



The Davis Indians

By Sarah Elizabeth Peck

In the year 1911, Pastor Davis began a long and lonely missionary journey from Georgetown, British Guiana, to Mt. Roraima, which is on the Venezuela and Brazil borders. The only people who went with him were two Indians, one to act as guide, the other as interpreter. But the privilege of finding other Indians who had never seen a missionary and who had never heard of Jesus filled his heart with hope and joy, for he believed that God would help him establish a mission among them.

The first few weeks they journeyed up the river in a little rowboat. When the river became too small for the boat, a canoe, made of a hollowed-out log, took the men seven miles farther. The rest of their three months' journey had to be traveled on foot. For eleven days, they pushed their way through the dense forests and jungles, over hills and down into valleys, and always under the hot tropical sun. They traveled through drenching rains, sleeping at times in some wayside hut, and again out under the stars, wherever they were when night overtook them. It was a truly heroic journey, for danger lurked at every turn. Only faith in God and a love for souls could lead even the bravest heart over such a path.

At last, they reached the country where the Indians lived. Pastor Davis called the Indians from the surrounding towns. They gathered and he told them of Christ. He started two missions in different locations and had just arrived at Mt. Roraima where he hoped to start another. The Indians and their chief listened with wonder to the story of Jesus, the Son of the only true God, who loved them and gave His life to save them. They learned of God's law. They learned how important it is for every child of God to obey his Creator.

With great joy the chief and one hundred thirty of his people accepted Christ and promised to obey God. To those who made this covenant with God, Pastor Davis gave Christian names. He named the chief Jeremiah. Gladly these Indians provided a building that seated two to three hundred people where they could come and learn more about God. Elder Davis was busy from morning till into the evening every day teaching and preaching to those who were hungry for the bread of life.

Just a few short months had passed when Elder Davis suddenly became very ill with black-water fever. His Indian friends did all they could to help him, but one day, with only his Christian friends and brothers near, he breathed his last in the hut of Chief Jeremiah. His work for Jesus was done. Loving native hands dug a grave, and laid the body of this noble missionary gently down to rest. For a long time, his family and friends did not know about his death. His wife was waiting and watching for his return. It was on her birthday that the sad news was finally brought to her.

A short time after this, a white man found the grave, and learned the story of the sacrifice that Elder Davis had made. While he was taking a picture of the spot, the





Indians gathered about the grave of their loved missionary, singing one of the songs he had taught them,--"Jesus knows all about our struggles." Did Jesus really know all about their struggles? Oh, yes, Jesus knows and cares. They had lost their dearest earthly friend, but they had learned about their heavenly Friend.

Chief Jeremiah held meetings with his people and did his best to help them. But after a while, the good chief died. Then the Indians were like orphan children. Poor Indians! They longed to hear more about Jesus, but they had no one to teach them. They were like sheep without a shepherd, and after a time they gave up their religious meetings.

When the people in Georgetown heard of the death of Elder Davis, they wanted to send someone else to teach the Indians. But year after year passed, and there was no one to send. Anxiously the Indians watched and waited. But they waited and watched in vain. Fourteen summers came and went, and still no "Davis men."

One bright day in autumn, nearly fifteen years after Elder Davis had first visited them, they heard several signal shots fired not far away. Looking in the direction of the sound, they saw two men with several strange Indians coming toward them. They met these strangers and kindly took them to a shed where they might rest.

"Who are these white men?" they questioned among themselves. "What if they are the 'Davis men!'"

They determined to find out. One young man went to the shed where the strangers were resting.

"I want to be a good man," he said in broken English, but very earnestly. Then he began to sing, "There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus."

The strangers joined in the singing. Other Indians came. In a few moments the shed was filled with them. Men and women crowded in and surrounded the shed, and all joined in singing. With earnest, hopeful faces, they sang, "Jesus knows all about our struggles."

The song was finished. There was a short pause. Then an Indian woman began to sing, "Shall we gather at the river?" All joined in singing, "Yes, we'll gather at the river." After that, another song, "Jesus is coming again!"

When the strangers joined in singing the songs that Elder Davis had taught the Indians, they exclaimed, "The Davis man has taught the Indians," while the Indians exclaimed, "The 'Davis men' have come! The 'Davis men' have come!"

Their joy knew no bounds. They stroked the faces of the men. They patted their cheeks. They took their faces between their hands. They put their arms around them. They did all they could to express their love and happiness.

They had no telegraphs, no telephones, no post offices, no railway trains, no automobiles, but these Indians knew how to make known such glad tidings to their people. Three runners were quickly sent to the different Indian villages to carry the news.

"The 'Davis men' have come! The 'Davis men' have come!" they shouted as they reached the towns.

Some of these towns were a half day's journey, but groups of Indians were soon on





their way to welcome the "Davis men." With earnest faces they pleaded that these men come to their town and teach their people more about Jesus.

The visitors remained with the Indians only a few weeks, but every day they were busy teaching and helping them. At last, the time came when it was necessary for them to say good-by. The Indians could hardly let them go. Some of them went with the visitors on their way. Three times the visitors said good-by before Indians turned back. Even then, an hour later, they, with other Indians, twenty-four in all, caught up with the visitors, this time with their hammocks and food just to go "piece way." To show their love and good will, they went a distance of eight days' march.

Then sadly they said their last good-by, and with sorrowful hearts returned to their mountain home to pray that God would soon send other "Davis Men" to live among them. And God heard the prayers of these humble, earnest Indians who were seeking after Him. Other "Davis Men" soon came and spread the good news of Jesus among the thousands of Indians in that area.

The few months that Elder Davis shared Jesus' love with a few Indians has multiplied into thousands and thousands of Indians learning of His love and soon return.

True Education Reader, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1933

