

STORIES OF EARLY MINNESOTA
AN INDIAN PENTECOST

I wish that I could have had this story while I was in active service. It is taken from authentic records and can be relied upon.

The foundation work for the Indian Pentecost was laid early in the history of the state. Great hearted missionaries followed the fur traders and ministered to the Indians whom they found there. They translated parts of the bible into the Sioux language; established schools and churches; taught the children to sing; the women to wash and sew; the men to plow and till the soil. The children were taught the new religion and when they grew up they were more peaceful, lived better lives and by their example had a great influence for good. What they did helped their parents to live better lives.

You will remember that 303 Indians ^{who took part in outbreak of 1862} were tried and convicted and sentenced to be hanged and that 38 of them paid the penalty at Mankato December 26, 1862. Lincoln refused to let them hang any more.

This story is trying to tell what became of the rest of the condemned band. There were several serious blunders made at this trial. The wonder is that more were not made. They hanged an innocent white boy and did not know the truth till afterwards. The came near hanging an innocent Indian who had risked his life to help save some of the white people.

Ta-tah-me-ma (Round Wind) was convicted on the testimony of two German boys who swore that they saw him kill their mother. Round Wind was the only one of the condemned Indians who had been in the habit of attending church. Before he knew that he was to hang he had professed repentance and was baptized and received into the church. His pastor, Rev. Dr. Williamson, investigated the case and found that on the day of the murder Round Wind was miles away helping ^{white} folks to escape. This information was sent to President Lincoln, who telegraphed a reprieve just a few

551
5
DEFECTIVE PAGE

Page 2. Pentecost

hours before the execution^s. The Indians who were to be hung were first ~~The Indians were~~ given an opportunity to send messages to their relatives and friends. In most cases children were counseled to become christians and to lead and to live a life of good-will toward the whites. All had the spiritual comfort and consolation offered by the faithful priests and missionaries. Thirty-three were baptized into the Catholic faith and four into the Protestant. Only two refused baptism.

Among them, were many ^{who} heard the teaching of the christian religion. ¶ Two of them were professed christians and members of the church. They were Robert Hopkins Chasky and Peter Big Fire. Robert had been most active in helping John Other Day in rescu^{ing} the whites at the Upper Agency. When the people learned that the man who had risked his life to save theirs, was in danger, they promptly sent the story to the President, who sent a pardon in time to save him.

However, good resulted from this blunder. These two men had already started a work among their fellow prisoners which they counted more important than their personal liberty. Under their leadership a wonderful spiritual revival was in progress.

In their defeat by the whites the Indians seemed to regard their gods as being defeated; and all their old superstitions over thrown. Their pride was broken and their confidence in themselves was gone. The white man's civilization appealed to them as something worth while. The God who had given the whites such an advantage over the red men must be the great God, and they would worship Him and become like white men.

On the Sunday after the execution Rev. Mr. Riggs preached to the ^{remaining} prisoners in the prison yard, There they stood, some 200 of them, heavily loaded with chains, in the freshly fallen snow, listening intently to the preacher's word. What a place and an hour for an artist ! But Alas he was not there, neither did the world recognize what a crucial hour it was for the Indian!

Page 3. Pentecost

All the missionaries gave their aid to the two christian Indians. Dr. Williamson walked from St. Peter once or twice a week to share in the preaching mission.

Under their united efforts the revival continued to grow in interest and spiritual power, until in February it culminated in a regular Pentecost^{al} ~~at~~ time. Even as at Jerusalem, so here, the Spirit of God, who is no respecter of persons, descended on His red children and swept them into the Kingdom of ~~their~~ Heavenly Father. Nearly all of them were baptized and recieved into the church all in one day.

That conversions among the Indians were as genuine as among the whites is attested by the statement that, " not a single Mission Indian joined the hostile band of the Sioux." At the time of the outbreak there was a small Presbyterian church near the Lower Agency composed entirely of Indians. This church exerted a wide influence among the Indians.

Please remember ~~that~~ when reading this story that all these Indians had been captured at Wood Lake, tried by court-martial, convicted and condemned to die by hanging. But Lincoln refused to let them hang.

It was on February 3, 1863--- a day long to be remembered in the annals of the Dakotas, as the day when they renounced savagery and enlisted under the banner of the cross. It was a most solemn and impressive scene when each dusky warrior arose in response to his name, confessed his sin and swore allegiance to the King of Heaven and was baptized in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

One of the impressive features of this service was the fact that the missionary was familiar with the past life of the candiate and so was able to give a charge just suited to his particular need.

After this out pouring of the Spirit, what happened next inside those prison walls ? Instead of telling idle stories, gambling and holding heathen dances, ~~These~~ wild men of the plains spent the whole winter in

listening to the Word of God, in prayer, exhortation and the singing of hymns.

With such a story as this for a background, can we not think of Mankato ^{Not} as a place of hanging--- but as the place of a new life--- where a nation was born in a day ?

Their log jail was transformed into a school house where they learned to read and write. The revival spread to Ft. Snelling where many of their comrades were confined. My father was standing guard at this prison while the revival was going on.

This spiritual awakening and transformation is unique in Indian history. It originated largely among themselves and affected a large number of their tribe. Their after life fully attested the ~~genuin~~ genuineness of their conversion. Christian homes and churches were established and added much to their happiness and well being.

However a dark cloud continued to hang over the prison--- a cloud of which we are not overly proud. The people around them could not comprehend the change that had taken place in the hearts of their red brothers.

Their claims of conversion were regarded as mere hypocrisy. Even among some of the best of us, too often the spirit of revenge drives out the Spirit of Christ.

The House of Representatives passed a resolution requesting President Lincoln to hang all these Indians at once. The final insane act came when a man from St. Peter, peeved because the people of Boston and Philadelphia had protested against the hanging of the Indians, drew up a petition and got it signed by 3000 persons, asking Congress to locate the Sioux on Boston Common and the Winnebagoes on the parks of Philadelphia.

The closing chapter is both bad and good. The sad part comes first. The Indians were kept in heavy chains all the while they were in captivity until their limbs were badly chafed. Rev. Mr. Riggs was able to get the chains removed for a short time to let their sores heal, but such were

were the fears of the people that the military were obliged to restore them. To men used to the freedom of the open air the close confinement in the log jail began to tell upon them. During the winter thirteen of them died.

In April they were taken to the military prison at Davenport, 270 condemned, 48 uncondemned and a few squaws, where they were kept till the spring of ¹⁸⁶⁹ ~~1868~~, when they were pardoned and sent to an agency in Nebraska.

As they were passing Ft. Snelling where many of their wives and comrades were confined they sang:
Jehovah, have mercy upon me,
For Thy own mercy sake,
Thy loving kindness is very great,
Therefore place me in Thy heart.

Let us follow these Indians a little farther on their life's journey after they reach the reservation at Santee, Nebraska.

Out of this revival came the father of Dr. Charles H. Eastman, noted author, doctor and preacher, who, after his release from prison went in quest of his son, found him in the wilds of western ~~Canada~~ Canada, brought him back, sent him to college where he afterwards became famous.

After three years confinement in a military prison, the Sioux now find themselves once more on the open prairies. But in the meanwhile a great change has come over them. They have not only learned how to pray, but they have also learned how to think.

Dr. Eastman's father was one who had learned to think. He had much to think about. He thought about his own and the future of his fellows, and came to the conclusion that reservation life meant practically life imprisonment and death to their manhood. He also saw that the wild life of the Indian was at an end.

With 25 to 30 others they decided to make a bold plunge into the white man's life, and swim or die in the attempt.

As bona fide homesteaders they selected a choice location 40 miles

above the present city of Sioux Falls, and here they established the first Sioux-citizen community. This remarkable Indian colony soon became known far and wide. They occupied 30 miles of the finest bottom lands with plenty of wooded sections. They were all Presbyterians and devout church members. The missionary Rev. J.P. Williamson was their first pastor to be followed by Dr. Eastman's brother who served them faithfully.

AS the Big Sioux valley is noted for its fertility it was not long before the rest of the land was taken up by white farmers. During the hard years of 1873-5 when drought and grass ^{hoppers} ~~hoppers~~ afflicted the land, they organized a relief society for the ^{benefit} ~~relief~~ of their poorer white neighbors and furnished them with cord wood, seed corn and potatoes .

The court records corroborates the statement that for 20 years there was not a single crime or misdemeanor recorded against one of these Indians.

With this record, who can say that civilization and christian manhood is beyond the reach of the untutored primitive man in a single generation.

It did not take Dr. Eastman's father, who was once a wild roving Sioux warrior, very long to become a broad minded, self-supporting and self-respecting citizen.

" Most of these Indians renounced Agency life, took claims in South Dakota, adopted the ways of white men, and there many of their descendents still live on farms leading worthy christian lives."-- Thomas Hughes.

Charles E. McColley,
92 Wheeler Av
Chanston. R.I.