

# THE REAL FACTS ABOUT MISSIONARY WORK WITH THE INDIANS

(By Rev. J. M. Cornelson, for 18 Years Missionary at Tutuilla Mission on Umatilla Reservation.)

It is simply wonderful what the average globe-trotting writer tries to palm off upon an over-confiding and unsuspecting public relative to any exceptional people, and especially about the Indians who, from the time Columbus landed on these shores, have always had a glamour, romanticism and halo about them, particularly if it tended to show what historians have ever strained to bring out, namely, their cruelty, destitution and laziness, until their fertile imaginations gave birth to "Lo, the Poor Indian."

Now, it is a shame to tear it all

down and unbecomingly this somber and stolid figure, and to do so with the full expectation of calling down on one's head the wrath of his denigrated originators. But I hope to give just plain every day facts that can be corroborated and certified to by any reliable citizen of the county that will cause to tumble down this fiction and dissolve—"Lo, the poor Indian."

I adjure that these are not to be the observations of the rover, but more of the squatter blind, made after nearly eighteen years' continuous residence among the Indians and of work with and for and interest in them, even so far as to the learning of their language that their problems both physical, social, mental and

spiritual might be gotten at from first hand information with a view to helping one section of them at least, to higher grounds in all these lines. Though just as the itinerant's observation is liable to be cursory, shallow and unreliable; so the resident or participant in such work is liable to be prejudiced, or biased in favor of, and so only view one side. Therefore, as stated at the first, it is best to give some unsought and outside testimony from reliable citizens in the county relative to the Indians on the Umatilla Indian reservation, both as to their growth, progress and standing as citizens.

When the writer first came onto the reservation and before he had seen

any personal means of transportation, he was often seen riding about with John Crow, a rancher of the David Hiram type. A friend accosted him one day with "Hello, John, who in hell is that riding about with you so much these days?" Reply—"Damn it, don't you know? That is the little fellow that the mission board has sent here to put wings on all these Indians." And many guffawed at the hush joke as it went the rounds. No one claims that those said wings have ever grown over much and all are willing to admit that the feathers get in other places at some times in the year, about July and Round-Up time in the case of some of the Indians. Just the same, few and not all by any means. However, this would soon stop if the white people didn't encourage it, and pay them so royally to do such stunts for show. It has little or no other significance to these Indians at this day. It is money that is in it that makes the feathers grow on certain occasions.

But that joke was made seventeen years ago and is mostly out of use, and one man was frank enough to come to the writer several years later and say: "Young man, we had many a good laugh about your coming on this reservation, and when you passed in your mission work we sort of tapped our heads in that significant way, meaning 'buggy,' especially when you began to drill that well up on that hill, and began to erect buildings. But as we see the mission plant now and the result of it in the lives of these people we don't laugh any more." Now all will be willing to admit that the moral tone, educational ideals and aspirations, homes and social conditions, and business

acumen of the whole reservation has been very greatly advanced in these years.

To bring out these results there have been at work many different factors. The splendid government school for the children, the Catholic school and mission, and the Presbyterian mission have all done their several parts along their own lines. Then, too, the very high class of farming done on the reservation by the ranchers, together with their families among the people as examples, have all been dominant elements in this transformation. Though the examples of some could have been better. Then right here is where my story really begins, and testimony taken and exhibited.

Some years ago through some departmental red tape the semi-annual rent payments to the Indians were held up for more than a year. The Indians simply had to get credit both from ranchers and merchants to live. The annual rentals of the reservation approach \$75,000 or more. This amount was scattered out among all their friends. I took pains on this occasion to ask several of the ranchers and merchants how they were collecting from the Indians, especially those who affiliate with the mission. For the Sabbath before the money was paid over to them I had made it a point to preach a sermon on the text, "Owe no man anything." And I said some very strong things about the fellow that don't pay his debts.

Just three days after they had their money one rancher said, and this is a typical case of many such replies: "I had out considerably over \$1000 'n small sums here and there, and not a note to show for it except my memorandum, and their memory, and

they have returned it all but \$25 and that man is not home yet."

A grocery merchant said: "Ninety-tenths of the Indians pay me every cent they owe me. The other tenth may be a little slow. If my white trade did as well there would be few complaints or suits to collect. A leading merchant in another line of goods had no complaint to make but said: "I am frank to say that you are dealing with a very different class of Indians than we did a few years ago." So, the testimony could be extended, ad infinitum, to show that the business faithfulness and honesty of the Indians are without question.

Of course there are a few sad exceptions to all rules which they say go to prove them. But the moral standards and business honesty that have been set up are so protruding as to have been caught by all in some degree. Many parents are ambitious to have their children educated. Many are seeking to make better homes and conditions of life for their children, more like they are used to in schools. The reflex action of the educated children in the homes on their parents and the older people has been good.

But unquestionably the most striking

changes and contrasts have come where men and women have openly confessed Christianity, and are practicing its teachings in their daily lives, and are taking an active part in the church work and Christian influences on the reservation. Some of these people only ten years ago were leaders in the wild life of dancing, drinking, gambling, racing and adultery. Some of their names are written many times in the police records of Pendleton for they couldn't be trusted in town with six-bits when all the saloons were there, unless it meant a jag, jail or fine. With their new vision in life, now they are good business men and many farm their own lands, and care for their families. The thousands of dollars that used to go for booze, headaches and fines, now goes for better groceries to eat, clothes for self and families, lumber for homes and furnishings for same, stock and implements for work and stably in several instances for the best automobiles to be had.

Ex-County Judge G. W. Maloney, an elder in the Presbyterian church, said just recently in mentioning an Indian who is now also an elder in

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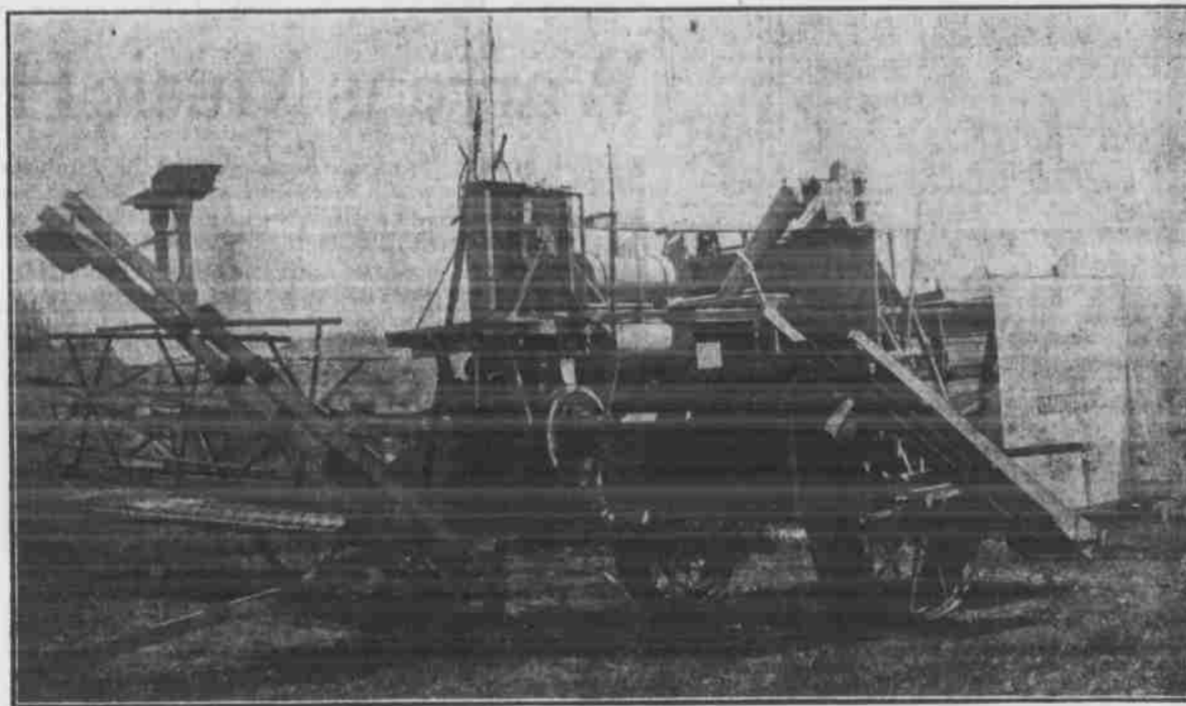
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