



LIGHTS AND SHADOWS
ON THE
COLONY FIELD

By J. LEIGHTON READ AND
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"In haunts of wretchedness and need
On shadowed thresholds dark with fears,
From paths where hide the lures of greed
We catch the vision of Christ's tears."



Mission Church, Colony, Oklahoma

"A charge to keep we have;
A God to glorify;
These never-dying souls to save
And fit them for the sky."

Lights and Shadows on the Colony Field

By

J. LEIGHTON READ and KATHARINE W. READ

"LOOK"; "PRAY"; "GO."

"Look on the fields;"

"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest";

"Go ye therefore into all the world."

These are the three words the Master uses to lay on us the responsibility of making the gospel known to the ends of the earth.

TWENTY-FIVE years ago the Women's Board of Domestic Missions of the Reformed Church in America "looked" on the needy Indian fields. They prayed, and under the guiding hand of God, they have gone to at least five of these fields with "the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to their trust." But we must keep "looking", for every year brings changed conditions and different needs; we must keep "praying"—for guidance, strength, workers, money; and we must keep "going"—not only to the fields already occupied, but to the more needy fields beyond.

In our little corner of the Master's vineyard (and the same is doubtless true in every other) there are both lights and shadows, clouds and sunshine, the bright and the dark side. Nothing is gained, and much may be lost, if we look only at one side. Here are some of the things we have to face on our field at Colony.

Difficulties

THE minor ones are hardly worth mentioning in connection with the major, but they cast their small shadows just the same together with the larger and darker ones. A picture is not complete with-

out details! Life everywhere is made up largely of "little things", and the mission field is no exception.

Let me see! When there is need of dental work to be done, you just reach for your 'phone, make a date with your dentist, take your auto or the street car, and in twenty or thirty minutes you are in his office where you stay for an hour perhaps and then leave. Imagine yourself thirty miles from the dentist, bundling up the baby, driving for two hours, and sitting in the dentist's chair for four, in order to get through in three sittings! Or suppose your porch had just been painted when along comes a sand-storm and turns your beautiful grey to an ugly drab! Then there are the cloud-bursts which play havoc with your garden, and sometimes hail-stones to damage your roof and destroy exposed windows. Last spring several stained glass windows in our picturesque little church were broken. Then last summer, when the thermometer stood at its highest, the well which had furnished the Mission with such splendid water for more than twenty years, suddenly filled with quicksand. Water had to be carried by hand for three weeks from another well over 200 yards away—the historic old well which was the first piece of work done by the Women's Board for the Indians.

Problems.

Chief among these are:

- (1) The suspicious nature of the Indian;
- (2) Opposition from their "medicine men";
- (3) The scattered condition of our people;
- (4) The powerful and pernicious "peyote" cult.

THE Indian watches you a long time, for years perhaps, before he puts his confidence in you. But when he does he is very friendly and trusts you like a child. You are his hero and leader now. At the last Camp Meeting old Two Crows, in his testimony, said when Dr. Wright first came into this country, he and two other Indians were speculating as to what manner of man this stranger might be, and they finally decided that he was a horse-thief!

Of course the opposition from the medicine men is gradually dying out, as the old men pass away, but we have had several incidents in the last few years which show us that it is dying hard. Recently one of our young women, critically ill with pneumonia in a camp eight miles away, wanted to be brought to the Lodge where we could take proper care of her, but she was not allowed to come. The distance and the roads, which were next to impassable even for a Ford, made it very difficult for us to do much for her. About two years ago our doctor refused to attend a woman in confinement unless the old medicine women would keep "hands off".

It has been the policy of the government for a long time to push the Indians out from their camps around the Agencies and Schools to live on their allotments, and to teach them to farm. This is fine! We too, encourage them to become self-supporting, for it will not be many years before the great majority of them will be thrown entirely on their own resources. But this scattered condition makes it more difficult for us to reach them. We try to get out in the field one or two days every week, but the distances are so great we can only visit four or five families a day at the most. Besides reading and explaining the Word, and prayer, we have a splendid opportunity for personal work. We usually take them some pictures and good literature, and often tell the older ones some current events of interest. They have so little to brighten their lives!

But the greatest problem and the most powerful enemy to our work is this peyote cult. The Indian has mixed his medicine and his religion so long that it will take more than a generation or two for him to change. This comparatively new religion, including the ceremonial use of the powerful drug called peyote, is tacked on to his Christianity like so many other false religions are today. They say peyote is the Holy Spirit, and worship it! Not long ago one of our younger men—and most of them are into it *deep*—held up a peyote "bean" before his wife, a splendid Christian young

woman, and said, "My god is greater than your God". Will you not pray with us for these misguided young men? One of our most progressive young farmers said a few weeks ago, "I tell you, Mrs. Roe, peyote is ruining my people". God grant that its shackles may soon be broken!

Progress.

TO those who knew this particular group of Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians twenty-five years ago the progress made during these years has been truly wonderful. One member of the Board recently (speaking to the Indians) drew a picture of conditions as they were twenty years ago and compared it with that of today. It is sometimes difficult for us on the field to see the progress, but it is exceeding gratifying to us, and should be encouraging to the church, to know that it is real.

Industrial. As the missionary was making one of



Mrs. Mary W. Roe, Colony



his trips in the field during the last harvest season, a novel sight met his eyes. Spotted Calf, a Cheyenne of the old regime, still wearing his hair in braids, was mounted on a McCormick binder, driving five horses abreast, harvesting his own grain. Across the field of half cut grain, perched on a small straw stack, sat his wife under a big umbrella, ready to lend assistance if necessary. Another trip found Mistamaha Wolf Chief, a younger man of the most advanced type, feeding hogs worth nearly \$1,000, with 400 chickens on his place, 50 acres in alfalfa and 150 in wheat. Yes, these are exceptional cases, for many do not cultivate a single acre nor turn a hand for self-support. But it is true, nevertheless, that more of them are at work than when the writer began his observation four years ago.

Social and Moral. There is still much along these lines that makes one's heart sick; but is any race, or even community, wholly free from flagrant lapses of this kind? Little by little they are coming to see that



Women's Missionary Society ready for the annual church cleaning

their daily conduct must square with their profession. With the education and industrial training our government is trying to give them on the one side, and the religious and moral by the missionaries on the other, we believe that the coming generation—the third with which our Mission is now coming into contact—will make a decided advance.

Religious. For reasons set forth above the religious progress of these, and many other tribes, is far from satisfactory. To those who watch so eagerly for every new sign of the coming day when they will be able to carry on their own religious activities, the *out-look* is often discouraging; but, thank God there is always the *up-look*! Although there are only a few sheaves garnered here and there from the field work, our greatest encouragement is in the work among the Government School children, with whom we have a much better opportunity. Each year we have the joy of seeing a dozen or more give themselves to the Master. This is the "high light" of our work, for it is in these young people that our greatest hope of the future lies.

Mission Activities

THE Church. The Sabbath School is our main Sunday service for the Indians. The teachers are the entire Mission force, some of the Government School employes, and, this year, two young Indian women. One of the latter is a graduate of Haskell Institute, a government school, and the other, having received several years training at Hampton, is the assistant to Miss Jensen in her splendid work in the Primary Department. The pupils of our school are the 87 children from the Government School, the older and younger camp Indians and a few white children whom we have not had the heart to turn away. A few Sundays ago the attendance reached the highest mark in several years with 140 present. The Cradle Roll, with Mrs. Kincaide as superintendent, has an enrollment of 57.

The Sunday evening service has been a straight Eng-

lish service for many years, and is attended by the older School children, government employes, younger camp Indians and some of the village folks. For one hour each week the children at the School (with the exception of the youngest) receive instruction in three Christian Endeavor groups, all under one or more of our own workers. The "Christian Council" on Friday evening is for the older Indians.

Camp work. By this we mean visiting the homes and camps in and around the village (truly a floating population), and going out by automobile where the people are (or where you may think they are), to their homes or in their different camps. It is the only way we can possibly keep in touch with quite a large number of our people. On these trips we spend the entire day, usually taking an interpreter and accompanied by one or two other members of the Mission force. It is slow and tedious work, but we always enjoy it and believe it pays.

"The Lodge". This building is now owned and supported by the Board and continues to render most valuable service under the capable leadership of Miss Meengs, matron and trained nurse. It is a community and social center for both school children and camp Indians, where many happy hours are spent in wholesome amusement. In serious illness and confinement cases the Indians seem more and more willing to seek the comfort and expert care offered free of cost. Within the writer's knowledge more than one life, either of mother or babe, has been saved.

In connection with the work at the Lodge we cannot afford to overlook that of the splendid Women's Missionary Society, for it is there they meet to sew, tie quilts, do bead-work, etc., the profits of their labor goes to the Jesus work and amounts to a considerable sum each year. And one of the brightest spots in our work is that a good number of these women are regular attendants at the Sunday School and Church services.

"The Mohonk Lodge". A resume of the various activities of the Mission would not be complete without



Miss Meege and Lodge babies

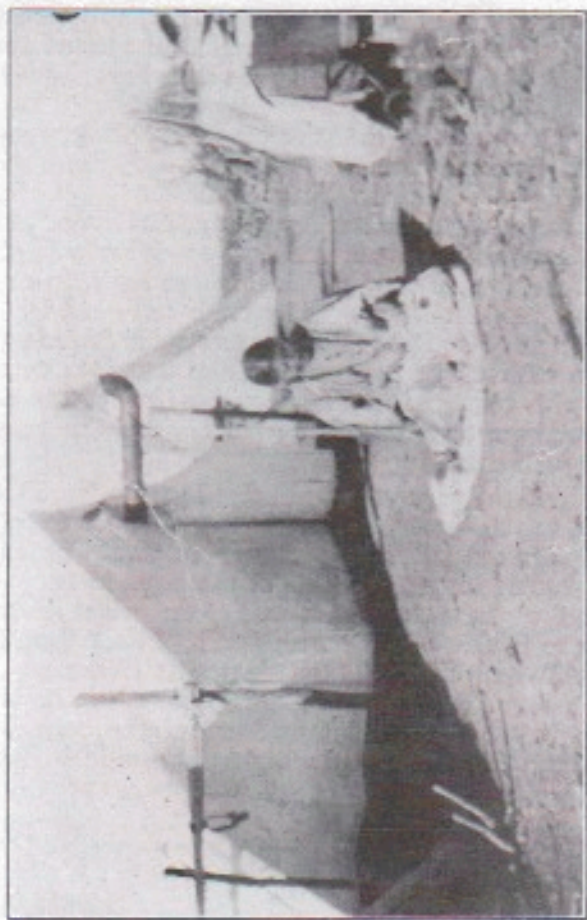
mentioning the important and constructive work which has been done for nearly twenty years by this institution, and how indispensable its workers have become to almost every other phase of the work in the Colony field. It is a philanthropic and industrial undertaking, neither owned nor supported by the Board, but under the direction of "The Mohonk Lodge Association", of which Mrs. Walter C. Roe has been president for many years. It provides employment in the bead-work for which these tribes are noted, and in the homes and camps or under the trees one can see the women busily engaged in their work. Mr. and Mrs. Kincaide, as well as his assistant, Miss Van Zoeren, all take an active part in the evangelistic work of the Mission.

Outlook.

AS to the future of the Colony work it would be useless to speculate. It is the almost unanimous opinion of those long experienced in Indian affairs that many radical changes, especially in the policies of the government, are sure to come in the near future. If these people are in the valley, as some have described their condition, then it is "the valley of decision". When the paternal care of the government is withdrawn—as it surely will be for a great many—and they and their valuable lands become a prey to the land-grafter and the money-grabbers, when they really "hit bottom", who will there be but the missionary to reach out a helping hand? And that they will look to us for help there can be little doubt. Let us be ready to "stand by" in their hour of crucial need. Let us set our faces to the future with confidence, and address ourselves to the task with courage, knowing that the Lord of the harvest will see to it that "we shall reap in due season if we faint not."

If by these pages we have helped you to "look", inspired you to "pray", or given to any a greater desire to "go", then our labor has not been in vain. We have tried briefly to picture some of the signs of progress, and a few of the shadows as well as the bright spots in this one field. We only wish you could see them for yourself—and above all the light that shines on the once savage face ("a light that ne'er was seen on land or sea") the indisputable evidence of the indwelling presence of Him who is the Light of the world.

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