



MISS S. L. McBETH

The Nez Perces Since Lewis and Clark

By KATE C. McBETH

ILLUSTRATED



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Leaves From Her Diary—Her School and First Pupils—Translates Nez Perces Hymns—Visit From Gen. O. O. Howard—Trouble From Chief Joseph's Band Compels Her to Leave Kamiah—Nez Perces Guard to Lapwai.

MISS S. L. MCBETH'S consecrated life among the Nez Perces can best be understood by looking over a few leaves from her diary. It will be seen that she believed she had a special call to work among Indians.

FAIRFIELD, IOWA,

September 5, 1858.

The duties of the day were over, the last class dismissed, the bright intelligent faces and active minds that had surrounded me were gone, and I stood at the window overlooking the University grounds where some of the younger boys were playing soldier.

It was the beginning of the term and Master Wiley, their captain, was drilling his new recruits, his boyish voice ringing out loud and clear as he walked beside his company issuing orders. His efforts to assume the dignity appropriate to his position, and the grave, stern look which his merry face was trying to wear, brought a smile to my lips as I watched him. Just then one of the elder pupils came into the room behind me and said, "A gentleman down-stairs wishes to see you, Miss McBeth." I replied, "Yes, Walter, I will go, where is he?" "In the reception room," and I fol-

lowed him down the broad stairway, little dreaming as I passed into the room, that I was stepping across the threshold of a new era in my life.

Mr. Junkin, the gentleman who awaited me, was an elder in the church in Fairfield. I had often seen him in his seat on Sabbath, but he lived some miles distant in the country, and I had seldom met him in the year which had elapsed since I came to the University. "I received a letter from the secretary of our Board of Foreign Missions," he said after the first greetings were over. "It contains something that concerns you. Will you read it?"

The letter read as follows: "I would be glad if you would see the Miss McBeths at once and ascertain their views about going to Tallahassee. If they think favourably of your suggestion, I would like for them to make application for an appointment at once. This matter requires dispatch as it is very desirable that whoever goes should be on the ground at least by the first of October. Let me hear from you with as little delay as possible."

"How did Dr. L—— learn of me?" I asked, when I had finished reading the letter.

"I told him of you," said Mr. Junkin. "Years ago I was a missionary among the Indians myself and became very much attached to them, as I know you would also if you should go among them, and I am still deeply interested in these missions. Some time ago, knowing there was great need of labourers among that people, I wrote to Dr. L——, telling him of you and your sister, Miss Kate, and informing him that if you would go, you were in my judgment well fitted for the work. I had no opportunity of seeing you before I wrote, and hope you will pardon me for doing so without your knowledge. The open letter was still in my hand, my heart and brain were busy with its contents, with myself and with the question so unexpect-

edly forced upon me. The first of October, and this is the first week in September, less than a month, my heart sinking and quailing at the thought of leaving home and friends, to go to an unknown home in the wilderness, perhaps never to return. Could I do it?" "Oh, no indeed! Mr. Junkin, it is impossible," I said hastily, "not now at least. My sister has gone home to Ohio, she would not go with me, I know, and I have entered into a new engagement with the principal of this institution; he could not supply my place in that short time, and it would not be right to leave him, besides I cannot leave my boys here," I added, as Captain Wiley and his band came in sight through the open window, and beyond them I caught glimpses of dear familiar faces, among the students scattered through the grounds. "Oh! no, I do not need to go among the Indians to work for Jesus, I can find more than I can accomplish here. Please tell Dr. L—— I cannot go at present."

When Mr. Junkin had gone home I walked slowly to my room, trying to convince myself that I had done right. Once again in my own quiet room I walked to the window and stood looking out for a time unconscious of surroundings in the whirl of busy thought that filled my brain. I looked around me, it was a very lovely picture that met my eye. The beautiful western town with its tasteful homes standing back from the broad streets amid flowers and shrubbery. The park, with its pleasant walks and shade trees, the church spires outlined against the sky, the University on a rising ground on the edge of the town, while beyond and around as far as the eye could reach, stretched the undulating prairie, dotted with white farmhouses and carpeted with its brilliant colouring of autumn flowers. Then, as sounds of music and dear familiar voices came floating up through the halls, my thoughts came back to the friends whose love made life's labours so light.

Could I leave them to live among the scarce civilized tribes of the forest? And yet who left a home in heaven for me—left His seat upon the throne of the universe to die for sinners? Was the servant above his Master? Might not the interview just closed be a call from Him? and I had decided and refused without even asking His will. If the call had been to go to India or China, I would have thought less of it, but the American Indians, a race in whom I had always felt such a deep interest. How could I slight their claim?

Even as I stood there pondering the subject, there came before me the memories of days when I had played upon the banks of the beautiful Ohio River which flowed before my childhood home. How distinctly I remembered sitting upon the huge rocks on the shore and examining the hieroglyphics, traced, as was supposed, by the red men when their tribes possessed the land. I recalled the deep sympathy I felt for the vanished race and longed to be a woman that I might go to the handful that yet remained and tell them the story of Jesus and try to show them the way to a home in heaven from which they could never be driven. Now I was a woman, the call had come and I had refused. "You have done wrong," said conscience. "But I have so much work I can do for the Master here, I do not need to go so far to seek it," said the flesh. "Fifty could be found to take your place here, to one willing to go to missionary grounds," urged the inward monitor, "and there is such great need for labourers in the field." And so the battle waged until the sun went down behind the beautiful banks of clouds that grace his setting in prairie land, and I turned to meet my friends, but the battle begun that night lasted for days. More and more distinctly as I prayed for guidance, came the conviction that I had done wrong, that it was my duty to go and labour

with them for the Master for whom, as well as for myself, He died.

Before the month closed I wrote to Dr. L—— putting myself at the disposal of the board, if I was needed at the beginning of the year. By the last of January a letter of instructions reached me from Dr. L—— saying, "Your services are very much needed at the Good Water Female School among the Choctaws, Indian Territory, and we have appointed you to that place. It may be necessary for you to travel without an escort, so that your independence will be put to the test at once; it will be for you to determine whether you can go alone. The route by St. Louis is by railroad to a place a little beyond Jefferson City, where you will take the regular stage route to California as far as Boggy Depot, ten miles from Wapenukka, our mission station among the Chickasaws, then on to Good Water. Let me know your decision at once." My friends objected to a stage journey of three or four hundred miles, thinking it beyond my strength, and by their advice I went to Keokuk, and after a short visit with my friends, the McQueens, I proceeded to St. Louis by rail, then down the Mississippi to the mouth of the Arkansas, then up that river to Fort Smith, finally reaching my destination.

She remained among the Choctaws until the breaking out of the civil war.

Miss S. L. McBeth came to Lapwai in the fall of 1873, and went up to Kamiah in the fall of 1874, after Mr. Spalding's death, and took up the work which he had laid down. That was, the preparing of young men for church work. Her first class consisted of the following persons: James Hines, James Lawyer, Archie Lawyer, Robert Williams, Mark Williams.