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Delivered before the Ladies' Home Missionary Society,
Burlington, Vermont.

No. 12, Vol. 9.

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When I began to reflect upon the subject of the Indian ^{of} today, the field appeared to me so vast that I thought I had better speak of a single tribe which has most recently come upon a reservation in the Indian Territory proper, namely the Comanches, and I will ~~give~~ ^{venture} some old accounts and experiences, that you may contrast them with the new. A. D. McCook and myself were cadets together at West Point. After graduating we had similar experiences on the frontier. I was sent to Florida and he to parts of Texas, the Indian Territory, Kansas and Colorado. We returned to the military academy three years after my graduation to remain as instructors there of cadets till the breaking out of the civil war. During that period McCook talked to me again and again of his remarkable experiences on the plains. The Indians with which he had most to do were the Apaches of Texas and the Comanches, whose raids continually extended over that state, sometimes coming very near a city as large as San Antonio. They roamed over the Indian Territory, Kansas and Southern Colorado and made fierce forays into New Mexico and not infrequently into Mexico proper. McCook said that the Comanches were the swiftest and shrewdest Indians on the plains. He once remarked that David M. Gregg, our most distinguished cavalry leader at Gettysburg, was when a lieutenant the best trailer of Comanche Indians that he has ever known. Richard I. Dodge, whose experience in the same part of the country was perhaps greater than that of any other officer, was stationed at the military academy at the same time with McCook and myself. It was better than reading a novel to hear these young men, when together, tell anecdotes of

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the Comanches. I cannot recall with distinctness their stories, but I was much impressed with the hair-breadth escapes and brave performances of our young officers along what they called the staked plains. Dodge has given us in his wonderful compendium, written when he was a colonel and aide-de-camp to General Sherman, that he was stationed in Texas at a two company post when he was a second lieutenant exposed to the wiles and machinations of the most cunning, the most mischievously artful of all the United States Indians, the Comanches. While not so coldly bloodthirsty as some other tribes,- priding themselves upon their silent stealth and cunning, and ranking ^{in their code of morals} the expert horse-thief above the dashing warrior,- the Comanches are at night the most dangerous of all Indians. Historically these Comanches with the Piutes, the Gosiutes and the Ban-nocks are traced back by their language to the Shoshone-Indians and several traditions put their main habitat, when first discovered, as far North and as far West as the head waters of the Snake river and its tributaries. They were at one period a very powerful tribe; they were thoroughly nomadic at all times; but were finally forced by other tribes with which they fought to occupy substantially the limits that I have given. From time to time in the records we find them along the Upper Kansas river and then bands of them south of the Red river in Texas. Some officers thought there were four distinct bands, ^{each} having a chieftain and organization like the Kiowas, the Cheyennes and other Plains Indians. Their territory, in fact, was designated as "The extensive plains from the Rocky Mountains eastward into the Indian Territory and Texas." From here they raided from five to eight hundred miles. Coming in contact with the Spaniards very early they came into possession of horses. This

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facilitated their roaming disposition and naturally developed their military instincts and warlike propensities. Next we find the seizure of horses and the capture of women and children ^{done} for ransom, like that of Miss Stone on the borders of Turkey; this gave zest and interest to their forays. For such business Texas, New Mexico and Mexico were favorite and fruitful fields. Before 1800 opposition had become strong in some parts of their field; they met an army on Mexican territory and were badly beaten. Soon after this the Texans, led by the Texan Rangers, defended their republic against the Apaches and the wilder Comanches, making constant and unrelenting war against them.

In those early days for their subsistence they looked for the most part to the buffalo and when they halted they put up lodges covered with buffalo skins, or tepees of simple boughs and brush-wood, which they could well do where the weather was usually mild enough to dispense with the more substantial lodge. At the beginning of the last century they had a population of at least twenty-five thousand and were able to send to the hunt or to war as many as five thousand men. The Comanches are not generally tall, being about the size of the Mexicans - their complexion of a peculiar brown with brighter tinge than that of the Pueblas. Their faces are bright and intelligent, often having a European cast. Their lips are never thick like the African and they have the usual straight black hair and fine eyes before they are bleared with smoke. They never wear a beard, either having none or having it pulled out with tweezers when it grows. In early days they wore their hair long, ornamented with pieces of silver, beads or bead work. They took particular pains to ornament their hair for state

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occasions and most of them had one or two braids. A picture of Quanah, a late chief of the Comanches, taken in Oklahoma, shows him dressed as we do, having his hair long with several braids, two of them falling down over his shoulders. His head is decidedly of a European type and his features are regular and strong.

In the times my friends were on the plains the Comanche dress consisted of leggins and moccasins and a strip of cloth around the loins. The body was kept naked above the waist except when covered with a robe which was thrown on and off at will. This robe was usually from the buffalo or the deer. The women of this tribe were, like the Apaches, short of stature and firmly built, and fairly good looking when young; they were nice in appearance when their village was pitched near to a clear stream of water. In early times the women wore their hair very short. When dressed, as a rule, they had on a neat skirt of buck-skin, trimmed and ornamented by their needle-work. Some tattooed their faces and scarred their breasts. This performance did not add to their beauty.

When they were numerous they seldom had any other weapon for the chase and for offensive warlike operations except the bow. But you never saw a Comanche without his bow and quiver of arrows. At a surprisingly young age every boy was armed with a bow and taught how to use it. In fact, practice with the bow and arrow was part of the child's fun. It did not take long for children to reach accuracy and quickness in archery. When grown to manhood every healthful youth soon became proficient in the buffalo chase and was ready for any warlike expedition in which he particularly delighted. Their bows were made of any firm wood. The Osage Orange afforded a good weapon. It was their custom to shape it for a bow

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and then wrap it in the middle with strips of deer skin so closely drawn that the wrapping seemed part of the material itself; a sinew of the deer-hide made as good a cord as they desired. Their bows were strong and flexible but never like those of our Saxon ancestors, long and unweildy. The arrow never exceeded twenty inches and was pointed with flint stone or iron, and generally a couple of feathers were fastened to the forked end.

Col. Marcy says: that the Comanche could send his arrow entirely through the carcass of a buffalo. The Comanches had an instrument for self protection - a circular shield made of firm material which was covered with buffalo-hide of great thickness. Between the layers of the hide the space was filled with hair. This shield the Comanche fastened to his left arm in such a way as to leave his hand unfettered; a rifle ball would glance off if it struck it at an angle. In an ordinary skirmish or battle this shield was a good protection, particularly against the arrows of an enemy. They had, too, a war club differing from others. Taking some tough wood they would bend it about a stone of two pounds weight, the stone being so grooved that the wythe of wood would hold it firmly. The handle of this club was secured like the bow with strips of deer skin or raw-hide. This made a dreadful weapon to be used against man or animal at close quarters.

These Indians exhibited very little desire for strong drink. They insisted that liquor made fools of Indians, and when any of the wilder ~~ones~~ ^{one} became adicted to drink, it grew upon him little by little and he was despised. In their food they resembled all the plains Indians. There was not much variety, mostly fresh meat. I have watched their allies, the Apaches, when they have brought down

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two or three deer. They prepared a fire, never a large one, with great care, and then roasted their pieces with more care. It was astonishing what a quantity each man would eat when the meat was thoroughly roasted and ready for use. Those with me had plenty of salt and used it freely.

The Comanches, like the Apaches, when necessity called for it, would go a long time without food, but made up for their abstinence by eating enormously as soon as abundance came. All the Southern Indians appeared more fond of tobacco than the Northern or Western. They did not care for ^{its} strength and often mixed leaves like the sumack with the tobacco. They inhaled the smoke and breathed it out from their nostrils.

In the time of Marcy and Dodge polygamy prevailed. Marcy says; "Ketumsee, the chief of one of the bands of Southern Comanches, a man at least sixty years old, had four wives, the eldest of whom was not over twenty years of age. They were very fond of the old man and would sit by the hour combing his hair and caressing him. I showed one of them a photographic likeness of my wife which seemed to interest her very much and she frequently requested me to allow her to look at it. She seemed to imagine that it was living and would point to the eyes and smile as much as to say "It could see." Upon one occasion I asked her how she would like to leave Ketumsee and go home with me. She, in reply, pointed to the photograph and drew her other hand across her throat significantly indicating that in her judgment my house would be anything but a safe place for her; and as I was rather inclined to the same opinion myself, I did not feel disposed to discuss the subject any farther."

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Col. Dodge, in relating his experience, gives this clear account of Comanche ways: "For months after the establishment of this little post (among the Comanches) there was scarcely a night when an attempt was not made on our picket line. The sentinels soon learned their lesson and hiding themselves watched the ground and fired at every unusual object. On each such occasion the Commanding Officer required the Officer of the Day to turn out the whole guard, deploy it as skirmishers, and scour the chaperal around in the vicinity of the corral. How often when engaged in such duty, thrusting my sword into every clump and cover, have I inwardly thanked the Indian for his disposition to put as great a distance as possible between himself and danger. Though I hunted faithfully many nights, I never found an Indian Exasperated by the constant failure of their effort to steal, and possibly emboldened by the lack of casualties, resulting from the fire of our poorly armed and badly drilled soldiers, the Indians became more enterprising and no part of the post was safe at night. Finally the black-smith, an excellent man, happening one night to stumble over a crawling Indian, was shot dead within a few feet of his tent. Up to this time our annoyance had come from little marauding parties of from two to six Indians on foot, who, separating on occasions of alarm, left no trail which could be followed with any hope of overtaking them. Now, however, they began to come in larger parties and on horseback. Our cavalry was therefore ordered out and at least twenty men kept continually on the move; watching passes through the mountains, following trails and making the Indians understand that they could not visit our section of the country without danger..... A party of Comanches passed near the

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town of Castroville, committing various thefts and depredations, finally murdering a whole family of Germans. I was ordered, with twenty-five soldiers, to pursue and punish them. For more than four weeks I followed the devious windings of the trail, and finally overtook and surprised them in their camp, killing some, dispersing the others, and capturing all their horses saddles and equipments."

In October, 1867, by virtue of a treaty at Medicine Lodge, Kansas, the Comanches were assigned to a reservation called "The Kiowa, Comanche and Wichita Agency." Our officials did not succeed in gathering many of them till two years later and it was many years before those now on that reservation could be induced to give up their hunting expeditions and others of a war-like character. In spite of all influence and teaching they still made their forays into Texas to replenish their horses and often to revenge themselves upon Texans who had been as relentless in their wars and skirmishes as the Indians.

The effect of a visit of Comanche leaders to Washington showed good results. After that they began to follow the example of those Indians about them who had put themselves on the side of peace. In 1875 the Comanches for the first time began to show a marked interest in the education of their children, especially in what applied to industry.

As early as 1878 the Comanche Agency changed its locality from Fort Sill to Anadarko on the Wichita River, That removal was salutary. Large camps of rough warriors were broken up by dissipating the savage influence of the chiefs and establishing families. Instead of a single encampment of the whole

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band, the visitor to Anadarko now finds never more than two or three lodges in a group,- oftener a single family which in some cases is as far as fifteen miles from the Agency. The Indians are slowly putting aside the blanket for the white man's clothing, though they still occupy the tepee in preference to houses. Polygamy is regarded with growing disfavor; gaming is still their besetting sin, but quietly carried on in the privacy of the tepees. Drunkenness is rare, as it always has been among the Comanches, though of late many have become addicted to the use of a ~~fruit from Mexico~~ drink they procure from Mexico, the Mescal; it is derived from a fruit of the same name and when taken in large quantities will intoxicate.

Under the change to civilization the Comanches have been growing less in number. In 1890 only about 1600 were reported. In the latest reports I notice that these Indians live mostly in tepees or lodges made of thick canvas, such as the government provides, instead of the buffalo hides of other days. In summer they build brush arbors beneath which in semi-circular form, are placed their small bedsteads made of reeds fastened to a framework of poles and resting on forked sticks driven into the earth about three feet from the ground. Upon these their beds are made up by blankets and skins. Within the circle of the arbor is the eating place, the earth answering for both table and chairs. Sometimes a blanket or a piece of oilcloth is used for a table-cloth. In winter they prefer their lodges to houses; they often live in lodges while using the houses for storage. Usually there are houses close to the lodges. At times besides putting in there farming implements they often make stalls for favorite horses.

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The food of civilization which comes to them comprises meat, a sort of pancake for bread, coffee, potatoes and other vegetables. They take care to raise chickens and other fowls, and gather in such game as is possible. Their beef is still cut up in strips and hung on a long pole to be dried in the sun. This is the "jerked beef" that you see in all accounts. Hogs, dogs and cats in great numbers have the freedom of the camp and little attention is paid to their depredations and mischief. We may notice some other changes in this transition state which applies to all the Plains Indians as well as to the Apaches and the Comanches. The children of the Agency dress in a simple cotton shirt, sometimes with leggins of the same material; on very hot days the leggins are dispensed with. For notable occasions some are provided with buckskin suits ornamented as of old with beads, shells and elk teeth; often you see twenty-five or thirty strings of beads around a child's neck. Boys and girls, when babies, have their ears pierced with several holes, so that they are prepared for a variety of ear-pendants. Their dolls are specially quaint and mostly dressed up as Indian chiefs. The children are the constant companions of the aged who are treated by the Comanches with as much tenderness, attention and care as the young. From the old Indian woman the girl child learns her duty about the camp, to sew and embroider with beads; while the old warrior teaches the coming chief, or prospective head of a family, how to fashion the bow and arrow, instilling the science of archery and the secrets of trailing and of wood-craft.

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The food of civilization which comes to them comprises meat, a sort of pancake for bread, coffee, potatoes and other vegetables. They take care to raise chickens and other fowls, and gather in such game as is possible. Their beef is still cut up in strips and hung on a long pole to be dried in the sun. This is the "jerked beef" that you see in all accounts. Hogs, dogs and cats in great numbers have the freedom of the camp and little attention is paid to their depredations and mischief. We may notice some other changes in this transition state which applies to all the Plains Indians as well as to the Apaches and the Comanches. The children of the Agency dress in a simple cotton shirt, sometimes with leggings of the same material; on very hot days the leggings are dispensed with. For notable occasions some are provided with buckskin suits ornamented as of old with beads, shells and elk teeth; often you see twenty-five or thirty strings of beads around a child's neck. Boys and girls, when babies, have their ears pierced with several holes, so that they are prepared for a variety of ear-pendants. Their dolls are especially quaint and mostly dressed up as Indian chiefs. The children are the constant companions of the aged who are treated by the Comanches with as much tenderness, attention and care as the young. From the old Indian woman the girl child learns her duty about the camp, to sew and embroider with beads; while the old warrior teaches the coming chief, or prospective head of a family, how to fashion the bow and arrow, instilling the science of archery and the secrets of trailing and of wood-craft.

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than when they attempt to imitate the whites. They usually possess miscellaneous wardrobes consisting of blankets, gee strings and leggins of buckskin, manta, or other cloths; moccasins ornamented in every possible way, various colored ^{and skirts} shirts of wool, cotton and buckskin and occasionally shoes and stockings. Many of the men wear our hats and a few of the women bonnets and turbans, but, as a rule, a single feather is all that graces a young Indian's head. On issue day, when our food is distributed, and at public dances the Indians still appear in all the wild and picturesque garments of their choice, displaying ingenuity in trying to outshine one another. They have attained to some further advances in civilized life. For example, young Indian beaux prowl about at night in groups or singly, chanting their native songs which are not altogether unpleasing to musical ears. This is very different from the old time Indian yell. Those well marked calls are often made even now at the end of a concert and remind one of the barking of the coyote rather than of the human voice. A very recent observer writes that the women ^{at} Atadarko permit their hair to fall in graceful locks about their necks and shoulders like the Zunis of New Mexico. They seldom dress their hair but when they choose to do so, they far outshine the men who always braid theirs so as to show the scalp lock; they wrap the braids in red and yellow strips of flannel and sometimes in fur from the otter and the beaver.

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than when they attempt to imitate the whites. They usually possess miscellaneous warbles consisting of blankets, dog strings and leggings of buckskin, manta, or other cloth; necessary ornaments in every possible way, various colored shirts of wool, cotton and and skirts. Many of the men wear buckskin and occasionally shoes and stockings. Many of the men wear our hats and a few of the women bonnets and turbans, but as a rule, a single feather is all that graces a young Indian's head. On some days, when our food is distributed, and at public dances the Indians still appear in all the wild and picturesque garments of their choice, displaying ingenuity in trying to outshine one another. They have attained to some further advances in civilized life. For example, young Indian bands growl about at night in groups or singly, chanting their native songs which are not altogether unpleasing to music-lovers. This is very different from the old time Indian yell. These well marked calls are often made even now at the end of a concert and remind one of the barking of the coyote rather than of the human voice. A very recent observer writes that the women Athabascans permit their hair to fall in graceful locks about their necks and shoulders like the Zunis of New Mexico. They seldom dress their hair but when they choose to do so, they far outshine the men who always braid theirs so as to show the scalp lock; they wrap the braids in red and yellow strips of tanned and sometimes in fur from the otter and the beaver.

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He declares that of all the evils to which the Indians are addicted their gambling is the most harmful. Wild Horse, another chief, agrees with Quannah and exerts a good influence in his tribe, but unfortunately there is still another recognized chief whose influence is pernicious; he is a gambler himself. With Indians, as with children, example is stronger than precept. When we first met them the Comanches led every other tribe in horsemanship, and they differed from other Indians in their kindly devotion to horses. They always had the swiftest in their races and they have outstripped American sportsmen with American horses every time they have had a trial. Our young lieutenants, during their early service on the plains, in the intervals of peace, were fond of trying their horses with the war chiefs and principal men of this tribe, and I have no incident on record in which the Comanche, putting forward his best animal, has not gained the victory in the race. Formerly in their bloody forays what the Indians called war was always involved. They were like the Kurds of Eastern Turkey. A band of Comanches, say a hundred strong, beholding from afar the dust of a wagon train protected by an escort of cavalry, would manage noiselessly and unobserved to get into some convenient ravine where they could descend upon the train. They would rush so quickly and conceal themselves so thoroughly that there would not be a suspicion of their immediate presence till, without apparent order, they would come like a whirlwind to strike the escort and the train. They would shoot as they charged, terrifying and stampeding horses, mules and oxen and putting everything into hopeless confusion with such a dash that none but officers of experience would be able to withstand them. If the stampeded cavalry was rallied upon a knoll near by and made ready for

He declares that of all the evils to which the Indians are addicted their gambling is the most harmful. Wild Horse, another chief, agrees with Gomanah and exerts a good influence in his tribe, but unfortunately there is still another recognized chief whose influence is pernicious; he is a gambler himself. With Indians, as with children, example is stronger than precept. When we first met them the Gomanah led every other tribe in horsemanship, and they differed from other Indians in their kindly devotion to horses. They always had the swiftest in their races and they have outstripped American sportsmen with American horses every time they have had a trial. Our young lieutenants, during their early service on the plains, in the intervals of peace, were fond of trying their horses with the war chiefs and principal men of this tribe, and I have no incident on record in which the Gomanah, putting forward his best animal, has not gained the victory in the race. Formerly in their bloody forays what the Indians called war was always involved. They were like the Kurds of Eastern Turkey. A band of Gomanahs, say a hundred strong, proceeding from afar the dust of a wagon train protected by an escort of cavalry, would manage noiselessly and unobserved to get into some convenient ravine where they could descend upon the train. They would rush so quickly and conceal themselves so thoroughly that there would not be a suspicion of their immediate presence till, without apparent order, they would come like a whirlwind to strike the escort and the train. They would shoot as they charged, terrifying and stampeding horses, mules and oxen and putting everything into hopeless confusion with such a dash that none but officers of experience would be able to withstand them. If the stampeded cavalry was rallied upon a knoll near by and made ready for

a counter charge, they having cut the terrified team animals loose, would be driving them off at full speed, or if forced to abandon them, these wild Comanches, bearing away their wounded, would disappear as quickly as they came. No other Indians could excell them in the buffalo hunt and in the amount of meat and skins they would carry off for use and sale. I once watched a band of such Indians making their preparations for a charge upon a mule train which had but a small guard. My influence over the chief in this instance prevented the disaster that was plainly in sight. In an incredibly short time, the Indians had painted their faces and put themselves into a convenient ravine just behind a line of foot hills; they mounted with the chief near the center and the Indians on his right and left and rear. ^{they charged} In no particular order, but so that every man had sufficient room to turn his horse in any direction. Every Indian was armed, some with carbines. The chief had a rifle that he had taken from a white man; others had the usual bow and arrow. They sprang forward with ease, first at a trot, then a gallop, and then a fast run; but to my joy, in some way the chief was able to stop them by a signal, doubtless agreed upon beforehand. They had come within a quarter of a mile of the train and must have startled the escort and drivers beyond expression by their wild approach, but they turned away and bore off to the right. When the chief joined me, he smiled and said, "It would have been good sport, but I am at peace now and want to please you."

Of course these things are now done away and we are loosing much of the manliness of these people, which is to be regretted. The Comanches are fully convinced that they can no longer live by the

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chase and that they must not make forays into Texas and Mexico. Diminished in numbers, they are bending what energies they possess to cultivating the soil. The issue day affords them a little of the old delight when they try to consider the cattle turned out to them like buffalos to be slain after the fashion of the chase. No doubt this exercise itself, monthly or oftener, is demoralizing and fosters to some degree the old spirit of wildness; but it is difficult to say how far it is wise to suppress the physical energy that these people have always put forth in hunting, in raiding trains, in war like expeditions against their enemies, both whites and Indians. The only remedy is to have generation after generation carefully taught in the schools -- especially in the industrial institutions which are open to them. If it were possible to scatter the children in early life among such good people as are found in the neighborhood of Carlisle, Pa. - among people who would take them into their homes and treat them as their own children the work of transformation would be speedy and effective.

Of course for all the Indians this is not practicable and it is a question whether the early breaking up of the family would be wise if it could be done. The day school among the Indians and the establishment ^{by} of families, as has been done upon many reservations or near them, is not to be over-looked. We must look both to the family and to the school among Indians as among other people. I do hope that through positive Christian effort a remnant of these interesting people may be saved with a retention of their shrewdness, energy and courage, without their having imbibed that Indian code which came with their mother's milk which made them think that the highest virtue consisted in hating and killing an enemy and in taking

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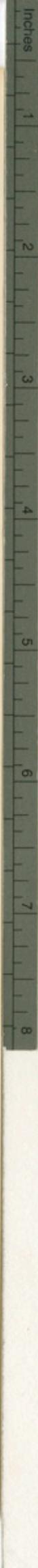
property, either by stealth or in open combat.

According to the last census there were on reservations outside of the Indian Territory proper, 145,200 Indians, and in the Indian Territory Indians not taxed 56,000 and Indians that are taxed 58,000, showing an aggregate without Alaska of 259,200 in the United States.

in the United States. There may be more or there may be less. They are nearly all penetrated with schools and with more or less of Christian effort for their upbuilding. In our A.M. A. we have a portion allotted to our care which we must not neglect. I like the words which come to us in our quarterly published in October, the last I have seen. A single fact is significant which comes from Dakota, Among those who fought against our army was Yellow Earring, a follower of Sitting Bull. After the last struggle he went back to his home. About him and his surroundings the missionary says, "These old Indians have such strength of character as only the chase and war could develop -- tender and kind at heart, fearless and strong. I called upon an old man, Yellow Earring, to pray at our meeting. I am sure the prayer touched the heart of Christ. He said, 'Saviour be kind to me and bear with me. I am an old ignorant man. I grew up without the Bible and knew nothing of Thee in my youth, though I try now to follow Thee I often loose the way, not because I do not want to go in the right road, but because I do not see clearly. Bless

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my people and be merciful to us. When we sin wipe out the sin because we love Thee and Thou didst die for us.'" 

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