessed hands. He can accomplish His own work in His own way. Let us sing the 23rd Psalm, and allow the Lord Jehovah to plan His own business and to plan ours.

SILAS T. RAND.

HANTSPORT, N. S., Jan'y 1880.