

"What hath God wrought!"

CHAPTER V.

SIMPSON DISTRICT.

AFTER the revival meetings recorded in the last chapter many became intensely interested in the study of the Bible. Every Sabbath morning after service the young people who could read a little met in the Church for what was called "School-um-text." They would find the text of the morning in the English Bible and read it over and over until they had it memorized in both English and Tsimpshean. It was a joy to see with what pleasure they went home, repeating the text as they went. Soon some of them had memorized as many as forty or fifty texts, so that when they were off at the fishing and logging camps they would always hold service two or three times a day, using these texts and what they remembered of the sermon connected with them.

"Wee-na-lke," or old Susan, was a native Tsimpshean, and must have been about sixty years of age when she was converted. She belonged to the Kit-an-doo tribe at Simpson. She and a number of her children were converted about the same time in the revival. Among others, she applied herself very earnestly every Sabbath morning to learning the text. We often had as many as sixty old people at the "School-um-text," after the morning service, for the purpose of committing the text to memory in their own language. Old Susan rarely missed, hence she had a great many texts in mind; and a short time before the Missionary left on a visit to the East she came to the

Mission House and asked if she might recite her texts. I said, "Well, Susan, I will try and take time to hear you." She opened out a little bunch of pebbles, tied up in a piece of rag, and took one in her hand. Looking at it, as if the shape of the pebble brought the text to her memory, she began to recite, and thus, one after another, picking up a new pebble for each, she recited forty texts of God's Holy Word.

In our absence in the East she sickened and died. Brother Jennings, who was in charge of the work, visited her regularly, and sent us word that poor old Susan was gone. She had a most triumphant death. As she lay, suffering great pain, the Missionary would say, "Well, Susan, you are very sick and suffering very much to-day."

"Oh, yes," she said, "but when I feel so sick that text of God's Word comes with such comfort, and that other one"; and, repeating the texts, she would say, "Oh, these good words make me so happy, and seem to take away the pain."

Day after day and night after night the precious Word was her comfort. Surely in her case was fulfilled the Scripture, "My Word shall not return to me void." She thus passed away, triumphantly and peacefully, to the land where there is no sickness. We missed her very much on our return, but we are sure we shall meet by-and-by.

Hall-obe was a native of the Tsimpshian nation, one of the old middle class and of those who had great respect for Chief or superior. He was one of the early converts to Christianity at our Mission, and sought baptism with a number of others. His wife also joined him and was baptized in the Church on a public confession of faith in the Lord Jesus. They promised to put away all forms of heathenism, God being their helper. He was baptized "Enoch Wilson," was very earnest and devoted for some

years, and really seemed to enjoy vital religion. He might have been sixty-five at the time of his conversion and was among the class of most earnest, elderly people who delighted to stay in the School Room after the morning service to commit the text to memory.

He had been much troubled for some time with rheumatism, brought on by exposure to the cold and wet, and by a life of wild dissipation. The rheumatism became much worse as he grew older, and finally he had to walk with crutches. So severe was it that it often kept him from Church in bad weather, and then he would have his wife bring home the text to him, for he loved God's Word. We gave him remedies and he tried many kinds, which he said helped him much. More than once he came to the Mission House to ask if I had time to hear him recite his text. He would recite fifty or sixty texts of God's Holy Word that he had committed to memory in the text school. He also often helped others to learn a text, and thus assisted in services when they were off at distant fishing or hunting camps.

Poor old Enoch had his ups and downs, his trials and failures, as others have. On one occasion he joined in a semi-heathen ceremony of raising a stone to the memory of a dead Chief. He subscribed some twelve dollars towards the undertaking, money which he had saved for the purpose of purchasing a stove. Speaking of it he said: "When the monument came I got proud, and that day I lost all my texts. I could not remember one of them; they were all gone, and I have been unhappy ever since. I am praying every day for God to give me back His love in my heart, and also to give me my texts back again."

The loss of a dear child was the means used of God to bring him to Himself again. He became very happy,

lived a Christian life, and treasured up more and more of God's Word in his heart.

The Rev. A. E. Green, who was supplying at Simpson at the time, tells this interesting and somewhat amusing story of old "Enoch Wilson."

One day he and his wife were fixing up the old stove, and trying to put the pipes together, but they would not go. The poor old man was suffering from rheumatism, his hands all bent with it, and his wife was urging that he did not put the pipes together in the right way. He tried again and again, but they would not come together. He could not fix them, so he took up the axe, and broke the stove all to pieces. Then he said he was tired, and would lie down to rest. He covered himself up in his old blankets in a corner of the room, and the Minister was sent for. The messenger said, "There is great trouble in Enoch Wilson's house; he has broken the stove to pieces, and some of the furniture." The Minister went at once to visit "lame Enoch, the class-leader," and when he reached the house what a sight met his gaze! The stove, broken in scores of pieces, was lying in the middle of the floor; his poor wife had got another old lady in to sympathize with her, and they were both sitting on the floor resting their heads on their hands and crying over the broken pieces. He asked what was the matter; they said Enoch had got angry, and had broken the stove. He asked where Enoch was then. Pointing to a bundle of blankets in the corner, they said, "He is there." They started to sing,

"Come, every soul by sin oppressed,
There's mercy with the Lord,"

then prayed and exhorted Enoch to look to the Lord for forgiveness. The poor old man uncovered his head, and

began to cry, and then to pray very simply, sobbing out, "Come back, Lord, come back; please don't leave me, come back, Lord Jesus, and forgive me." Turning to his wife he also asked her to forgive him. His repentance was very sincere and his after-life witnessed to the complete change that was wrought in his heart.

In spite of many afflictions and bereavements, he would rejoice and praise God in the class-meeting in his own house, when often, if he sat up, he had to be propped or held up while he told his experience.

The greatest trial of all came in the death of the good, faithful wife of his youth, who strangely enough passed away first. Mournful, indeed, was his experience. It was pitiful to hear him moan, "Oh, what will I do now? She who has been hands and feet to me so long and who cared for me so well, she who would go to God's house and bring back the texts of God's Word when I could not go, has gone, has gone from me."

Doctor Bolton, who had now come to our help and the help of these poor people with his medicine, had been a great comfort to Enoch for some time. Christian natives, as well as the Mission people, now visited him regularly and on the Sabbath would carry him the text as of old, and sing with him such pieces as he delighted in. The day came when Enoch passed sweetly away from his sufferings on earth to the land of light. His last words to his friends were, "Meet me there! Meet me there!"

Within a few years from its commencement, our work had extended to a large number of tribes on the northern part of the Canadian Coast, and it was thought best in 1881 to organize these Missions into a separate district, under the Chairmanship of the Missionary at Port Simpson. The Port Simpson District reported at the following Conference, 1882, a work consisting of ten missions,

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namely: Port Simpson, Port Essington, Kitamaat, Naas, Kit-wan-silk, Kit-la-tamux, Bella Bella, Hyhise, Wee-ke-no and Bella Coola, in charge of three Missionaries and six native assistants.

There were regularly established Churches at Port Simpson, Naas and Bella Bella, having a total membership of six hundred and seventy-five—of whom three hundred and seventy-four were full members and the rest on trial—seven local preachers and fourteen class leaders. There were in all sixteen preaching places with a total attendance of about thirty-four hundred; three parsonages; and seven schools, having an enrolment of seventeen officers and teachers and one thousand and twenty scholars.

The effects of the first revivals at Simpson passed over somewhat as years went on, and, although many continued very earnest and happy, there was a falling off, which was very painful to us. We made this a matter of prayer and asked also for the prayers of the Church as a whole. In answer to our petitions, the Spirit of God came upon us again in the year 1890, and the people were roused once more to a renewal of consecration and desire to carry the message to others.

For some time it had been perplexing to some of the Missionaries to know how to get a large number of the young people to do Christian work, which is of such great importance to young converts themselves. Having heard from Ontario some years previously of the Rev. David Savage, and the great work he and his Christian Band Workers were doing through that country, it occurred to some of us that this was just the plan we needed to get our young people to work. Hence in 1888 one or two such bands were organized.

In the Missionary Report for 1888, Rev. W. H. Pierce, the Missionary at Kitzegeula says, "Our Christian Band



THE SIMPSON DISTRICT MEETING, 1896.



AN INDIAN WEDDING PARTY

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is increasing, and God is raising up some young men to carry the good tidings to those who sit in darkness." In the next Report he says, "We organized a band of workers who were anxious for the conversion of their benighted countrymen." About the same time the Missionary on the Naas says, "Our Christian Band has carried the Gospel hundreds of miles into the far interior." In the Missionary Report of 1889, the General Secretary says of Kitwan-cool, "A most hopeful feature on this, as well as on other Missions on the Simpson district, is the organizing of the Bands of Workers, who have visited outlying heathen villages and preached Christ to their heathen countrymen."

In the Report of 1890 the Missionary at Essington says, "The Band work which was begun last year is still carried on. Most of the young people, several children, and some of the older people are connected with it. They hold open-air services."

The first of these Bands was composed of the most earnest Christian workers at Simpson. Others were formed at Kitamaat, Bella Bella and on the Skeena. They generally carried on street preaching or open-air services in their own villages, and also took trips with their Missionary, or sometimes alone, to distant heathen villages. They were organized with a President and a Secretary. They also carried a banner or flag with the name of their organization, or Scripture texts, on it, such as "God is Love" or "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found."

On nearly all of our Missions, the Bands were then entirely under the control of their Missionaries. It was a great pleasure to witness the earnest, self-denying zeal of many of them. In all kinds of weather they would cross the mountains from one river to another or travel by canoe, toiling hard for days at the paddle, the pole or the tow

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line, to reach the heathen villages that they might tell their dying countrymen of Jesus and His love. Some of them travelled hundreds of miles down the Coast to visit the heathen villages of the Kwa-kualth nation. One could not doubt that such work was a great blessing to themselves, as well as to those to whom they went, and had these young people kept faithfully attached to the Church and under the direction of their Missionaries, they might have proved to be a still greater power for good.

Rev. Dr. Carman, on his visit to our Missions, thus describes these Bands of Christian Workers among the Indians:

“Anyone visiting our Port Simpson District, with an eye open to spiritual, intellectual, moral or social movements, must see that the bands of Indians within the spheres of our influence are aroused and stirred by some great energy that for weal or woe must powerfully affect their character and destiny. When assemblies of scores and of one, two, three or four hundred come frequently together, say six or seven times a week, and sing and pray earnestly, and rise into ecstatic fellowship, and talk and sing of nothing but Jesus and His love, it must mean something; and it must produce some results; and results it does produce; for savage natures are subdued, heathen customs are abandoned, and heathen gods, forsaken, fall. Meekness takes the place of pride, and love of hate. The change of spirit and life is quickly noticeable. No man, till he has seen it, can form any idea of the moral, spiritual and intellectual death of the pagan Indians. Oh, what darkness! Oh, what blindness! Oh, what ignorance! What utter torpor and vacuity of mind! One would say it must take generations of time and toil to lift them anywhere near the level of Christian civilization. And so it must—by mere human devices and agencies. But who

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dare limit or restrain the power of God? And yet do we not restrain the power of God when we fail in any way to meet the claims of Missions upon us? And who dare falter in his faith and trust before such a problem? And yet do we not falter in our faith and fail in our obedience when we are slow to commit ourselves in our several callings with all our powers to this Missionary work, and the salvation of our race? It would not take generations to effect this great work if the Church were in earnest. What mine eyes have seen, what mine ears have heard, yea, what I hear at this very moment of writing—for it is eight o'clock in the evening, and the Essington band of workers is making this end of the village lively with their songs and prayers and shouts—is to me a matter of amazement. Scores of young men and young women in these meetings witness for Christ. I do not understand their language, but when I listen to their testimony I hear the oft-repeated name of Jesus, and many of their songs are in English, and the theme is that blessed Name. Never to me was the divine wisdom clearer and brighter in giving us a Person, the God-man, to whom to look for salvation, and not a system or an abstraction.

“These bands of workers were organized by the Chairman of the District, I am told, with the approval of the District Meeting, eight years ago, four or five years before the Salvation Army or any of its members looked this way at all. The Bands have their flags, drums, tambourines, etc., and certainly are showy enough in their parades, and demonstrative enough in their worship. They have not used these instruments in the churches. Of course, doubt, apprehension and controversy have arisen as to the propriety of such means at all; but when it is remembered what these people were, and witness what they are, much criti-

cism and severe judgment may well be deferred. There will, of course, in the worship be demonstrative and vociferous jubilations, but there are also solemn and impressive lulls. And the reading of the Word, and the instruction of the minister or teacher, are received with the closest attention and deepest respect. Many have their Bibles and pencils in hand, and do their utmost to catch and retain the ideas given. I never elsewhere witnessed such hunger for the truth of God. And to such a people no one of a right mind could think of giving anything else but the sincere milk of the Word; and as they are strengthened in grace and knowledge the stronger meat of holy doctrine. Speculate and theorize, decorate and criticize, invent and tincture elsewhere, but not here. And possibly the kind of Gospel that carries converting power with it here would do the same thing in other places.

"The readiness with which these people speak in their meetings is an inspiration and a charm. They are very democratic and great talkers in stories. In this they differ from the habit of their native councils. One rises while another is speaking, and that often seems a signal for a speaker to stop and give another a chance. Often 'the experience' is begun with a lively verse in singing, in which all join, and sometimes it is closed in the same way. They are sincere and simple-minded in their fellowship, and have not yet learned the fear of man, that bringeth a snare. If there be oddity, strange singing, or a mistake, there is no staring, snickering or giggling all over the house. But we are civilized, and these are just out of savagery—and oh, how much remains to be done for them and for us!

"A. CARMAN.

"May 14th, 1896."

The intrusion of the Salvation Army into our Christian villages, which superseded this work, entailed a great expense and loss of energy.

We had at Simpson, about this time, nine classes organized. It was a blessed sight to see fifty or sixty adults coming forward to be baptized, after weeks and, in some cases, months of preparation in special classes. A further interesting experience was the presentation of infants for baptism, the young parents decently dressed and the children beautifully arrayed, in imitation of white babies whom they had seen.

The sacredness with which they regarded the obligation to attend the various services was very interesting. We held an early morning prayer meeting on Sunday at six o'clock in summer and at half past six in winter. We often had sixty present, and everybody took part during the hour. There was no time for long speeches. At ten o'clock there was a teachers' class. At half past ten there was a short ringing of the bell, and then at fifteen minutes to eleven it would begin to ring again, and continue until the minister had taken his seat. When the bell stopped, the doors were closed and service opened. It was very seldom that anybody was late and everything took place promptly on time.

We had Sabbath school at half past two, and at four o'clock went out into the street for an open-air service, while some went from house to house, to visit the sick, singing and praying with them.

There was an evening preaching service at half past six, with a testimony meeting at its close.