

Project Canterbury

A Month among the Indian Missions and Agencies
on the Missouri River, and in Minnesota and Wisconsin

New York: American Church Press, 1872.

IT having been decided by the Executive Committee that an official visit by some of its members to the Indian Missions and Agencies placed under the care of the Church's Missionary organizations was essential to a correct understanding of their needs, a delegation consisting of Rev. J. A. Paddock, Mr. William Welsh, and the Secretary, proceeded to Dakota in June last, and made a tour of observation of all the stations on the Missouri River and our Missions in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Mr. Welsh and the Secretary, accompanied by Mr. Hinman, Gen. Stanley, U.S.A., commander at Fort Sully, and Mrs. T. S. Rumney, of Germantown, Philada., visited the Agencies and tribes on the Missouri as far north as Cheyenne River, and returning (Gen. Stanley leaving them at Fort Sully), they were joined by Dr. Paddock at Yankton Agency in a visit to the Ponka and Santee Missions. Afterward, Dr. Paddock and the Secretary visited White Earth, in Minnesota, and the Oneida Mission at Green Bay. The round of visits occupied a little over a month, and the result of the Committee's observations is set forth in the following pages.

The delegation was furnished transportation by the War Department from Fort Randall to Fort Sully, and has also to acknowledge its indebtedness to the President and Directors of the Northern Pacific Railroad for facilities extended to two of its members on their visit to White Earth Agency. In this connection it may be proper to state that the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Department of the Interior at Washington fully approved of and encouraged this visit to the several tribes of Dakota Indians, giving the delegation special aid in the accomplishment of its work. The Northern Pacific Railroad Company also wrote an open letter to be read to the Northern tribes, promising them work and assistance along the proposed line of its road.

The official report of the Visiting Delegation was made to the Executive Committee by the Secretary at the regular meeting in July. A report was also made to the Secretary of the Interior by Mr. Welsh, in his capacity as honorary member of the U. S. Indian Commission. Copies of this report have been widely distributed by the Interior Department.

Acting upon the report of its members, the Executive Committee have taken measures to relieve the most pressing wants made known to them, and briefly touched upon in the subjoined narrative. Upon proper representations being laid before him, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs ordered a distribution of rations to be made to the Ponkas, sufficient to keep them from starving, and he has also taken steps to carry out that portion of the treaty with the Sioux which provides for the furnishing of cattle and certain farming machinery to the Indians who show a capacity for using and taking care of them. The changes and additions in the personnel and material of the work of the several Missions have been elsewhere set forth.

The narrative and report of this visit, which follow, are mainly transferred from the wayside notes of the Secretary, and are allowed to follow the same form of daily familiar "jottings-down."

Philadelphia, May 21st.--Mrs. Stanforth and Mrs. Rumney (of Germantown) join us here

place. It is past the hour for Morning Service, but we may meet them at Evening Prayer, and we have only a day to spend on the Reserve. We must go forward.

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ONEIDA MISSION.

The Mission of our Church to the Oneidas is one of the oldest Indian Missions in America. It is the continuation of the work begun among the Six Nations, in this State, by the Venerable Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, as early as the beginning of the present century. The Oneidas were removed to their present Reservation between 1820 and 1830. A part of the tribe was settled on Fox River, three miles south of Green Bay. Here the Mission was resumed by our own Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, and included in the Foreign field of the Church. The first Clergyman sent to Green Bay proved unfaithful, and the Mission fell into decay. When the present Reservation was settled by the Oneidas the Church followed them, and a new work was begun under the spiritual oversight of Rev. Eleazar Williams. A log-church was built near the site of the present Church building, and a daily Service was held. Mr. Williams was succeeded by Rev. R. F. Cadle in 1834. Our present Missionary, Rev. E. A. Goodnough, began his labors among the Oneidas seventeen years ago.

The Reservation is a beautiful tract of land, twelve miles long by eight wide. The portion of the tribe by which it is occupied numbers thirteen hundred, having nearly doubled by natural increase since 1838. The greater portion of the people are sober, industrious, and faithful to their religious professions; but there is a party of thriftless and idle men who seriously retard the general welfare of the community by their schemes to dispose of parts of the Reservation to white speculators in the vicinity, who of course encourage them in their evil work. The influence of the friends of the Indian is greatly needed to counteract the mischief which is being wrought by these speculators. It is very desirable that the party opposed to the sale of the Reservation should be encouraged to stand firm. The lands of the Reservation have not been divided in severally, and cannot be while the present feeling exists on the subject of the sale of the lands. Each member of the tribe has the privilege of taking as much land as he can cultivate. We saw a few well-tilled farms of fair dimensions, but generally the fields were small, the farm-houses dilapidated, and there was an appearance of unthriftiness about too many of them.

The Mission church stands on the main road (which runs through the centre of the Reservation), about five miles from its upper or northern end. It is an old-fashioned square-towered edifice, about thirty by fifty-five feet, very plain within as well as without. Its cost was seven thousand dollars. Opposite the church is the Government school-house, under the charge of our Missionary, who, assisted by Mrs. Goodnough, teaches a day-school of about fifty scholars during nine months in the year. Three hundred yards from the church is the rectory, a comfortable cottage built by friends of our work among the Oneidas, to which is attached about eight acres of enclosed and cultivated land, and which, with the barn, outhouses, and other property is the property of the Mission. Mr. Goodnough has been a good Pastor and careful instructor of this people during his ministry, but he needs practical aid and sympathy in his isolated work. It is unfortunate for the Mission that so few of our churchmen at Green Bay and in adjoining places have so little interest in its success, and in the welfare of these Indians. But under every disadvantage, and with no little opposition, our Mission has prospered and been blessed.

The Services on the afternoon of our arrival consisted of Evening Prayer, and a short discourse by Dr. Paddock. About two hundred men, women, and children were present. The

Prayer Book has been carefully translated into the Mohawk tongue, which is the language spoken by the Oneidas; but few of the men seemed able to read sufficiently to make ready use of it. The youth and the children show greater proficiency. The responses were earnest, and the worship and general deportment of the congregation devout. An old-fashioned organ supplies the instrumental part of the music, and a choir of half a dozen voices leads the singing, which is hearty and inspiring. We are reminded while joining with our brethren in the Services, that within four weeks we have heard our liturgy, or parts of it, in as many different tongues. After the benediction, addresses were made to the congregation by members of the Visiting Committee. Our friends evinced deep interest in the work we have undertaken, and seemed greatly pleased with our visit. At the conclusion of the addresses, men, women, and children came forward to shake hands. There are several fine specimens of the once-famed Iroquois in this tribe, and the women excel any Indian women we have seen in intelligence, good manners, and womanly independence.

The religious training of this tribe is divided between the Methodists and ourselves. To enable each to carry on its work quietly and effectively, the two Missions are situated at opposite ends of the Reservation, and those who attend on the ministrations of either, have settled in that part of the Reserve where it is located. Our Missionary claims to have under Church influence about eight hundred of the thirteen hundred persons composing the tribe. His own influence is thrown in favor of maintaining the lands inviolate, and he aims to discourage their sale; while a good many of the Methodist members favor the schemes of the speculators. In the eight hundred who are attached to our Mission, there are two hundred and twenty-five registered communicants.

Mr. Goodnough presents the following statement of (he needs of his Mission:

"1st. We need aid to make more provision for the education of the children. Either we should build two more school-houses to accommodate the more remote children, or else provide a good substantial dinner daily for the school children at the Mission, where, I believe, that all the children (three hundred in number) could be gathered into our present schools, which would be better than scattered schools, as then I could have them all under my own daily charge.

"2d. We need a new floor, some windows, a globe, new desks, and maps and charts for our school-house.

"3d. We need a new church; the building of which by the united labor of the Indians will tend to fix their minds on this place as a permanent home, and thus it will be of the greatest benefit to the tribe, aside from the high and holy use it will serve as an offering to their LORD; we cannot build this church without aid from Christian friends; but the fund has already been begun; a seed has been planted in faith, in answer to prayer, and the church must be built.

"4th. We need also presents suitable for the school children at Christmas. Clothing, books, almost anything that white children would prize, will be very valuable.

"5th. Also, we need clothing and medicine and articles of food for the old and sick of our congregation, when they are too poor to provide for themselves.

"All packages may be addressed to E. A. Goodnough, Fort Howard, Wisconsin, per Merchants' Despatch."

On the day of our departure from the Reservation, to take the eastward-bound train to our homes, we met the communicants of our Church and others in Council, with regard to the division of their lands. The leading chief and principal speaker was Cornelius Hill, a young man of good ability who is studying law. He is highly commended by our Missionary for his zeal, uprightness, and fidelity to the Church and the true interests of his tribe. We were glad to find that most of the intelligent members of the tribe are opposed to the scheme of division for the purposes of sale, and that their strength is continually increasing. When this question is removed from the politics of this people, or settled satisfactorily to all, there will, no doubt, come an era of prosperity in their affairs such as they have never known, in which the Church, properly sustained and encouraged, should make rapid progress. The prayers and labors of our people to that end are greatly desired.

The Committee returned to New York on the 10th July.

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