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INDIAN SCHOOLS

AN EXPOSURE

Address Before the Ladies Missionary Societies of the Calvary M. E. Church,
Washington, D. C., April 6

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WILDER

By R. H. PRATT, Brig. Gen. U. S. A.

Our Indian Schools and The System.

I am asked to talk to you for thirty minutes about Indian Schools.

I speak from wide, long, and varied experience with the Indians. Forty-eight years ago as an Army officer, I began to handle Indians on the frontier. First I commanded Indian Scouts, then assisted in negotiations with Indians, then had charge of tribes, then through two winter campaigns against them commanded Indians as scouts and guides, and during this time as the result of one campaign had charge of hundreds of Indians held as prisoners at the Post of Fort Sill, Indian Territory. I then took seventy-four selected bad leaders of these in chains to Florida. I soon removed their chains and there gave them such education and industrial training as I could under their prison life. Most of them acquired the English language, and quite a goodly number became able to write it. After three years they were released, and I arranged and took a part of the younger men to Hampton Institute, Va., and soon after, with Mrs. Pratt's help, brought forty-seven more, both boys and girls, from the Dakota tribes, and remained in charge of all these for more than a year. I then suggested an Indian Industrial School at Carlisle, Pa., inaugurated it by bringing 147 Indian boys and girls from Dakota and the Indian Territory, and conducted it for twenty-five years, during which time it grew to an annual attendance of above a thousand, coming from more than eighty different tribes. Hav-

ing been retired from Army service I was relieved, ten years ago, but have since kept up a wide correspondence with the graduates and returned pupils of this school.

During the Carlisle experience I visited most of our Indian reservations and became well acquainted with all sorts of Indian management and mission work, and was constantly called to Washington with reference to my Indian duties.

Speaking to you from this experience, I say that under the same environment and using the same facilities, it is quite easy to educate Indians in the English language and to train them to full usefulness in civilized industries, and that with best chances for their acquirement, high education and skillful ability in industries, business and professional life are all easy certainties for Indian youth. When properly prepared, Indian youth are welcome in all our schools and industries.

About three hundred thousand of our population are classed as Indians. A very considerable proportion of these have white blood. There are men and women on the rolls of the Indian system who have as much as sixty-three parts of white blood and only one of Indian. Almost all mixed bloods are the products of white fathers and Indian mothers. Many men among these mixed bloods, through fatherly ambition and right chances, have developed large ability and gained high place in the Nation. Just now two of our National Senators and two Members of the House of Representatives have Indian blood.

But there have been also great men of pure Indian blood. Uneducated and untrained, they have shown remarkable state-craft and generalship.

Among these, Red Jacket, Tecumseh, Chief Joseph and scores of others, both in the earlier history of the country and in these later days, many of whom became my personal friends. If these had been given education and the chance, they would have written their names high on the scroll of America's wonderful progress.

At no time in the history of the country has it been impossible for young Indians to move out from their tribes and to receive a welcome in our civilized life and to gain as high an education and as great skill as was possible for them to absorb, and to remain in our civilization and go on to still greater perfection. They only needed encouragement and the proper help. The overpowering barrier has been the tribal segregating system enforced by our government.

The negroes were forced to come to America, and were forcibly distributed among our people, and by the very necessities of the ease compelled to learn the language and acquire the industries their enslaved condition made necessary. They have become ten millions of useful citizens. None of them can speak their old languages, or have habits of the old aboriginal life of their tribes. On the contrary, since slavery was abolished, they have made remarkable progress in acquiring intelligence and varied industrial usefulness, and have entered the higher walks of business and the profession, and have accumulated vast aggregate wealth.

Contact with the white race was the negroes salvation.

At vast expense we segregated and imprisoned the Indians apart from all right contact with

our life on reservations by tribes, and made them prisoners, and by the most ingenious devices and the most relentless and heartless systems of control compelled them to continue in their old life. One-fourth of the money we spent in enforcing Indians to continue their tribal life, if wisely spent in merging them into our life and industries, as Washington, Jefferson and other fathers of the Republic urged, would have incorporated them as useful, self-supporting citizens long ago.

Our school histories and daily published accounts of the Indians and almost all of our writings have presented false views of their qualities and character.

The Indian is as much entitled to be judged by comparison as any man. Judged by this, he is not as brutal as the boasted race which has encompassed and oppressed him. He is kindly and responsive and even more charitable than the educated and trained people of the master race.

The influences which have controlled the Indian from the beginning have all persuaded, hired or compelled him to segregated tribalism. The influences that bear upon him to-day are increasingly strong and insidious in this purpose. There has never been an honest, continuous and strong purpose in the system to recognize the man as being capable of the qualities and to give him a proper chance to acquire the ability of American citizenship. If, perchance, in limited numbers he has been permitted to go beyond the reservation among our citizens for some education, training and experience towards this ability, it has almost universally been his lot to be hired, persuaded or compelled to return to his people and become one of the mass.

The reservation has always been a prison, and the army was used to establish and enforce this prison life. The Indian was hired to continue tribal by rations, and persuaded by the feeble systems of tribal schools, and inefficient farm training, and allured by issues of cattle and other stock, and enticed by lands in severalty which riveted him to tribalism; and in these later days is enticed by the loan of government money to help develop, tribally, his surroundings which keeps him in tribal duress. This will teach him one more sad lesson that "He that goes a-borrowing goes a-sorrowing," but it thrives the system. The system asked Congress and was given about a million dollars for this new tribal riveting scheme.

The Government always was and is now the only employer on the reservations. There was no diversity of industries allowed, no material employment outside of agriculture, and the very system of agricultural training invited failure everywhere because of its weak and incompetent quality and remoteness from market. One farmer has been held sufficient to instruct hundreds of families of Indians ignorant of farming and scattered over wide areas. Thus any sort of right and speedy accomplishment was impossible. I might go into details and show how this whole system of industrial instruction and management has always been calculated to breed just the failure which has resulted, but you only asked me to talk of schools.

An unpleasant duty requires me to speak with great positiveness about the qualities and false reputations of the various kinds of schools, and

I desire to expose the reasons for the large failure which has followed the use of the widest systems adopted.

The Indian system has not always been in the hands of capable, humane and wise management, intent on elevating the Indians into real manhood and citizenship. More than thirty-six years ago it was suggested, and in part accepted, that one good way to educate and train the Indians into the capacity and merge them into our citizenship, was through the use of industrial schools established in the surroundings of our best American civilization, and from these schools push them individually out into the general school system of the country and into its avenues of industry. This became the only scheme ever adopted by the Government intended to merge the Indians into becoming co-equal Americans. Why it has in part been unsuccessful is one object of this paper.

There had been day schools among the Indians for more than two hundred years. I know a tribe which has had day schools for longer than that, and they are still but a compact tribe of Indians under the care of the system. For a hundred years we have had day schools among the five thousand Indians on their reservations in the State of New York, but such schools have not lifted them out from the babyhood of dependent tribal life into the manhood of American citizenship, but have rather indurated their tribalism. The Society of Friends has maintained a tribal school in one of these tribes for one hundred and twelve years, without making a single convert and with the same meager result as the day schools among those Indians.

Scarcely an Indian of the several tribes in New York so educated has left his tribe and gone out into American life. A contrasting proof of the efficiency of another system, and its results is the fact that over three hundred of the youth of these tribes were permitted to attend the new system of non-reservation schools during the last twenty-five years, and near half of them have abandoned tribal life, moved out into our communities and become independent, useful citizens, successfully engaged in the varied pursuits of the many American communities in which they live.

It can therefore be easily seen that educated among our people, Indians aspire to our life, but weakly educated at home in day schools, they adhere more tenaciously to tribal life. The courage and ability of our American citizenship is as easily and quickly gained by Indians as by the people of the many other races we have incorporated, but it must be through the same contact with our citizens which we accord to them. Swimming is only learned by going into the water.

I intend to use this address widely, and therefore wish to expose here one of the most baneful influences that has ever controlled and perverted the Indian school system and discredited and hindered its highest educational purpose. More than twenty years ago, while at Carlisle, there was a newspaper correspondent in this city of Washington, engaged in writing about public matters through the columns of an eminent New York newspaper. He persistently attacked the non-reservation system of educating Indians. He became the tool of the Indian system, and now and then was sent out by that system to make some

investigations on Indian reservations. He increased his income by becoming the Washington representative of the Indian Rights Association in addition to his newspaper work. In these double capacities, he engaged in wide criticism and wrote himself into notoriety by assuming to praise and blame right and left.

He was then appointed a member of the Board of Indian Commissioners, which is a body of "ten men eminent for intelligence and philanthropy" created by law at President Grant's request for the special purpose of careful investigation into Indian matters everywhere, with a view to helping the administration to overcome the then rampant maladministration and defects of management.

This man assumed dictatorial utterance and misrepresentation in regard to my work at Carlisle, which he never visited. I always met these assaults. After about two years as a member of the Board of Commissioners, he wrote two letters containing false statements. I sent copies of these letters to a United States Senator, specially interested in my work, and called his attention to their quality, asserting that a necessary part of right, "intelligence" was truthfulness, and inviting attention to the fact that nothing that the man did indicated that he was "philanthropic;" that all his acts were calculated to tear down and not to build up. The Senator went to the Secretary of the Interior with my letter and the two newspaper letters. On reading these, the Secretary wrote a personal note to this newspaper correspondent, Washington Agent of the Indian Rights Association and a member of the Board of

Indian Commissioners, demanding his resignation from the Board, whereupon he went off that Board, and also soon after out of his position as Washington Secretary of the Indian Rights Association.

During a Presidential campaign, he wrote a laudatory book for campaign purposes, covering his view of the career of one of the candidates. That candidate was elected and rewarded him for his laudation by making him Commissioner of Indian Affairs and placing him in charge of the vast estate of the Indians and their development. The position of Commissioner of Indian Affairs has long been a plum for political service, which inevitably influences perpetual change in the personnel throughout that department.

While in office this Commissioner began the destruction of the non-reservation schools. He wrote a letter to the Speaker of the House of Representatives recommending that seven different non-reservation Indian schools be abandoned. He then insidiously labored to have such schools turned over for use as eleemosynary institutions to the States in which they were located. This was offering a direct bribe to support his purposes to each of the Congressional delegations from the States in which these schools were located. Three of these schools were by special laws so given to States. These schools were the property of the people of the United States at large, and if abandonment was needed, could have been sold for large sums of money and the proceeds put back into the Treasury, where they belonged; for in every case they had cost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

During this period there were fifteen or more infamous stories widely circulated through the newspapers about alleged Carlisle graduates. They were ingeniously worded and in every case declared crimes and misconduct. Every case alleged, save two, was absolutely and unqualifiedly false, both as to name and events, no such Indians having been at the Carlisle school and no such events as alleged having occurred. In one case the name of an ex-student of Carlisle was used. The charges were atrocious, but without the shadow of foundation in fact, and the Indian himself was most worthy. In the other case it was alleged that the outlaw "Apache Kid" was a graduate of the Carlisle Indian University," and there had acquired great literary and other competence, and had returned home to become the terror of the Territory of Arizona. The description was lurid and the article was published widely, especially in the Sunday papers. It so happened that there was an "Apache Kid" who was terrorizing the Territory of Arizona, which was the only truth in the story. Kid was never a pupil of any Indian school and was an outlaw before Carlisle School was established and before the Government began to educate the Apaches, and remained an outlaw to the end. The attention of many of the papers publishing this article was called to the facts in the case, but none of them published such facts, which indicated they were under perverting espionage.

These fake stories, accompanied by other like misrepresentation from such noted source, have filled the country with unwarranted doubt about the results of Indian education, and is my warrant for making this exposure.

Soon after becoming Commissioner, in addition to his activities before Congress, he began increasing day schools and oppressing non-reservation schools and did all that he could to destroy the latter through false representations in magazine and newspaper articles and by placing limitations upon the securing of pupils for said schools. and by dismissing and transferring their employes. In a magazine article, he falsely declared that "85 per cent of the Indians from non-reservation Indian schools, such as Carlisle and others, sooner or later revert to the blanket." He asserted that the Indian day school was the only school to do the work.

His immediate predecessor twice during his term of office had instituted thorough inquiries throughout all the reservations covering the products of the non-reservation schools, and published in two different annual reports, first, that "3 per cent of such products were excellent, 73 per cent good and 24 per cent poor and bad." Two years later a like investigation was made and "10 per cent" of such products were reported as "excellent, 76 per cent compare favorably with white boys and girls under similar circumstances, and 13 per cent, while having raised themselves somewhat above the level of the Indians in the same environment, the result of their education cannot be said to be good," and only "one per cent prove by their lives and actions that they have not been benefited." This new Commissioner was called upon to furnish the data covering his contrary allegations, but he failed to respond.

At the very same time he was publishing these outrageous misstatements this Commissioner was paying many hundreds of Indians educated and

qualified therefor in the non-reservation schools, for their useful services in important positions throughout the Indian School and other service as school superintendents, teachers, disciplinarians, clerks, matrons, etc. No day school products reach such usefulness.

While in office as Commissioner he secured the passage of a law by Congress prohibiting Indian youth from going away from the reservation for education until they had attained the age of fifteen years.

Before his term of office as Commissioner expired he was found so devious in furnishing information to one of the Indian Committees of Congress having in charge the compiling of the Indian Appropriation Bill, that the Committee notified the Secretary of the Interior that they would not permit him to appear before the Committee any more in reference to Indian matters; that the Secretary would have to send someone else or come himself.

Though out of office for quite a number of years, but still newspaper correspondent, magazine and book writer, this ex-Commissioner continues to assert in favor of day schools among Indians and against non-reservation schools. In his recent book, "In Red Man's Land," he plausibly says:

"I have always believed that the key to the problem of Indian education lies not in establishing more of the big institutions, but in the multiplication of the little day schools to which the children can come every morning and from which they can go home every night. In the family circle the children describe the day's happenings at school, and the parents absorb unconsciously some of the message the teacher is bringing

from the outside world. The teacher, in turn, catches some of the atmosphere of the home from the children, and is able to do better work with them in consequence. Through the mutual understanding thus developed an opening is made for the missionary; and when you have a whole camp or village subject to the leaven, it seems to me you are contributing to a scheme of race elevation on pretty broad lines."

Against this view, I place this extract from a recent letter from a day school teacher among the Indians in Arizona:

"Any one seeing these children at the opening of school would not think of such a suggestion. Their condition is beyond description though I shall endeavor to give you some idea. Their feet, hands, and neck are encrusted like an alligator, with great cracks and sores on them. Their bodies covered with sores and their faces, in some cases, one solid scab. Their heads one solid mass of sores, caused by vermin. It takes several weeks to get them in shape, as their heads have to be hand-picked for a while, for no comb can be used 'till the sores are cured up. I tried an experiment for two weeks, let them go without cleaning their heads of vermin, then cleaned them up and kept count of the vermin. One head produced a crop of seven dozen and the average was about five dozen. There were but two girls free or clean of vermin. I am going thus into detail so that you may know the conditions to be met and overcome.

We kept all clothing here to keep it free of body vermin and from being infected with germs.

One might ask, why should they have their heads cleaned of vermin so frequently. Well,

their small sisters and brothers are so infected that they get a new supply every night. They sleep on filthy sheepskins, alive with vermin, in many cases."

The facts are that, because of the lack of facilities and the inevitable circumstances surrounding Indian day schools, they do not free Indian youth from the vermin so universal throughout their camps. Neither is any material or quick progress in intelligence or ability gained. The assumption that day schools greatly help the family is proven by the results to be largely imaginary.

In this same book the ex-Commissioner gives his oft-repeated and misleading statements against the quality, character and results of the non-reservation schools, which are flatly contradicted by what I have already presented. His statements are not even plausible.

As a contrast to the sad experiences of the day school teacher I have quoted, I have seen forty Indian boys and girls arrive at one time at a non-reservation school, many of them from tribal schools. These boys and girls were not assigned rooms or permitted to go about the quarters until they were thoroughly policed; the boys under the direction of the disciplinarian had their hair cut by their fellow tribesmen already students at the school, who then used fine-tooth combs, and relieved their heads and bodies of all vermin. The girls under the direction of the matron, were also thoroughly combed. All were then put through the bath and clad in entire new clothing and made fit to occupy rooms with their predecessors. Their clothes brought from camp were put through the laundry and were found

to be infected with thousands of body lice, so that thorough steaming and cooking was the only cure. In this non-reservation school every boy and girl had a fine-tooth comb, and was required to daily keep their heads and bodies clean. Periodically, under the direction of the Disciplinarian and the Matron, the boys and girls had their heads combed by other boys and girls and the results reported until absolute cleanliness resulted. By this means the school was made and kept free from vermin.

I make this statement in closing: I have known ex-Commissioner Francis E. Leupp for more than twenty years. I doubt if there is one Indian in the United States who will say that Mr. Leupp ever took him by the hand and encouraged and materially aided him to enter the avenues of higher education and usefulness looking to citizenship. I have never found one such.

Mr. Leupp's general quality of queering himself in writing about Indians is well illustrated in his book, "The Indian and His Problem."

On page 162, he says, "Many Indians are fine blacksmiths, and one of the best of these is stone blind."

That any "stone blind" mechanic can possibly rank among the "best" of his craft is preposterous and that a "stone blind" person, dependent on the sense of touch to replace eyesight should rank among "the best" as a "blacksmith" is ridiculous. Think of a "stone blind" man making a shoe out of red hot iron, fitting it to a vicious mule and then nailing it on the animal.

His recent and latest book, "In Red Man's Land," by cute management, has been placed in the Sunday Schools of our churches as a text-

book to be studied according to a formula specially arranged. It is totally unfit for such uses.

The book contains nine pictures. The first picture in the book is a fabricated mendacity: it is a picture of two Indians wearing feathered war bonnets and in their native dress. Underneath, it says "Present Day Warriors." The facts are that there are now no such Indian "warriors," nor have there been any of that sort for a good many years. The Indian warriors of to-day are regularly enlisted in the United States army or navy, serving just as all other army and navy men serve. The government has had an army of Indian police to maintain order on the various reservations, but they wear only civilized uniforms.

This "Present Day Warriors" picture belongs to the Wild West Show business, which was especially nursed by this Commissioner while in office. I was living in Denver, Colorado, at the time, and five or six times during his term of office he loaned to the various great conventions assembling in that city, parties of Indians from the nearby reservations, who instructed thereto would come painted and feathered to ride in the parades and amuse the crowds. Having the official sanction of the Government through this Commissioner, they gladly took the holiday outside their prison reservations at somebody else's expense and paraded themselves as desired, and thus led our people to conclude the Indians are incurably aboriginal.

I saw young men and young women that had been educated in Indian schools riding in these parades, thus misrepresenting themselves and

their people, encouraged to do this by those in authority over them.

All of the other pictures in this book save one are pictures of the poverty of low Indian life, and therefore give a hopeless view. The one exception is a little frame-house and a barn, styled "Indian Homes, the Best of the New Type." The chances are that it is a picture of the home of an Indian graduate of a non-reservation school and may have been constructed by himself through having learned the trade of carpenter, which all these schools teach. These graduates have long been and are leaders of their people towards civilized living.

Perpetual tribalism and the consequent endless control by the Indian System has always been the limit of Mr. Leupp's vision for the Indians and the basis for his arguments. This suits the system and all that profit by it. Slave holding thrived on limiting intelligence and could see no virtue in individual freedom and citizen chances for the negro. Indian holding has the same infirmity and therefore contends for the meager education and the continuance of the environment which will not disturb the Indian System. The churches through their similar segregating systems of Indian missions, unconsciously work hand in glove with, and accentuate the System. Defamation and clamor against the higher educated "returned student" is part of the campaign. It will not do to have Indians around who know better.

It was a stroke of genius that succeeded in getting Mr. Leupp's book about Indians into the curriculum of the Sunday Schools, and of course enhances the sale of the book. But why should

any church, through its Sunday Schools, take up such a false text-book to mis-inform their students about real conditions among the Indians? The Rev. Thomas C. Moffatt, who is in charge of all Indian Missionary work of the Presbyterian church, has written, "The Indian on a New Trail," which is a very widely informing book about Indians and missions among them, far better adapted for church and Sunday School uses. It is filled with hope by statements of the progress the race has made, and contains pictures that well illustrate such progress.

My plan has long been voiced in this —to civilize the Indian, get him into civilization. Then keep him there and increase his usefulness. Having through bad treatment been made the most backward among our people, he needs and deserves the best chances in schools and in every other way in order to quickly reach his only place of safety, which is the ability to care for himself and his own property in competition with all other Americans, and free from all special system management. To get these qualities he must be environed by them, which is impossible in the tribe and reservation. To hold him to less than this only perpetuates the Indian System, and is both cruel and criminal.