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EARLY WESTERN MISSIONS

Was the General Theme of Dr. Schafer's Address to the Y. M. C. A. Friday Night

That the American Indians have not decreased in number since the days of Christopher Columbus, was the statement made by Dr. Joseph Schafer, at Y. M. C. A. Friday night as an introduction to his talk on "Early Missions in the Northwest." Dr. Schafer continued in part as follows:

"The old government policy of putting the Indians on reservations in the hope that they will ultimately die out has in recent years been supplanted by the new and enlightened policy of endeavoring to fit the red men for civilization and absorbing them into it. Of all forces that have been powerful in preserving the Indians by averting wars which would have resulted in their extermination, and of all influences that have been potent in bringing about the new enlightened policy there has been no force more powerful and no influence more potent than the early Christian missionaries.

"The work of the missionary in the region west of the Mississippi begins with the removal of the pioneer hero mission worker Isaac McCoy to Western Missouri, after the coming of renegade white men had rendered of no avail his efforts in Ohio and Michigan. In the twenties, the government inaugurated the policy of moving all tribes to the west of the great river. The hope of the missionaries was now to deal with the Indians and get them to adopt civilization before the white men should come with firearms and intoxicants. But in most instances, the march of immigration was all too soon, and the work was without enduring result. The last stand of the missionaries was in the Oregon country and there the greatest measure of success was attained. The intrepid Parker and Whitman, Mr. and Mrs. Spaulding, Mr. Gray and later arrivals of the same stamp found in Washington a superior type of Indians, as yet free from disturbing elements. Their plan was essentially what that of the United States is today, to get the red men to settle down and to teach them to raise cattle, to plow, to plant, to irrigate, to reap, to build and care for houses, to read and write. In many places their success was wonderful, and fifty years more would have completed the civilization of the Indians of the Northwest.

"But the renegade whites began to come in, a clash between the methods of Protestant and Catholic missionaries left the Indians in doubt as to what religion really was for them, and the final result was the massacre of the fourteen missionaries at Whitman's mission, and the end of the work had come, until the policy was recently adopted by the government."

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