Lucy Margaret Baker

A Biographical Sketch of the first Missionary of our Canadian Presbyterian Church to the North-West Indians

BY

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W. D.

PREFACE

FEELING deeply that the heroic efforts of our pioneer women missionaries should be held in grateful remembrance by our W. M. S., Mrs. Wm. Byers of Montreal, at the request of the Executive Board, undertook the preparation of the following short biographical sketch of Miss Lucy Margaret Baker, the first Canadian woman to represent us in mission work among the Indians of our own land.

This sketch was begun in 1917—the 50th anniversary of the first steps taken by the Western section of our Church to send forth messengers to the aborigines of Canada, who were sunk in superstition and darkness.

In addition to what the writer remembers from personal conversation with the subject of the memoir, the material for the sketch was obtained from relatives, friends and fellow-workers and also from the Church's Blue Books, Records, and W. M. S. Annual Reports, that whatever was related might be accurate.

The outbreak of the war prevented this memoir being printed at the time it was prepared. This is to be regretted as Mrs. Byers has since been called Home. But it will not have been written in vain if it proves "an incentive to some of our young people to follow the example set by this noble woman," and makes us all grateful for her life, which was the expressed wish of the compiler, Elizabeth A. Byers.

M. C. G. F.

Miss Lucy M. Baker

The Life of Lucy M. Baker

CHAPTER I.

EARLY YEARS

"Onward, onward will we press
Through the path of duty;
Virtue is true happiness;
Excellence true beauty;
Minds are of supernal birth,
Let us make a heaven of earth."

DURING a visit to Winnipeg a few years ago, while out for a drive, a gentleman of the party, an "old timer," remarked to the writer, on reaching a point about three miles west of the city, "This is the spot where the Nisbets encamped the first night of their journey to start mission work amongst the Indians."

What a change to-day! Part of what was then an almost impassable trail is now Portage Avenue. This leading thoroughfare to the west, following the Assiniboine river, is not only well settled on each side, but is paved for miles out of the city, having on it a fine line of trolley cars.

That exodus of the Nisbets and party was in 1866. How well we older women remember the date, and with what interest we read of and followed this great venture of our pioneer woman missionary, Lucy Margaret Baker, into the almost unknown regions of the "Great Lone Land."

As we write our missionary's name it seems so appropriate, and almost prophetically chosen, "Lucy," a light; "Margaret," a pearl. A "light bearer" she certainly was, not only to the poor benighted pagans, amongst whom she sojourned so long, and whose sad condition called forth her deepest sympathy and most practical help, but also to all who knew her life of joyful, loving sacrifice. And she was "a pearl" amongst the King's daughters; such a jewel as, without doubt, now adorns the crown of Him whom she rejoiced to serve.

This brave, but modest little woman, was born at Summertown, Glengarry County, Ontario, in 1836.

Her mother dying while Lucy was still too young to remember her, she was adopted by her father's sister, Mrs. Buchanan of Dundee, Que. Here she was tenderly cared for and brought up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

From an early age the desire to learn and impart knowledge was a marked characteristic of the child.

When old enough to pass from the Dundee district school, Miss Baker finished her preliminary education at a very good educational institution at Fort Covington, N.Y. After graduating from this school, she returned to Dundee to teach. She also took an active part in the Missionary and Sunday School work of Zion Church, of which she was a consistent member, Rev. Donald Ross being the minister. Some time after this Mr. Ross was called to the pastorate of the Presbyterian congregation at Lancaster, Ont., and probably it was on his recommendation that Miss Baker became for some time a teacher in that village. As the writer has been unable to ascertain the correct dates of the events of this stage of Miss Baker's career, they may not be recorded in their proper sequence, but the facts are as given by one of her relatives, and are, no doubt, accurate, and show unmistakably how an over-ruling Providence was fitting a willing and obedient daughter for her future life.

An important step in Miss Baker's preparation was her being called upon to accompany an invalid relative to France. While there she perfected herself in French, which she afterwards taught and spoke with fluency.

This visit to Europe was made in 1876, but Miss Baker must have had a good knowledge of the language previous to that time as, associated with another cousin, Mrs. Grubb, formerly Juliet Buchanan, she had taught French in a ladies' day and boarding school somewhere in New Jersey. Mrs. Grubb and Miss Baker were carrying on a ladies' school at New Orleans at the time the Civil war, between north and south, broke out. They had quite a trying and exciting experience before reaching the north again, having difficulty in

getting through the blockade. This, however, was at last managed through the kindly assistance of a naval officer, a personal friend of these ladies. Shortly after this experience Miss Baker went to teach in a private school in Lancaster, under the direction of her old pastor, Mr. Ross.

In 1878 Mr. Ross was appointed by the Home Mission Board of our church to go to Prince Albert. The Foreign Mission Board wishing to retain control of the School which had been started under Mr. Nisbet, asked Miss Baker to accompany Mr. and Mrs. Ross, and become the teacher of the mixed races of children then in attendance.

CHAPTER II.

PRINCE ALBERT DAYS

"She being dead yet speaketh."

IN looking over a collection of old MSS. left by Miss Baker, a copy of a most interesting letter was found. This letter had been written to Miss Dixon, at that time secretary of the W. F. M. S. of Kingston Presbyterial, in response to a request for accurate information regarding her field and work, twenty-one years after she had entered upon it.

She writes: "You ask me for an account of my life in the North-West; I can only give you a very short sketch, as my experience now stands over twenty-one years, and my work has changed from time to time to meet the varied needs of the frequent changes taking place in a new country. Prince Albert Mission, with which we have been connected, was opened in 1866, and is noted for being the first Mission of our Church to the heathen, and these the pagan Indians of our own land.

"The pioneer missionary chosen to carry the good news of salvation to these wild savages of the North-West—or the 'Great Lone Land,' as it was then designated, was the Rev. Jas. Nisbet. Imagine this heroic missionary starting out from Fort Garry on the Red River, a spot near where the city of Winnipeg now stands, with his wife, his brother-in-law, J. McKay, who was also to act as interpreter, Mrs. McKay, and a few others who were engaged as helpers. Their mode of conveyance was in Red River carts, which were made entirely of wood, and as they journeyed on, kept up a continual screeching. But they were good carts, in a way, as they served a double purpose. On coming to a stream which could not be forded, they were taken apart and formed into rafts.

"After travelling about 600 miles north-west, on an Indian trail, in quest of a suitable place to start a mission, they came to a beautiful spot on the south bank of the swift flowing Saskatchewan river, where they pitched their tents, and after much parleying with the Indians, selected a spot and commenced work.

"A palisade about 6½ feet in height enclosing about three acres of land was erected, and inside this enclosure were built log houses for the accommodation of the missionary and his staff.

"This spot they called 'Prince Albert,' in honor of her late Majesty's consort; a name which the town, now built on the same site, still retains.

"As the party did not reach their point of destination until the 26th of July, 1866, the missionary had to devote much of his time to superintending and putting up the buildings; indeed he did much of the carpenter work himself, whip-sawing lumber, etc.

"Notwithstanding all these exertions, the party had to live in tents long after the ground was covered with snow.

"But our missionary did not neglect the spiritual part of his work. Roving bands of wild Indians were continually coming and going and would camp for days near the spot; to these he preached the Gospel, opened a school for the children and taught the young men four evenings in the week. The next year he tried to induce as many Indians as he could to settle down and farm; but as the buffalo at that time were very plentiful not many would listen.

"For years Mr. Nisbet worked unceasingly, then his wife was taken very ill; he made an ambulance wagon and took her back to Kildonan, on the Red River, her native place (not far from where Winnipeg now stands) to obtain medical aid. Mrs. Nisbet died shortly after their arrival, and her husband, worn out with fatigue, soon followed her.

"In 1878 the aspect of the mission changed. A few families from Kildonan had settled near by, also some white settlers. As the buffalo had by this time disappeared in the vicinity of the mission efforts were made by the Government to place the Indians on reserves, and everything indicated that Prince Albert would become the site of a town. So in 1878 the Foreign Mission Board transferred the mission at Prince Albert to the Home Mission Board, whose aim was to meet the wants of the white settlers, the Foreign Mission Board retaining control of the day school, which had been established by Mr. Nisbet.

"In the meantime, negotiations were being made for the transferring of the Indian work to a reserve. The Home Mission Board agreed to the proposal, and appointed the Rev. Donald Ross, who was at that time the minister of the Presbyterian Church at Lancaster, Ont., to go out to Prince Albert and take up this work.

"At the same time I was appointed by the Foreign Mission Board as teacher of their school, and was to go out with Mr. Ross and family. We travelled together, with many difficulties by the way, as far as Winnipeg. There Mr. and Mrs. Ross, being both very ill, were obliged to give up the idea of going any further. I decided to go on and take up my work, if a suitable way could be found for me to cross the prairie.

"We heard of a lady who was going with her family to Edmonton, by way of Prince Albert, who agreed to take me with her as far as that point.

"The Red River carts, which I have already described, drawn by oxen and Indian ponies, were our mode of conveyance. We were six weeks making the journey, camping out all the time, arriving at Prince Albert on October 28th, 1879, with the thermometer standing 28 degrees below zero.

"There was no place where I could board, so I kept house by myself in a room of the old Mission building, inside the stockade, until the small house which had been built by Mr. Nisbet for his interpreter could be made warm and comfortable. After seven weeks I was able to take possession of this little house, and once again, most thankfully enjoyed a warm corner.

CHAPTER III.

MISSION WORK STARTS, AND GROWS

"Rest of the weary, Joy of the sad,
Hope of the dreary, Light of the glad;
Home of the stranger, Strength to the end
Refuge from danger, Saviour and Friend."

"ON our arrival we at once opened the school, which was composed of Indian half-breeds, and a few white children. The following year the Home Mission Board sent a missionary to carry on their part of the work, and soon after these Indians (Crees) were transferred to a reserve 80 miles west of Prince Albert. Their chief was a noble Christian man and the reserve was named after him 'Mistawasis.' Were you to visit that reserve to-day you would find a good church, a large congregation and surroundings quite like a white settlement.

School at Encampment, Prince Albert

"I taught the Mission School at Prince Albert until the rebellion of 1885. Public schools were then established and as we had a great deal of fatiguing work during the rebellion,

our cottage having been turned into a hospital, we were glad to take a rest, and made a visit east.

"Upon our return we assisted in a school which was carried on by the ministers of our Church. In 1891 a High School was established by the Government, and then work was commenced among a pagan band of Sioux Indians at their encampment, about 3 miles from town.

"Here we carried on our work in a tent, until a small building was erected. The medicine men bitterly opposed us; nevertheless, slow but sure progress was made. In 1895 the Government gave this band a reserve, and our school was then transferred to it. This is situated on the north bank of the Saskatchewan river, about 9 miles from the town. My assistant, Miss Cameron, and myself live alone on this reserve with these Indians, because we are sorry to say that, as yet, only a part of the band has consented to settle down on this reserve. We hope, however, that ere long they may be induced to join us.

"The medicine men are our greatest hindrance, and to relate our experiences with them would fill pages.

"In religion they are polytheistic, worshippers of the sun, north wind, air, water, etc. And their mode of worship consists principally in holy dances and holy feasts. They believe all sickness is caused by demons taking possession of the individual and the medicine men pretend to have the power to cast them out.

"The Indians living on the reserve are making good progress, the women and larger girls being taught to bake, knit, make quilts and sew. The children come to school in the morning and remain until evening. We give them their dinner at the school house, after which the girls wash the dishes and tidy the room.

"When we first settled on the reserve we could only get a few small children to come to Sunday School, but now we have regular Sabbath services, which I conduct mostly in Sioux. We have an organ and they all enjoy singing hymns. We often open with a familiar hymn 'Anpeta de Wakance.' which is Sioux for 'This is the day the Lord hath made.'

"As yet we have only one professing Christian, but with a pagan people steeped in ignorance and superstition the progress is necessarily slow. Yet when we contrast those on the reserve with those still on the old encampment we see a great change, thank God, and take courage. We see evidences that the Holy Spirit is working quietly and surely, and we believe in God's good time we shall have an abundant harvest."

This ends the letter written after 21 years of service. And for additional information we shall here insert a few items culled from the Church "Blue Books" regarding these Prince Albert days, before Miss Baker became a ward of the W. F. M. S.

In the H. M. report of 1881 we read that "the Mission School continues to prosper under Miss Baker," additional testimony being given regarding her 'thoroughness and efficiency. At this date there were 45 children on the roll, children of mixed blood, most of then speaking Cree. The Rev. Mr. Sievright was the missionary in charge.

In 1882 we learn that more English children were attending the school, 70 being now on the roll and only 14 of these Indians. This report speaks of Miss Baker giving special attention to religious instruction, "every morning giving, in as simple a manner as possible, fundamental talks on Christianity."

In 1883 we find that Miss Baker's salary was assumed by the residents of Prince Albert with some help from the F. M. Board for her work amongst the Indians. We are also told in this report that on the advice of Dr. Black it was decided to divide part of the Prince Albert Mission property into town lots and sell them in the interests of the work.

In 1886 we learn that "Miss Baker is now teaching in the High School." In 1887 that Dr. Jardine is the Home Missionary, and that the Assembly of that year decided to proceed at once with the erection of the "Nisbet Academy," so named after our first missionary to the Indians of that district. In 1888, the staff of teachers at the High School consists of the Rev. Messrs. Campbell, Jardine and Miss Baker.

It must have been in 1883 that Miss Baker first came, to a certain extent, under the care of the W. F. M. S., at least to the extent of sending clothing to assist in making the Indian children, still attending that school, more comfortable. It is in the 8th volume, 1884, of the W. F. M. S. reports that we find the first mention of Miss Baker. After speaking of the Prince Albert work being so greatly reduced by the removal of the Cree Indians to the "Mistawasis Reserve," it goes on to say, "Her school is now mainly supported by the white settlers of the neighborhood, and attended by their children. She, however, receives a number of Indian children whom she not only teaches gratuitously, but also feeds and clothes during the winter season. A few of the Cree Indians still reside in the vicinity and for the benefit of these, adults as well as children, Miss Baker is about to establish a Bible Class." "Miss Baker states, that though the school cannot now be said to be doing 'Indian work,' still its value cannot be overestimated, its aim having ever been a thorough Christian education." "Over 50 of both races are now attending the school," and Miss Baker adds: 'Were I to give you a detailed account of my work from day to day I am sure you would be both interested and amused.' "It has been a positive necessity that I should open my house to girl boarders, having at present three, and have had several others. As I have to be matron, cook and teacher, my duties are never done until a late hour."

"The Christians in the East cannot be too zealous in putting forth every exertion to mould the character of the young people of this coming great north-west."

One of Miss Baker's assistants gives the following testimony regarding our missionary's bright, optimistic disposition. "Miss Baker," she said, "was never depressed, never lost faith, always had a strong sense of humor. Did she turn out their dog-soup (soup made from dog flesh) on an occasion when they were making medicine, and the said soup was unusually 'holy' (even for dog soups; and the men used language that is not generally used in polite society; Miss Baker just went home and read Shakespeare; and found that the language used by the Indians was not so very much

plainer than that used by our own ancestors in Shakespeare's day." And knowng that the unregenerate heart is really the same in all races, 'deceitful above all things and desperately wicked,' she just went forward courageously and faithfully teaching by precept and example, the grace and power of God, leaving the results to Him—and in old letters and reports, we see how her faith was honored and her prayer answered.

Miss Baker's missionary life being so complicated and filled with many unforeseen changes, we frequently find that a good deal of confusion still exists in the minds of the younger generation of our Presbyterian Church, and of older members also, who did not follow her career closely. In order, therefore, to make this biographical sketch as clear as possible, we close this chapter by asking the readers to fix in their minds the four stages of Miss Baker's North-West career in their proper sequence.

1.—Her work as teacher in the school to which she was appointed by the Church, viz., for the education of the children of the Cree Indians, afterwards removed to "Mistawasis" Reserve, 80 miles distant from Prince Albert.

2.—The periods of teaching in the Nisbet Academy, and High School, during which time her sympathy was awakened for the outcast band of Sioux.

3.—Her helpfulness during the N.-W. Rebellion.

4.—Her efforts towards the uplifting of the outcast band of Sioux, first at their encampment, later at Makoce Waste Reserve which, through her influence, had been allocated to them by the Canadian Government.

CHAPTER IV.

APPRECIATIVE TESTIMONIES FROM FRIENDS AND FELLOW WORKERS

"Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren and to strangers which have borne witness of thy charity before the Church."—III John, 5, 6.

WERE the extracts from Miss Baker's letters, given in the preceding chapters, the only record we had of her missionary labors, how meagre would be our realization of what her life really represented. With her own characteristic modesty, these letters, and official reports, are mainly statements of bald facts; now, however, it becomes a privilege and pleasure to throw on some "flash lights" gathered from the testimonies of those who knew her well, and which, it is hoped, will awaken a much fuller appreciation of this heroic self-denying life. Many have been reading during the past year the thrilling missionary narrative of "Mary Slessor of Calabar," and in Lucy Baker we find a kindred spirit. Although the fields were entirely different, that of the former being in tropical Africa, amongst a debased tribe of negroes, and the latter for the greater part of the year in the bitter cold of our north-western Canada, amongst equally debased red men, yet the similarity of unswerving faith and undaunted courage is most striking. We see Lucy Baker's courage exemplified in the very beginning of her missionary career, when, compelled to say good-bye to her friends and earthly protectors, Mr. and Mrs. Ross, at Winnipeg, she determined, in God's strength, to go on herself with strangers. How little she makes of the sacrifice required, or of the discomforts experienced. Anyone who has ever travelled in our North-West well knows what a maddening torment the almost unbelievable multitude of mosquitoes becomes; but minor trials such as that, and worse, are never mentioned.

Let us take a glance at what that journey from Winnipeg to Prince Albert meant from an outsider's point of view, by

quoting from a copy of the Montreal Witness of 1909, about the time of Miss Baker's death.

"Across the bare, uninhabited prairies the long train of tented wagons creaked their way. Nothing was to be seen on either hand but the nimble gopher, the coyote slinking off with stealthy lope and, perhaps, the long, pale spiral of smoke from the camp fire of wandering redskins. Day in, day out, the fatiguing journey led its way across unsurveyed regions and unmarked trails.

"Fifty to one hundred wagons in close procession, for safety's sake, bogged to the axles, crossing creeks, or dun-colored in a flying nimbus of dust, ate up the distance at snail pace, from paling dawn to carmine sunset. With the shadows of night making perilous the trail, the wagons went into laagers with the animals inside."

Under such conditions Miss Baker left the comforts of civilization behind her, and commenced her life of doing good in what is now the coming region of Canada. But like Mary Slessor, Miss Baker evinced not only strong faith and great courage, she was also most optimistic, and had a keen sense of humor, a truly "Mark Tapleian" characteristic of being "jolly under difficulties," which helped her to trip blithely over many a rough path on life's journey.

Let us see here just what she herself writes to a young friend while on this journey. She says: "We have now been travelling 14 days and, upon the whole, enjoy camp life very much. We have been most hospitably entertained at Fort Ellice. The scenery is perfectly grand. For two miles before you reach this Fort you wind your way round and round immense hills until finally you reach the Fort. Our carts are all made of wood, even fastened together with wooden pins. Do you remember a wooden toy, a kind of rattle children sometimes play with? Well, if you should set a dozen children each whirling one of them, that would give you some idea of how the carts sound when we are on the march. *We* have a comfortable 'democrat,' the one Mr. Ross took out, and so can drive ahead of the carts, or keep behind at pleasure." It is astounding to see the number of people moving westward. The trail is simply swarming with brigades. We have had

some rather high winds, and cold rainy days, but I am clothed with a heavy buffalo coat with a collar which, when turned up, covers all my head, and in length is down to my feet, so I never feel the cold. When the weather is damp I sleep in it, and I am sure you would laugh if you saw me. Although a cold rainy day dampens one's ardor a little, a bright sunny one dispels all clouds, and the spirits run up as quickly as the mercury. The great variety of people in our brigade is also most interesting. The guide, a Scotchman, with the real "burr" accent, always arouses us in the morning as dawn of day arrives, calling at our tent doors 'Sleepers, sleepers, Breakfast!' "

And so on, the whole long letter giving anxious friends the impression that a six weeks' journey to the north was a jollification to be envied.

What we feel must necessarily have formed a chain of discouraging incidents (although never spoken or written about by Miss Baker herself) was the frequent changes in the mission staff. This must have often caused the upsetting of plans and methods; but our plucky pioneer seems to have been able to look on the bright side of all difficulties and to adjust herself to meet them without troubling other people. At the same time she was evidently gaining the confidence and affection of all with whom she came in contact; not only her fellow workers, but the wild children and debased pagans as well.

From Miss Baker herself, while home on furlough after the N.-W. Rebellion, we learned some of the thrilling circumstances of that event; but with her innate modesty regarding personal recitals and an evident unconsciousness of having done anything heroic we did not fully realize to what extent she really had served her country at that critical point, until a year ago when a letter, received from one of Miss Baker's cousins, threw a light on that episode which adds greatly to its importance. This letter says:

"She not only gave her house for a hospital, but refused all remuneration, although freely offered by the Government, and turned in and nursed and worked like a slave." There

is no doubt that more than one soldier lad at that time owed his recovery to Miss Baker's tender care.

Many of our women during the Great War showed wonderful loyalty and rendered noble service, but it is doubtful if any have exceeded that of Lucy Baker during the 1885 rebellion.

The following incident in connection with the thrilling experiences of those days, was told the writer by Miss MacIlwaine, who was, for some time, one of Miss Baker's assistants. "The Presbyterian Church and manse were across the street from Miss Baker's house, and built around with all the cordwood in the place, to form a stockade, the women and children having instructions to get inside of it, should the rebels march on Prince Albert, as feared. Miss Baker used to tell of one night that the loyal half-breed scouts, who were patrolling the town, ran in with the cry 'the Indians are upon us!' This story she told with such vividness that the listener always turned around to see the Indians coming. 'The wounded were dragged across the street; the women, children, and sick were tucked inside the stockade, and even a baby made its entrance into the world in the midst of the excitement.' Fortunately, when morning came, the cry of an attack proved to be a false alarm."

This testing time seems to have been but another step in God's preparation of Miss Baker for what was yet to be the greatest undertaking of her whole missionary career: her devoted efforts towards the uplifting of the outcast Sioux.

This, the fourth stage of her life we shall take up in the next chapter, but before closing this, it will be opportune to give here a testimony kindly furnished by Dr. Baird of Manitoba College, Winnipeg, who was told the following interesting reminiscences by one of the Nisbet Academy girls, (now a married woman) who boarded with Miss Baker at that time. Dr. Baird was one of the Commission appointed by our Church to look into the whole question of the "Indian Missions," and thus got to know Miss Baker well.

He writes: "One side of Miss Baker's character was the impression which she made on everybody, clearly and distinctly, that she was a *lady*. I used to be amused at some

of the dainty little ways which marked her, even while she was engaged in the roughest and most laborious work of a missionary to the Indians. During the time she was one of the staff connected with the 'Nisbet Academy' in Prince Albert she had two young girls living with her who were students at this school. When they came home in the afternoon, Miss Baker would set herself to the preparation of dinner, which, however hurried or worried she might be, had its full measure of courses: soup, meat, vegetables and dessert; and at the hour of 8 o'clock in the evening, would serve it in the daintiest of fashion. And the best of all, in the memory of one of these girls, was the bright and lively conversation which transported the company from the monotonous details of work at Prince Albert to the gay regions of Montreal or Paris. Part of the talk, especially about the food and service of the table, or anything in which the girls would understand her, was in French. And she did her best to encourage them to talk in the language which she taught them in the Academy classes. This was one side of Miss Baker's personality, she always insisted that she could never do the work required of her unless she was well fed."

This "daintiness" as characteristic of Miss Baker is also remarked by Agnes Laut, in her article, "The Borderland Woman," written for Collier's Magazine, at the time of her visit to Miss Baker, at Prince Albert. She says: "One day we went to call at a cottage in Prince Albert, where lived a little lady—one of the old school, the kind done up in ecru lace and black silk—who had come out in a tented wagon to the west in the seventies, to inaugurate some sort of school for the frontier."

From this part of Miss Laut's description one might possibly receive the impression that Miss Baker paid a good deal of attention to personal adornment; but we know that this "finery" worn at suitable times and on proper occasions with dignity and simplicity, did not occupy much of either her time, thought, or means, being nearly all gifts, and were used with an untroubled conscience. Miss Baker believed in setting an example of refined womanhood before these girls

who were daily in her company and influenced by her example. No one could possibly accuse her of foolish vanity; but believing her body to be the temple for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, she felt the fitness of purity of person, and becoming raiment; such a model as is presented to us in the last chapter of Proverbs.

CHAPTER V.

A SKETCH OF THE SIOUX OUTCASTS, AND HOW MISS BAKER MADE THEIR ACQUAINTANCE

"And were the world with devils filled
And watching to devour us,
Our souls to fear we need not yield
They cannot overpower us."—Luther.

We have already seen some of Miss Baker's shining virtues: faith, courage, unselfishness, cheerfulness; we shall now see another most Christ-like characteristic, viz., her deep sympathy.

During the time Miss Baker was a teacher at Prince Albert Mission, her soul was often saddened by the pitiful, hopeless wailing heard from the encampment of the wild pagan Sioux, of whom she wrote in chapter two. On the burning of the Nisbet Academy and the establishment of the Government High School, there seemed to be no longer need of her services as a nursing teacher. It was forcibly borne in upon her, that *here* was a band of God's children who knew Him not, yet needed Him badly; and *here* was she with the work which took her to the North-West apparently come to a close, ready to obey at once what she felt was the Master's will concerning her. This was a task which would have loomed up as an impossibility before the ordinary woman, or even man; but so profound was her sympathy, and strong her faith, that, with God's help, she determined to overcome this mountain of difficulty, and do her utmost for the uplifting and salvation of these lost people.

In order that we may have an adequate idea of this formidable undertaking, let us read a quotation from John P. Williams' "Early Missions to the Dakota Indians in Minnesota."

Mr. Williams says: "The first missionaries found the Dakotas in the lowest stages of heathenism. Their objects of worship were the sun, moon and stars; the air, the trees,

the stones, the earth; birds and fishes, beasts and creeping things; the invisible powers of the air and watery deep; the departed spirits, and many of those still embodied in the flesh. They were in blind bondage to these gods. When fortune smiled, it was the favor of these gods, when disaster came it was the gods' rebuke.

"But the gods, like themselves, were full of evil passions. Upon the reception of a sacrifice the gods would as quickly assist at a murder as at the rescue of innocents from destruction. Thus the Indians, having eliminated the moral element from the character of their gods, were in a fair way to eliminate it from their own characters. As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind. They did not want to know the true God. How could they be brought to know him?

"The first missionaries to Minnesota also found the Dakotas in perpetual warfare. It had become their normal state. The great national recreation was the war-dance. And not only at this dance, but on every occasion, the warrior was accorded first honors; and each warrior according to his rank. A young man was hooted out of society who undertook to win a wife before he had taken a scalp. Such were these people from amongst whom some of the worst fled to the North-West of Canada to escape imprisonment and punishment after having taken part in that barbarian cyclone which burst upon Minnesota's peaceful homes on that eventful August day of 1862, the horrid phantom of which still lingers on the western border. On behalf of these poor deluded savages it must be said that having reason to fear that the U. S. government was crowding them out of what they felt to be their property, they had come to believe that all white faces, missionaries included, were their enemies, and a general massacre seemed the only solution of their wrongs."

Of course, those taking refuge in Canada were outlaws; a price was put upon their heads by the U. S. government and no reserve would be given them by our own. They felt that every man's hand was against them, and they were certainly against every white person who attempted to interfere with them.

But in spite of this seemingly impassable barrier, our heroic little missionary was convinced that God had brought her here. They were "her neighbors" whom she was to "love as herself," and seek to serve. Everyone tried to dissuade her from such an undertaking; even the few Sioux with whom she had become acquainted assured her most solemnly that if she attempted to visit the encampment she would "certainly be killed." But she had no fear, so strong was her faith, and before long the way was opened for her to get across the river to visit them.

In the meantime Miss Baker felt that the way to gain the confidence, and reach the hearts of these wild frightened creatures must be through the use of their own language. The early missionaries to Minnesota had laid down the first principles upon which the language should be written. The Rev. S. W. Pond may be said to have led the van in this march. He was the author of the first primer of the language, and the first translations from the Bible. The Rev. S. R. Biggs gave the language a name and civilized form, when he issued his grammar and dictionary on the Dakota language. The Rev. Thos. Williamson, and Rev. S. R. Biggs established it, when they completed the translation of the Bible. Miss Baker was therefore able to secure the necessary books, and she set about learning this new and difficult tongue, with the same avidity she had shown in acquiring the French language. How many quiet night hours that should have been devoted to needed rest, were spent over this necessary means of gaining access to the hearts of the people, none but He whom she was serving shall ever know. But with the "love of Christ constraining her" she was enabled to forget the frail wearied body, and "press on toward the mark of her high calling."

To the Rev. Andrew Baird, D.D., of Manitoba College, Winnipeg, the writer is again indebted for the following story of how Lucy Baker at last brought to a practical result her determination to become the Gospel messenger to these degraded fellow creatures.

Dr. Baird writes: "The period during which Miss Baker still lived in Prince Albert and went across the river daily to

carry on her school and mission work amongst the Sioux Indians on the north side of the Saskatchewan involved much labor and exposure. You have probably heard the story of how near she came to losing her life in crossing the river; her paddle broke when she was near the further shore, in the swiftest part of the current, and she was floated down the stream, helpless, but desperately trying to improvise some means of propelling herself nearer to the shore. At last, just at the head of the rapids, she got near enough to seize some overhanging bushes, and there an Indian, who had seen her predicament from the higher land, and had dashed through the scrub to assist her, found her.

"This narrow escape, added to the often repeated entreaties of her friends, caused her to abandon the attempt to cross the river herself, and she hired an Indian to come for her each day.

"In spite of the fact that this man professed not to know any English she used to talk to him every day as he rowed her over. She was so much alone in her own house, that it always seemed a relief to have somebody, however unresponsive, to talk to.

"One day, after these daily journeys had been going on for months, always in silence on the part of the Indian, some accident happened to the boat, when the oarsman uttered the single word 'damn.' 'Why! you know English,' said Miss Baker, and the Indian with a laugh gave up henceforward the pretence of not being able to understand his passenger."

In this incident we again see that tactfulness and sense of humor so often shown by Miss Baker under trying circumstances.

From another friend of our missionary the writer learned *why* Miss Baker was really forced to attempt this apparently reckless manner of crossing the river. As this incident is given from memory only, it may not be absolutely correct in detail, but the main facts are true. At first Miss Baker found it impossible to induce any man to row her over. Everyone said it would mean the killing of whoever attempted it; but so sure was she that duty called her to get over to this encampment by some means, that "paddling her own canoe" seemed

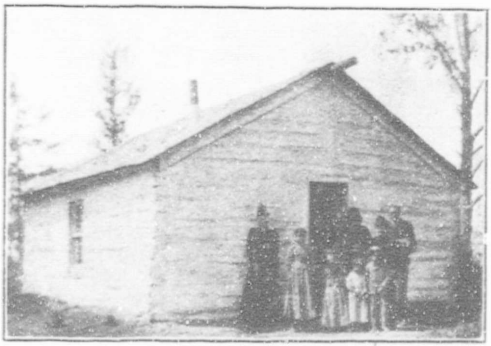
to her the only solution, and the first time she ever crossed with an Indian was by jumping into his boat as he pushed out from shore, and telling him he "must take her over" even if it meant killing. This Indian was one to whom Miss Baker had been very kind, dressing and caring for a very sore foot, and a sense of gratitude seemed to impel him to meet her wishes.

CHAPTER VI.

"Jehovah Tsidkenu! My treasure and boast,
Jehovah Tsidkenu! I ne'er can be lost;
In Thee I shall conquer by flood and by field,
My Castle, my Anchor, my Breast-plate and Shield."
R. M. McCheyne.

MAKOCE WASTE RESERVE

WE begin this chapter by quoting part of a letter by Miss Baker, after her work in this new field was well established. She says: "Our reserve called 'Makoce Waste,' meaning 'good land,' is situated on the North Saskatchewan River, ten miles from Prince Albert (see map). The encampment where we first opened work in a tent, is on the north-west bank of the river, three miles east of Prince Albert, which makes thirteen miles from the present mission. To reach our reserve you must cross the river at Prince Albert on a ferry, then wind your way on a trail through pines and stumps for eight miles in a north-westerly direction through an uninhabited country. Then you come out on an open prairie, encircled by tall pines, called Round Plain.



Mission House, Makoce Waste Reserve

"You are now in the reserve. Drive on about two miles further, then about a half mile off the trail, to your right, and you will see our Mission House on a hill which commands a good view of the reserve.

"On the trail leading to the Mission, you pass our school house, a log building about 24x18, shingled roof, whitewashed on the outside; and although not plastered on the inside, is pretty comfortable.

"The Mission House is a frame building lathed and plastered on the outside, containing one good-sized room 16x24 and an addition 9x12 used as a kitchen.

"Three years ago a log cabin 16x14 was added but this might rather be called an Indian reception room. This was found to be too cold for winter use, but you would see by my letter in the 'Tidings' of either January or February that the Prince Albert Christian Endeavor Society plastered the outside last autumn, which rendered it habitable last winter and enabled us to use it."

With this enlightening quotation from Miss Baker's letter, we continue our story.

After gaining a most precarious footing amongst these Indians, Miss Baker's first effort seems to have been directed towards winning the confidence of the children. She began just as one would with wild birds, by throwing them pieces of biscuits or other tasty tid-bits from the tent opening, keeping herself concealed in the meantime.

After a while, however, finding that even when this "white woman" did show herself, she evinced no desire to attack or hurt them in any way, their timidity began to disappear, and eventually she succeeded in so securing the confidence of a few of them as to be able to start a school.

Another quotation here from Dr. Baird's letter of reminiscences, gives a graphic picture of the situation. He writes:

"These Indians at the beginning were extremely suspicious, and sometimes hostile, this feeling exhibiting itself in an incredible degree of wildness and fear on the part of the children. A little boy or girl cajoled into school in the morning would be alarmed by some sudden or unusual movement and flee in frantic terror to the shrubbery that surrounded the school; and even with all the charm of Miss Baker's personality and skill in winning children, it was months before she really gained their confidence. But, by and by, they became her absolute slaves, and in course of

time would flee from the hardships and cruelties of their own homes to place themselves under her protection. There was no labor too heavy or too discouraging for her to perform when she thought the interests of her Indians required it. I still remember the shock that passed through me when I found that out at Makoce Waste she had made with her own hands a coffin for a little child."

To this Christ-like trait of unselfishness in Miss Baker's character, Miss McIlwaine also gives strong testimony, in some of her reminiscences. She says: "In nursing the sick, the 'medicine men' and 'medicine women' from the encampment proved to be a great hindrance.

"One of their beliefs is that when anyone falls ill an evil spirit has entered that part of the anatomy affected; and when anyone dies in a house the evil spirits continue to dwell there, so the house must be torn down.

"During the summer months, when they live in tents or tepees, that trouble is easily overcome, by simply moving their temporary abodes to another spot the evil spirits are 'fooled'; but when one takes ill in the winter, a tent is put up outside to obviate the danger of the patient dying in the house, no matter how cold the weather may be.

"On one occasion, during bitterly cold February weather a tent was noticed outside of 'Tati Waste's' house early in the morning. Miss Baker went to investigate, and found a little girl of three years very ill with bronchitis. The medicine woman had been there, had taken all their blankets for pay, had sucked the evil spirit out of the child's chest, but not effectually; and as there were no more blankets, or anything else to get, the little girl was laid out, clothed with beads and paint, to die.

"Her father was waiting with his gun, ready to rush out at the moment of her death and fire it off to frighten the evil spirits away so that her spirit would get a chance to win through.

"Miss Baker at once returned to the Mission House, got blankets and everything necessary for the proper treatment of the child, stayed all day and all night, and then left to get a little rest, leaving the child on a fair way to recovery.

"But the new supply of blankets was too great a temptation to the medicine woman; she persuaded the parents to give them to her, and allow her to suck out the remaining evil spirit. Consequently, the little girl was again naked, and on Miss Baker's return in the evening, there was no hope of saving the poor child's life. At the dawning of the next morning the gun-fire was heard. And the little body, wrapped in a piece of cotton, was rushed off to be buried, without a coffin, a victim of heathen superstition."

CHAPTER VII.

"The world is full of noble tasks,
And wreaths hard won;
Each work demands strong, hearts strong hands
Till day is done."—Aubrey de Vere.

The quotation from one of Miss Baker's later letters, which opened the last chapter, gives us a good idea of the long and difficult walks and drives which she and her assistants were frequently compelled to take in making their rounds of visitation.

One of Miss Baker's fellow workers gives a vividpicture of what a really serious matter these expeditions sometimes were, especially when it was found necessary to camp out over night.

These impromptu campings were arranged in this manner: After tethering their horse the buffalo robes would be fastened around the outside of the conveyance which they used and a good fire built up outside of it to frighten away the wolves. These wolves were the genuine "timber" species, not the smaller and more timid "coyotes." An evening meal would then be prepared and partaken of, the remaining supply of food packed away in a strong wooden box and securely fastened. Then the ladies, after commending themselves to the Heavenly Father's protection, would lie down on the ground, inside of the robes which formed the walls of a snug little tent.

One night they were so overcome by fatigue, and slept so soundly that although the wolves came, took possession of the provision box, broke it open and devoured every particle of its contents the weary wanderers were not aroused. Next day the hungry missionaries awoke to find, alas! that they must travel without breakfast.

But even an experience so fraught with danger as this used afterwards to be related by Miss Baker as but an

"interesting adventure," just "a little turn-over of the rut of monotony," and on the whole, "a good joke."

To the numerous testimonies already given to Miss Baker's many beautiful traits of character, we must add another from Miss McIlwaine's letter, portraying her constant self-forgetfulness. She writes: "Miss Baker was known to the Sioux among whom she worked as the 'Ina' (mother) of the Dakotas; although her official title, so to speak, was "Winoocha Waken," (Holy Woman.) And she was indeed both to them. Were they sick, hungry, cold, wanted a letter written to their friends in 'Yankee Makoce,' or needed a new mitten, she supplied their wants. Did 'Nedo' (palato) consider the advisability of getting a younger wife, or a yoke of oxen, or where he could secure seed grain, or in which field he should sow it, or did he feel a thirst for knowledge, and want to know the reason why the cat had not a soul, to the Mission House he repaired, and talked until 'Ni Ota' (the sun was big). Did the northern lights flash brilliantly in the heavens, and poor old Jane thought she heard cries of her departed children fighting with the departed spirits (that is their conception of the northern lights) to Miss Baker she went for comfort and instruction; and by her was taught, as she would teach a child, a very little child.

"No matter what the object of the visit may have been originally in the minds of the visitors, they never left the Mission without having the Gospel preached to them. Were they old Indians, they heard it in their own language, were they school children they heard it in English, were they French half-breeds, they heard it in French. Miss Baker was diligent in season and out of season preaching the Good Tidings of Salvation for all and never failed to practise what she preached."

Another telling testimony to her self-forgetfulness, sympathy and generosity comes through a letter from one of her cousins, who says: "In reading Lucy's reports I notice how little she says about herself, or all the sacrifices she constantly made; nursing the sick, taking little Indian children into her own home, feeding and caring for them, making clothing for the poor little things, learning their language and teaching

them, both in English and Indian. Teaching them to eat properly, how to keep themelves clean and keep house nicely. The native custom is for all to sit on the ground and to eat out of an iron pot, using their dirty fingers instead of knives, forks and spoons. She never tells of how she made pots of good soup during the night time, buying most of the food herself, as the Government only allowed one or two 'hard tack' biscuits per day, for each child.

Miss Baker, Miss Cameron and school children from Makoce Waste Mission

"The older girls of the mission would carry this large pot of nourishing soup to the school house the next day, where Miss Baker, also at the own expense, had purchased a supply of plates, cups, saucers, etc., and had taught them how to use them.

"None of these things does she mention, any more than her generosity and helpfulness during the rebellion."

We have already seen how nobly Miss Baker did her "bit" at the most critical period in Canada's history. How much we owe to her and other such Christian missionaries, that the rebellion was not a much greater tragedy, we can only faintly realize.

We cannot close this sketch without making mention of two more of her gracious qualities, viz.: her warm appreciation of all favors, and her constant expressions of thankfulness. Some of us still remember her words of gratitude when the W. F. M. S. commenced sending her parcels of clothing suitable for the poor children under her care. The following graphic acknowledgment will help us to understand her appreciation. She writes:

"They are now able to bring their soiled clothes to the mission, wash, iron and mend them; and every Saturday they can have a bath and then put on fresh garments. Thus they are taught cleanliness, tidiness, and thrift."

But you will notice there is not one word of what all this must have meant to her—what constant patience, perseverance and love.

Before the close of her work, all of this had come to be properly done by the children themselves in their own homes. They had also learned to make good bread, keep tidy homes, and had become quite expert needlewomen and knitters.

Miss Baker also constantly gave thanks for the so-called "common" every-day blessings, which so often are never considered. In an old letter of March 4th, 1884, she exclaims: "Oh, with what joy I hail the return of long days! To rise, light fires, prepare breakfast, and get off to school while it is yet dark is not very agreeable; but after all it just makes one doubly thankful for the coming springtime." She expatiates so often too over the beauty of scenery, the kindness of friends, the refreshment and better health from furlough visits.

But what a reward was hers in due time. Again we quote from Miss Laut in her account of that memorable visit:

"How the little lady won the Arab outcast youngsters to school . . . . How she and Miss Cameron, a kindred spirit, who had joined her, with their own hands taught the outlaws to make doors, windows, and sashes for the houses, how to plough and garden, are all stories in themselves.

"When a salary at last came from the Church and the Reserve was finally granted the outcasts by the Government, the old chief came to her, 'Miss Baker,' he said, with a puzzled look, drawing a circle on the ground with his cane, "If we build on the new reserve here"—pointing to the rim of the circle—"will you build here in the centre and be our Queen?' And in a letter from one of Miss Baker's friends we are told that when she went back to Prince Albert from her last furlough east, she found the Union Jack flying at the mission. 'Why is the flag flying?' she asked. 'Oh,' answered the Chief, 'you told us to always fly it on the Queen's birthday, and you are our Queen, and you have come back to us, so we fly the flag."

CHAPTER VIII.

LAST DAYS

"Jesus Thou Prince of Life
Thy chosen cannot die;
Like Thee they conquer in the strife
To reign with Thee on high."

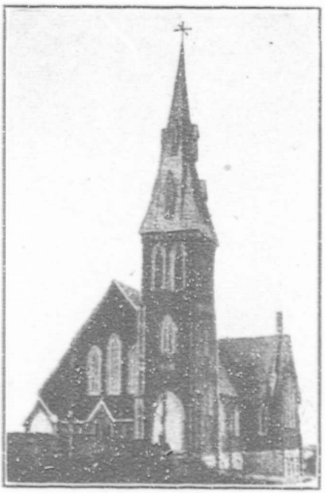
In the "Montreal Witness" of June 2nd, 1905, appeared the notice of Miss L. M. Baker's death at the Royal Victoria Hospital, on Sunday, May 30th.

On Wednesday morning her remains were conveyed by loving relatives to the old home at Dundee, Que., where after religious service the body was interred in Zion churchyard; this being the church of which she had been a faithful member, and active S. S. teacher in her bright young womanhood.

The week following Miss Baker's death a memorial service was held in the Presbyterian Church at Prince Albert. The Rev. C. G. Young, who knew her well, conducted the service, taking for his text Acts 9: 36, "This woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did, and it came to pass in those days she fell sick and died." Mr. Young stated that "while in past centuries the spirit of heroism was revealed either in defence of the truth, or on the field of battle, nowadays it is the missionaries of the Gospel of Christ who set the standard for the true hero, in their marvellous devotion and self-sacrifice; and no better example of this could be found than the life of Miss Baker." This text was most appropriate and the final clause very telling, for although Miss Baker continued to live in the town of Prince Albert for some two years after failing health compelled her to leave Makoce Waste Reserve, yet to the very last her work went on. "It was," she said, "pathetic to see the yearning that the poor squaws manifested to learn to write—'to talk on paper' —as they put it." She was, however, unable to teach them for lack of strength. The Indian women were sadly disappointed. "Will you," said they, "tell us then what the letters are that

we bring to you?" The following day the two beginners were increased to six and they came each day with various letters of the alphabet until they knew them by sight and could do as some of their clever children did—write.

Let us here take into serious consideration two quotations, the first from one of Miss Baker's letters given in the annual report of the W. F. M. S. of 1891-2. She says: "Oh, what strength it imparts to know that we have the sympathy and prayers of so many faithful followers of the Master; it makes us feel assured that the time will come when these poor heathen shall be brought into the fold. We feel, and *know*, how feebly the seed is sown, but God's Holy Spirit can cause it to bring forth fruit."



Zion Church, Dundee, Que.

The other is from "The Story of Our Missions," by Mrs. MacGillivray. She says: "Miss Baker started the work in 1874 and continued until 1905 when she retired owing to ill health. The station was kept open for a few years; but owing to the difficulty of finding a missionary it was closed by *advice of the*

Presbytery in 1913. We feel there is still need of this work being done, *but there is no one to do it."*

Oh, is it not pitiful to think that over thirty years of such zealous, loving, and successful service should be allowed to lapse?

Surely there must be *someone, somewhere,* who will say "here am I, send me."

We owe it to these aborigines of the land, to give them the knowledge of the Saviour.

We owe it to Christ, who has done so much for us, to obey his last command and make Him known to every creature.

In the name of philanthropy, if on no higher ground, we owe it to these poor suffering, down-trodden Indian women, to do what in us lies, that they too may enjoy the blessings which Christianity has brought to us.

If this little biographial sketch of Lucy Baker's life but stimulates someone to take up her mantle, many hearts will be filled with thanksgiving and praise.