

ELIZA AND THE NEZ PERCE INDIANS

Seventy-six years ago a little six-months old baby sat in her mother's lap in an humble home in the eastern part of what was then known as Oregon. (Oregon then comprised all that section of country lying west of the Rocky Mountains and north of the California line.) The baby was a dark-haired, dark-eyed little girl, and was the joy of her parents, who had peculiar reasons for being attached to her. She was not different from other children of like age, but had the distinction of being the second white American child born on this Northwest Coast, and the first who grew to years of maturity. She is still living, and has been for years a resident of this state, though now living in Idaho.

Her parentage and environment were unusual. On the banks of a swiftly running stream, called Lapwai, which empties into the Clearwater river a dozen miles or so east of the City of Lewiston, in the State of Idaho, was the place of her birth. Their home was a nondescript building, made of logs, eighteen feet wide and forty-eight feet long. A partition, also made of logs, divided it into two rooms, one eighteen feet square in which the family lived, and the other eighteen by thirty feet, which was used for a school and assembly room. It had been a great task to erect that house. There were no teams, and all the logs had to be carried four miles by the Indians. It took thirty men to carry one log. The parents were missionaries, and had lived there about eighteen months, with no white neighbors nearer than one hundred and twenty miles and the only means of communication between them was on horseback.

Now let us go back thirty years or more. In the spring of 1806, when Lewis and Clark were returning back across the continent in their most wonderful exploring expedition, they passed through this section of the country. On arriving at a place called Kamiah, sixty miles east of Lapwai, they found the snow too deep to allow of their crossing the mountains, and were obliged to remain there about a month. They found the Indians of this tribe very friendly and accommodating. They were really a superior race of people. Most of them had never seen any white people before, and none of them had ever seen a black man, like York of that party. Their curiosity was greatly aroused. They even tried to wash the black off from his face. The thirty days or more spent there was mutually very enjoyable, and the memory of it was treasured up in their minds for very many years. It is not known that there were any very religiously inclined men among them, but all knew of the existence of

a God, and Mr. Clark at least is said to have been a church member. It is more than probable that some seeds of Divine truth were dropped into their darkened minds at the time, for twenty-five years later they sent a delegation of four men to St. Louis to get further knowledge of the white man's God, and the book or guide to Heaven. Two of these were elderly men, and two were younger. On arriving at St. Louis, then the emporium of the West, they were cordially received by General Clark, who was then Superintendent of Indian Affairs, having charge of all Indians living in the far West. He remembered well the hospitality he and his company had received at the hands of their tribe a quarter of a century before, and took great pleasure in requiting it in a fitting manner. They arrived in the fall. During the following winter the two elderly men sickened and died. There is a tradition, that just before starting, one of the survivors made the following speech: "I came to you over the trail of many moons from the setting sun. I came with one eye partly open for more light for my people who dwell in darkness. I made my way to you through many enemies and strange lands that I might carry back much to them. I go back with both arms broken and empty. The two fathers, who came with us, the braves of many winters and wars,—we leave them here asleep by your great waters and wigwams. My people sent me to get the book of Heaven from the white men. You make my feet heavy with the burden of gifts, but the book is not among them. When I tell my poor blind people after one more snow that I did not get the book, no word will be spoken. One by one they will arise and go out in silence. My people will die in darkness. No book from the white men to make the way plain. That is all."

There has some doubt been expressed whether the Indian used this exact language. But Mr. Catlin, the Government painter of Indian portraits, and who traveled with them on the steamer going up the Missouri river, and who painted their portraits which are now in the museum at Washington City, is authority for the statement that this was their object. At any rate, their very unusual mission became known among the missionary societies in the east, then in their infancy, and awakened a deep interest in their call for help.

In 1834 the Methodist denomination sent out four single men, two ministers, the Reverends Lee, uncle and nephew, and two laymen, Messrs. Shepherd and Edwards. These men established a mission in the Willamette Valley nine or ten miles from where the City of Salem now stands. Two years later Messrs. Spalding and Whitman followed in their footsteps. They were accompanied by their brides, who, with indomitable pluck, heroism and devotion faced that long and terrible journey from the

Atlantic to the Pacific, and accomplished it successfully. Of their privations and sufferings on that long and toilsome journey there is not now time to dwell. Week after week, and month after month, they traveled on horseback, sleeping on the ground at night, with no house but a tent, and no mattress but skins and blankets; fresh buffalo meat their principal diet, and through tribes of Indians who had never seen a white woman. After many delays and dangers, in November, 1836, Mr. and Mrs. Spalding located among the Nez Perce Indians, the tribe who had sent the messengers east. Doctor and Mrs. Whitman had settled in the Walla Walla Valley, among the Cayuse Indians.

For the first three weeks the Spaldings lived or rather camped in an Indian lodge, the poles of which were covered with buffalo skins with the hair taken off, called parfleshes, until their cabin was prepared. The two missionary couples were one hundred and twenty miles from each other; and neither woman saw the other or any other white woman for a year after their separation.

The following year, 1837, witnessed the birth of two girls, the first white American children born in the Northwest. Alice Clarissa Whitman was born March 4th, and was the first, and Eliza Spalding, born November 15th, was the second. In November, 1837, Mrs. Whitman made her first visit to Mrs. Spalding, bringing her little girl with her, when each child beheld for the first time a white baby. On the 23d of June, 1839, little Alice was accidentally drowned in the Walla Walla river, leaving Eliza as the first white American child who grew to years of maturity.

Mr. and Mrs. Spalding pursued their labors for the benefit of the Indians; she collecting the women and the girls in the assembly room, and teaching them the simple arts of domestic life. Being somewhat of an artist, she also drew pictures representing events recorded in the New Testament, and also the alphabet, which they readily learned. The room was often crowded to its utmost capacity. Men as well as women of mature age, as well as the young people, applied themselves with eagerness. Mr. Spalding would often collect a crowd about a campfire and tell them Bible stories, often somewhat embellished, and he held their attention until long into the night. The interest of the Indians was very encouraging.

The next year, 1838, brought them fresh cheer and assistance in the arrival of a reinforcement to the mission, of which they got Mr. W. H. Gray and his wife, and a Mr. Rodgers, besides which a Mr. Smith and his wife went to Kamiah to establish a mission there. For some reason, Mr. Smith did not succeed at Kamiah and soon left the country. But

with the help of Mr. Gray and Rodgers, Mr. Spalding built a grist mill, bringing the stones forty miles down the Clearwater river. One of those stones is in the collection of curios of the Historical Society in Tacoma. This little mill was very much appreciated by the Indian women, who before that time had to pound their grain and roots in a mortar with a pestle. This was very laborious work for them. In later years a sawmill was also built there.

Messrs. Walker and Eells, who also came at that time, located among the Spokane Indians, where they remained about ten years.

In the year 1839, three years after they commenced teaching the Indians, their hearts were gladdened by the receipt of a printing press, a gift from the native Christians of the Sandwich Islands. With it came a printer by the name of E. O. Hall, who, with his wife, made things brighter for the Spaldings. They immediately went to work with fresh vigor to prepare books and pamphlets for the use of the Indians. A primer, an elementary spelling book, a book of songs, a translation of the book of Matthew, and some other books were prepared. These the Indians learned to use. In their lodges and around their campfires they studied them, and the air often resounded with their songs, they using the books that had been prepared for them. The printing press remained there seven years, when it was taken to The Dalles. It is now in the rooms of the Historical Society of Oregon at Portland. It is interesting to note in this connection the fact that the first printing press was brought to the Atlantic Coast in 1639, just exactly two hundred years prior to the arrival of this one which was brought to the Pacific Coast in 1839.

There were lights and shadows in their work. Sometimes the Indians got tired of their books. At other times they got cranky and lazy. Then there were outside influences that they had to contend with. Some of the missionaries got discouraged and left the mission; but Mr. and Mrs. Spalding labored on. The important results of their work were seen in later years, when a large proportion of the Indians were found to be nominally Christians.

Eleven years passed by when a tragedy occurred, which shocked the whole Northwest, and drove the missionaries from their work and their homes. Many immigrants had come across the plains with their teams, and most of them went on down to the Willamette Valley. In the fall of 1847, however, some fifty or sixty, who for various reasons had found it impracticable to go any further, were stopping temporarily at Walla Walla, at Dr. Whitman's place. There were in all about seventy-five stopping there, including the mission family and attaches. So many white children were among them that a school of English speaking children

was established. It seemed an opportune time for Eliza Spalding, who was then ten years old, to be there, where she could associate with children of her own race, and her father took her down to spend the winter with the Whitmans. Arriving the latter part of the week, Mr. Spalding decided to remain a few days, and on Saturday he accompanied Dr. Whitman to the Umatilla, some forty miles to the south, where there were some sick Indians that the Doctor wished to visit. Dr. Whitman returned the next day, as the calls for him at home were urgent; while Mr. Spalding remained a few days to hold services with the Indians there and do missionary work among them.

On Monday, the 29th of November, 1847, shortly after noon, while Dr. Whitman was sitting in his house, two Indians came in and asked for some medicine, which was given them. While the Doctor was explaining to one of them something about the use of it, the other stealthily slipped up behind him, drew his tomahawk out from under his blanket, and struck him a blow on the top of the head which stunned him. A second blow and he fell to the floor insensible. This was the signal for a general attack. The screams of the women and children, the rapid discharge of firearms, and the yells of the savages made pandemonium let loose. During this affray little Eliza was almost the only one who understood the Indian language, and her terror was increased by knowing what they were saying. At one time, when she heard the order to shoot all the children, she turned her back so she could not see it done, and leaning over the sink, put her hands over her face and listened in terror. But better counsels prevailed and they were saved. During that and the few following days thirteen men and one woman, Mrs. Whitman, lost their lives, a few escaped, and more than fifty women and children were taken prisoners.

Two days later Mr. Spalding started back from the Umatilla, knowing nothing of what had occurred. The same day a party of three, a Catholic priest, a half-breed and an Indian, left Walla Walla to go to the Umatilla. The latter went for the purpose of killing Mr. Spalding. Eliza heard of this, and having learned in some way that the half-breed was friendly, managed to have a little private conversation with him, and implored him to do what he could to protect her father. This he promised to do. They met on the road; but a short time before meeting the Indian had discharged his gun at some game, and stopped to load, and was otherwise engaged, so that he did not see Mr. Spalding. When he overtook his companions nothing was said about having met Mr. Spalding for some time, so that he had quite a start to get away. In the meantime they had given Mr. Spalding the warning, and he had hid in the brush, and although the Indian and his party passed close to him, they

did not discover that he was there. He hid there till it was dark, and then traveling by night, and hiding by day, made his way toward his home, but by a very circuitous route. He was near a week on the way. In the meantime he lost his horse, his shoes gave out, he had but little food, and crazed with grief for the fate of his comrades, tortured with fear for the fate of his daughter, and terribly anxious about what should befall his wife and three small children whom he had left at home, he staggered along until he reached an Indian village in his own neighborhood. Uncertain whether they were friends or foes he listened intently, when he heard them singing. Creeping slowly along, he discovered that they were singing the songs that he and his wife had taught them. A wave of relief swept over him. He was now among his friends. The next day, accompanied by a strong guard, he reached his home, which he found deserted.

It had been looted that very morning. But where were his wife and children? At length they were found secreted in an Indian lodge with some friendly Indians ten miles distant. When he finally found them, all were overcome with emotions too deep to be described. They then all returned to their home under a sufficient guard, where they remained for several weeks, protected by friendly Indians.

In the meantime an express had been sent to Vancouver, the headquarters of the Hudson's Bay Company, apprising the chief factor of what had occurred. He immediately dispatched Factor Peter Skeen Ogden, one of the most tactful men, who made all possible haste to Walla Walla to rescue the prisoners. He was successful. For about four hundred dollars' worth of blankets, beads and other trinkets the Indians delivered to him all at the fort, which was located at what is now Wallula. Negotiations were also entered into for the delivery of Mr. Spalding and family. They, under a guard of forty Nez Perces, finally rode into the fort. Their little Eliza fell into her mother's arms with transports of joy too deep for utterance. The last days of December witnessed the departure of all these people from the upper country, who arrived at Oregon City December 31, 1847.

Soon after this, the provisional governor of Oregon, George Abernethy, called for a regiment of volunteers, who went up and fought the Indians. That is what is known as the Cayuse Indian war, the first Indian war in the Northwest. After a campaign of six months, the Indians were driven out of their country and large numbers of their horses were captured. Eventually, through the kind offices of the Nez Perces Indians, five of the murderers were delivered up, and taken to Oregon City, where they were tried, convicted and executed by the authorities.

Mr. Spalding then settled in the Willamette Valley, where he lived for a number of years. Governor Abernethy had issued a proclamation warning all Americans not to settle east of the Cascade Mountains, and for nearly ten years that section of the country was closed to settlement.

Three years after they went to lower Oregon, Mrs. Spalding passed away. Never a strong woman, the excitement, fatigue, and exposure, incidental to the breaking up of the mission, and moving to the Willamette Valley, had been too much for her. After a lingering illness, she closed her labors for the cause of her Master, whom she so much loved.

Eliza was now left at the age of thirteen at the head of the household with the care of the family. She had one brother and two sisters. The burden was a heavy one for her young shoulders to bear. In a few years, her father having married, she also married, and for a time disappears from our narrative.

Now let us return to the Nez Perce Indians. After the close of the Cayuse war, for years they were left to themselves. They did not, however, forget the worship of the true God. The books that had been distributed among them, and which they had learned to read, were used continually, and served to strengthen them in the belief and practice of the truths that had been taught them. Seven years passed away, during which time the Territory of Oregon, and later that of Washington, were organized. Governor Isaac I. Stevens had arrived. He was also Acting Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Territory. With his accustomed impetuous energy, he had made treaties with most of the Indians west of the Cascade Mountains. In May, 1855, he assembled a large council of Indians in the Walla Walla Valley, to try to make treaties with them. He had with him less than one hundred men. The Nez Percés were the first to arrive, who came, twenty-five hundred strong. While waiting for the others to arrive, Sunday intervened. Governor Stevens relates that the tribe held religious services in their camp, conducted by one of their own number. He commends the good order, interest and devotion manifested by them.

When all had assembled, it was estimated that there were five thousand present. A large proportion were opposed to selling any of their land. There was much angry discussion, and it looked as though the effort would be a failure. Late one night, Lawyer, the head chief of the Nez Percés, came unattended into the tent of Governor Stevens and disclosed to him the fact that a conspiracy had been formed to kill him and his whole party. He proposed that he move his own family into the midst of Governor Stevens' camp; and although it was now past midnight it was immediately done, and word was circulated that he was there for their

protection. The plot failed by this bit of strategy, and their lives were saved.

Matters then took a turn, and in a few days the terms of the treaties were agreed upon. Lawyer was the first to sign, and the others then followed. This result was largely due to the teachings of Mr. and Mrs. Spalding, whose instructions had made Lawyer, who was the head chief, a Christian, as well as so large a following that they controlled, for the time being, the other bands who were there.

However, a few months later the general Indian war broke out, in which a large proportion of all the Indians in Oregon and Washington took part, led by many of the very Indians who had signed the treaties above mentioned. During all of these hostilities, which lasted about two years, the Nez Percés Indians remained friendly to the whites and saved many valuable lives.

By the year 1859, peace had been declared, the Indians having been conquered, and the country east of the Cascade Mountains was opened up to settlement. The next year Mr. Spalding moved his family into the Walla Walla country, and attempted to renew his work among his former Indians. The Indian Service at that time was very corrupt, and he encountered such strong opposition on the part of the agent and employes that he had to desist and await further developments. The influences about these Indians during the next ten or twelve years was very bad. The White Salmon River and the Oro Fino mines had been discovered, and thousands of miners, many of whom were of the worst class, passed through their country.

In 1871, however, the Indian Service had been reconstructed, and what was commonly known as the peace policy was adopted by the government. In accordance with its principles, all religious work among the Indians of the United States was to be encouraged. The way was now open for Mr. Spalding to return to his former field of labor. Twenty-three years had passed since he was driven away, during which time no work had been done by white men to encourage the best, while much had been done to encourage the worst, in them. The Indians received him with open arms. They thronged about him, and a more joyous welcome could not have been given him. The old church organization was resuscitated and during the next three years, while he still lived, he baptized nearly seven hundred of this tribe, and more than two hundred and fifty among the Spokanes, a smaller tribe, where Messrs. Walker and Eells had been stationed. During his last days, not being able to travel about as he had done, he established a boys' school in Kamiah, in which he taught and trained young Indian men to be preachers. But he had not

much longer to live. He was worn out. In August, 1874, he was brought down to Lapwai, where he laid down to die, at the ripe age of seventy-one. He was buried near the same spot where, thirty-eight years before, he had commenced his labors which had accomplished so much for the tribe and the country.

Another chapter in the good work done for the Nez Perces was the advent of the McBeth sisters. Nearly a year before Mr. Spalding's death, Miss Susan L. McBeth arrived at Lapwai under appointment as a teacher in the Indian school. As subsequent events will show, hers was a remarkable Christian character, in every way worthy to be the successor of Mrs. Spalding. The following year she went to Kamiah, and took up the work begun by Mr. Spalding, the training and education of young men to do missionary work among their own people. In addition to her work as a teacher, she was also a missionary, and held services among the Indians there. Although afflicted with partial paralysis, she performed her duties with a heroism and success that was remarkable. For three years she was there alone. When the breaking out of the Chief Joseph Indian war made it unsafe for her or any of the whites to remain there, she, in company with two other white families, fled hastily to Lapwai under guard of forty of the Christian Indians. The war closed in the fall of that year, 1877, but there were still stragglers about, and the agent felt it would be unsafe for her to remain there alone, and under his direction she remained in Lapwai for two years. Some of her students followed her down to Lapwai to receive the benefit of her instruction at that place.

She had now been on that reservation for six years, when in the fall of 1877 her sister, Miss Kate C. McBeth, arrived, and joined her in her work. Together they went back alone to Kamiah, where Miss S. L. McBeth resumed her work teaching the young Indian men, and her sister, Miss K. C. McBeth, opened a school especially for young women. It had been found that however well the young men were instructed and trained, when they wished to marry, they could not find young women fitted to be helpmeets for them; and they deteriorated so much as greatly to impair their usefulness. This new school soon became popular, and was very useful and important. Those were happy days for the two sisters. The church work, the Sunday school services, the Women's Missionary Society, the hearty co-operation, and I had almost said the adoration of the Indians, was very enjoyable. For six years they continued there, supported by the Presbyterian Missionary Society. A part of the time a government school was kept near them, and the intercourse between the teachers of the different schools was mutually enjoyable. About this time the health of Miss S. L. McBeth gradually failed, and there were

changes in the management of affairs on the reservation which did not help the McBeth sisters in their work. At first, during the hot weather, and later permanently, Miss S. L. McBeth removed to Mt. Idaho, fifteen miles distant and across the reservation line. She went there first in 1885. She bought a little home there, and lived in it until her death. Many of her pupils followed her and built little houses in which to live while attending her school. In addition to her other duties, during all these years, she prepared a dictionary of the Nez Perce Indian language, containing upwards of fifteen thousand words, which she left as her legacy. It was a most valuable one. For nearly twenty years she had lived among and for the benefit of the Nez Perces Indians, when her end came. In May, 1893, at the age of sixty years, she passed away. Born on the banks of the Doon, in Scotland, hers was a strong character, and a long and useful life. Loving hands bore her fifteen miles to the little church at Kamiah, near which, on the banks of the Clearwater, she was buried. Her influence, even after her death, was most potent. The young men she had taught and trained lived and labored for others for many years thereafter. Some of them went to preach to the Spokane Indians, some to the Umatillas, some to the Shoshones, and some even followed the prisoners taken in the Joseph Indian war to the Indian Territory, where so many of them died. They were of great comfort to the suffering ones, and finally returned with some of the prisoners to the home land. The high moral tone of the Nez Perces Indians, as well as those living in that vicinity, is largely due to her influence.

As has been said, six years after Miss S. L. McBeth came to the Nez Perces Indians, Miss Kate McBeth, her sister, followed her, and also took up a similar work, especially among the young Indian women. Upon her shoulders has fallen the mantle of her elder sister and now for a third of a century she has been among them. "Miss Kate," as she is familiarly called, is to them the little mother to whom they come for advice and counsel. She has written a book, covering the principal events of their history during the past century, which is valuable, and intensely interesting to any one who cares for information regarding the Indian tribes of the Northwest. From this book I learn that there are now six churches among the Nez Perces, two among the Spokanes, a smaller tribe, and where Messrs. Walker and Eells were for nearly ten years, one among the Umatillas, where was the remnant of the Cayuse tribe who remained friendly during the Cayuse war. Old Istychus, who had led the first wagons across the Blue Mountains, in 1843, when Dr. Whitman was called away to visit the Spauldings, when so many were sick there, who with his band of forty-five Christian Cayuses always remained true

to the faith taught them by Dr. and Mrs. Whitman. There were two other real mission churches, one among the Shoshones, and one among the Chivwits in Utah, eleven in all. These are the results of the work of the early missionaries, among whom the Spaldings and the McBeths were the most fruitful. All of these churches are self supporting, and conduct their own affairs with so much wisdom that at present they do not need a superintendent to care for them. In the Christian Endeavor Convention, held in the Presbyterian church of Tacoma, in 1912, half a dozen well dressed Indian men were there as delegates sent by those churches.

The Nez Perce tribes originally numbered about three thousand, approximately. Their country is especially well adapted for their needs. Consequently they were always well supplied with the necessities of life, and were, compared with the other tribes, well off. They were an unusually high-minded, noble and intelligent tribe. About two-thirds are what are called the Treaty Indians. About half of these are nominally Christian Indians, and all are and always have been friendly to the whites. About one-third are called non-treaty or wild Indians. It was from these that Chief Joseph collected his band, and made war on the whites in 1877; and whom General Howard followed across the Rocky Mountains to near the British line, where they were surrounded, and taken prisoners. They were then taken to the Indian Territory and given land. Many of them died there. Most of the children could not endure the climate of the hot land, as they called it, and wilted away. After eight years of captivity, they were permitted to return. Those who were willing to come on the reservation were given lands and homes. The others were sent to the Colville Reservation. Among these was Chief Joseph, who steadily refused to return to his own tribe. He felt that those Indians had sold his country without his consent, and he could never forgive them. Perhaps two hundred stuck by him as long as he lived, and since then they have been gradually drifting back. Something like half of the non-treaty Indians joined Chief Joseph in the war. They have now dwindled, so that scarcely one hundred are left who have not come on the reservation. Joseph, himself, died in 1904.

And now let us come back to our Eliza, the first American white child born in the Northwest who grew to years of maturity. We left her married, and living in the Willamette Valley. About the year 1861, she was living with her young family on the Touchet in what was then Walla Walla county. There we met her, being neighbors, although living twenty miles apart, but I saw more of her younger sister, then unmarried, living a mile or so from her home, than I did of her. She soon after returned to the Willamette Valley and our paths diverged, so that we did

not meet each other for a long time. Three years ago we again met at her beautiful home on Lake Chelan. Fifty years had elapsed since we last met. She was then a widow, but well preserved for one of her age. She had been active in religious work, having been superintendent of one or more Sunday schools; and "Grandma Warren," as she is familiarly called, is universally respected and esteemed. She has since sold her attractive home, and is at present living with one of her sons at Dudley, Idaho. She intends soon to return to Spokane and purchase a small home. She is an honor to her family, and to our state, where she has lived for many years, and where she expects to end her days.

EDWIN EELLS.