



From Mission Lands



Our Covenant's Educational and Medical Missionary Work

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Indians at Yakutat, Alaska.

In 1887, just twenty years after the old Russian flag was replaced by the Stars and Stripes in the great Land of the North, our first missionaries arrived with the Gospel. Axel Karlson and Adolf Lydell, a sturdy pair of pioneers, had set out from another "Land of the Midnight Sun," old Sweden, and traveled half the way around the world to finally establish missions among the Indians and Eskimos of Alaska.

The first year was spent in surveying the field and laying plans for the future work. The natives inhabiting this country were found to be in a most pitiable condition, living in poverty, filth, and ignorance, slaves to the scheming witch-doctor, and bound to a degrading worship of evil spirits; lacking all knowledge of a loving God. Here was a most crying need for missionary work. And in less than a year's time the work was well under way, brother Karlson selecting the Eskimos in the more northern latitudes, and brother Lydell choosing the Indians in the southeastern part, as their respective fields of work. Thus, Unalakleet was established in the northern, and Yakutat in the southeastern part. However, on account of failing health, brother Lydell did not remain long in charge of the Yakutat field.

But other pioneers followed. In 1888 Albin Johnson and Karl Hendrickson arrived to take charge of the Yakutat field, and to Unalakleet another worker, August Anderson, was sent to assist the founder, Axel Karlson. The work was beginning in earnest. But as in other missionary fields, the workers soon found that in order to dethrone satan it was necessary to combat ignorance, filth, and disease. And almost from the start the missionaries were called upon to give medical relief to some sick Indian or Eskimo. But with only a rudimentary knowledge of medicine and a medical supply that contained only a cold and laxative remedy, and an extra bottle of Kuriko, this service was rather wanting. However, the missionaries had an abundance of spiritual help; they gave the sick kind care and sympathy; they prayed for them, and told them of God's wonderful love. And this in all its simplicity brought the sick much comfort



and often started them on the way to recovery.

Similar courageous efforts were made in the educational field. Neither the Eskimos nor the Indians had a written language. By the transfer of Alaska from Russia to the United States the English language became the language of the land, and the future language of these people. So the missionaries set to work to teach this language which they themselves were none too familiar with. They rigged up the one-room log cabin or dug-out into a class room; they provided some white cloth for a "black board," and used coal from the fireplace as crayons, and the Bible was the all-round text book. With this equipment the missionaries taught the Indians and the Eskimos the first lessons in the three R's, while the Bible was the major subject at every period—and right here I wish to say that Alaska would be better by leaps and bounds, if the government teachers would have adhered to the program adopted by the missionaries and kept the Bible as a major subject in the schools.

However, as the workers were few and as demand for service in the educational and medical field was ever on the increase, especially as the missionaries had established so-called boarding schools both at Yakutat and Unalakleet, appeals for additional help were sent to the Board in Chicago. And the need of specially trained

teachers, nurses, and doctors was emphasized. In 1891, in direct answer to these appeals, the Mission Board sent out Misses Agnes Carlson and Selma Peterson assigned to the Yakutat field, and David Johnson and Miss Hanna Svenson, assigned to the Unalakleet field. These new workers were to supply the medical and educational needs at the two stations.

About this time another station was established at Golovin in the north. To this station N. O. Hultberg was sent as the first missionary-teacher. He was to have charge of the proposed boarding school, or "barnhem," as it generally was termed in Swedish. But this institution grew so fast that another worker was soon detailed to the same field. His name was O. P. Anderson.

The work flourished. Adults as well as minors were anxious to enroll at the boarding school; we admit, some prospective students may have been attracted more by the food and comfort offered, than by the actual course of study. But the enrollment grew, and, while no accurate statistics are available, it is safe to say that over sixty per cent of the village population became students for shorter or longer periods. And as to progress in the subjects taught, while no comparison can be made with the average pupil of today, yet they learned, and some even excelled in their studies. So these schools did justice to themselves and became a credit to the missionary work. They became a great factor in helping the Alaska natives from darkness into light—Christian light.

Often the teachers in these schools served as nurses dispensing medicine and giving medical advice. Little by little the medicine chest had been supplied with the more ordinary lines of drugs. Thus it finally became rather well stocked. Medical handbooks were also furnished. Specially trained nurses were also sent to the different stations. And at least one licensed physician was sent by the Mission to the Alaska field. His name was Dr. Lind. And later a hospital was built at Unalakleet.

But with the constantly increasing demand the problem of supplying workers and money became acute for the Mission Board. Was the Covenant able to bear the ever increasing demand for nurses, doctors, and teachers? Or, would it not be a better policy, at least from an economical point of view, to let the Federal Government take over and assume financial responsibility in both the medical and

educational work at our stations? Especially, as the said government had already approached the missionaries in this matter, and promised, that if such transfer were made, the Mission Board could yet select and recommend the special teachers, nurses, and doctors needed at the various stations.

Yes, so believed the missionaries, and so the Mission Board decided. And the Department of the Interior, authorized by Congress to assume charge of the educational and medical work among the natives of Alaska, started by making good its promise that only Covenant people would be assigned to the work in the field where the Covenant had stations established: Sheldon Jackson, a Presbyterian missionary, and fine Christian gentleman, assumed charge as chief of the Alaska medical and educational work now in control of the Department of the Interior. And he was just as eager as our own missionaries that Christian teachers, and Christian nurses of our own people should carry on the work. Thus, a long list of real missionaries, recommended by the Mission Board in Chicago, but appointed and paid by the government, was sent out. Others, already in the field were paid as teachers and nurses by the government.

But after Dr. Jackson came other chiefs, strangers to the pioneering missionary spirit which dominated the early leaders. And with them came a change in policy, a change not always friendly to the missionary work. While at present a great number of government employees labor in the fields at Yakutat, Unalakleet, Golovin, Shaktolik, and other places, under the Covenant's spiritual guidance, to my knowledge, not one of these is a Covenanter by faith or principle—and some of them seemingly hostile to our work. And this change in character of workers is the result of a well planned policy adopted by the later Alaska School Chiefs—a policy which evidently has for its object to neutralize the influence of the missionaries as much as possible.

However, we started well. Lack of space prevents me from mentioning the long list of devoted Covenant men and women who helped to lay the splendid foundation which the government afterwards was invited to build on. And as pioneers in the educational and medical work among the natives of Alaska our people rank second to none. In a speech before the Congressional Committee, Alaska's delegate, Hon. Dan Sutherland, on March 29, 1924, in Washington, paid a fine tribute to the industrial education, begun by our early missionaries at Unalakleet. Among other things he stated that the Unalakleet people had far surpassed neighboring communities in progress, and that this progress was largely the result of the

industrial education furnished at our station. And he even went so far as to recommend that the government adopt an educational policy similar to the one introduced by our Unalakleet missionaries.

And without reservations or apologies we can point to the beginning we made, and say to these later-year, worldly-wise, Alaska school chiefs: "Follow in our steps. Be faithful to the missionary cause, and help save the people."

We have been far surpassed by the ambitious program adopted by the Federal Government, which today is spending over a million dollars annually in the educational and medical work among the Indians and Eskimos of Alaska. But yet, let us say with Peter: "Silver and gold have we none, but such as we have we give thee." In the name of Christ Jesus of Nazareth let us give loving, consecrated service to every Indian and Eskimo within our reach. This is worth more than millions. It is the saving of the people. And it is the supreme achievement sought by every real educator, every sincere doctor. And, as in the past, the Covenant missionary must continue to minister to the sick, and to teach, and to preach to all the people.

BOOK REVIEW

Orientalisms in Bible Lands, by Dr. Edwin Filbur Rice, published by The American Sunday School Union, and selling for \$1.25 plus postage, is a book that should be in every Sunday school teacher's library. Published for the first time in 1910, this splendid text on oriental life and customs, has gone through six editions, and is still one of the most popular books on the subject of orientalisms on the present book market in America. Many of the Bible's books and passages are made clearer to us westerners for reading a book like "*Orientalisms in Bible Lands*." In it are chapters on such interesting themes as "*The Oriental Family*," "*Marriage Processions and Feasts*," "*The Oriental Household*," "*Oriental Children*," "*The Oriental Children's Play and Games*," "*The Education of Oriental Children*," "*Women among Orientals*"; chapters on social practises, dress and ornament, diseases and remedies, mourning and burials, land tenure, occupations and professions, fruits and vines, shepherds and flocks, traveling in oriental countries, warfare, music and musical instruments, oriental writing, religion and morals, prayers and vows, offerings and sacrifices, naming of children, oriental dwellings and property rights. In fact, there are no less than thirty-seven chapters, brim full of interesting information about the life and customs of the people of Bible lands. And that which was custom in those lands thousands of years ago has changed very little with the years. How true is the saying: "*The Immovable East*!"

You will be better able to interest your Sunday school pupils in Bible reading, if you can help them look with you at Bible lands and their peoples through "*Oriental Eyes*."

A word to the wise is sufficient!

Olga E. Lindborg.

DAY BY DAY

SUNDAY, AUGUST 30

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me. Ps. 138:7.

Though troubles assail,
And dangers affright;
Though friends should all fail,
And foes all unite:
Yet one thing secures us,
Whatever betide;
The Scripture assures us,
The Lord will provide.

Behold, God is mine helper. Ps. 54:4.

MONDAY, AUGUST 31

The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. Rev. 22:17.

Though his majesty be great,
His mercy is no less;
Though he thy transgressions hate,
He feels for thy distress:
Yield not then to unbelief,
While he says, there yet is room:
Though of sinners thou art chief,
Since Jesus calls thee, come.

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 Tim. 2:1.

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 1

Yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Heb. 10:37.

If from guilt and sin set free,
By the knowledge of thy grace,
Welcome then the call will be
To depart and see thy face.

Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. Heb. 10:36.

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations. 2 Pet. 2:9.

Christ knows how much the weak can bear,
And helps them when they cry;
The strongest have no strength to spare,
For such he'll strongly try.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Matt. 6:13.

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 3

The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Heb. 10:38.

Grace alone can cure our ills,
Sweeten life with all its cares,
Regulate our stubborn wills,
Save us from surrounding snares.

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. Heb. 10:39.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 4

Call unto me, and I will answer thee and show thee great and mighty things which thou knowest not. Jer. 33:3.

When my prayers are a burden and task,
No wonder I little receive;
O Lord, make me willing to ask,
Since thou art so ready to give.

Into thine hand I commit my spirit thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. Ps. 31:5.

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

The Lord will not cast off for ever: but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. Lam. 3:31, 32.

No voice but thine can give me rest,
And bid my fears depart;
No love but thine can make me blest,
And satisfy my heart.

He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men. Lam. 3:33.