

# Life of David Brainerd, Missionary to the Indians

by William B. O. Peabody

---

## Preface

The materials for the following memoir have been chiefly collected from a volume published the year before Brainerd's death, entitled "The Rise and Progress of a remarkable Work of Grace amongst a Number of Indians in the Provinces of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, justly represented in a Journal kept by Order of the Honorable Society, in Scotland, for propagating Christian Knowledge"; from Jonathan Edwards's "Account of the Life of David Brainerd"; and from a Sermon preached by Edwards on the day of his funeral. Brainerd's "Journal" contains a record of his labors and success among the Indians, and illustrates the peculiar difficulties of the enterprise, and the fervor and energy by which they were overcome. In an Appendix to it are also many interesting particulars respecting the habits, customs, and opinions of the Indians, the method of instructing them, and the obstacles to be encountered in converting them to Christianity.

## Chapter I

*The peculiar Character of Brainerd. — His Parentage. — Circumstances in his Childhood. — His early Religious Impressions. — His Preparation for College. — His Conversion. — The prevailing Religious Excitement. — His Expulsion. — His Preparation for the Ministry. — His Appointment as a Missionary to the Indians.*

There are few among those distinguished by their self-devotion to religion, whose names have been more honored than that of the missionary Brainerd; but, in general, little is known respecting his personal history, and his fame is rather traditional, than founded upon a knowledge of the trials which he underwent, and the difficulties he encountered. There have been those whose zeal was as pure and high, and whose success was greater; but in some respects his history was peculiar, owing to his peculiar temperament, which obliged him to encounter enemies within as well as without, and to contend with doubts and fears in his own mind while he was endeavoring to influence the minds of others in favor of the Gospel. A great proportion of those, who have preached the Gospel to the heathen, have been, impelled by a strong and daring spirit, such as would find its native element in difficulties and dangers; and they have gone forth exulting to fight the battles of the Cross. But in him we find no such self-sustaining power; his spirit was naturally gentle, and he put his hand to the work, not because he was at home in such a warfare, not because it suited his taste and character, but simply because he believed it to be his duty; and, having this conviction, he made a daily sacrifice, giving up his tastes and inclinations, his home and his friends, his comforts, and at last his life, as so many offerings upon the

altar.

David Brainerd was born at Haddam, in the State of Connecticut, April 20th, 1718. His parents were very respectable in point of condition and character, his father being an assistant or member of the Council, an office of considerable distinction. His mother was the daughter of a clergyman who came with his father, a member of the same profession, from England to America, in the days of persecution, and always retained, and probably transmitted to his children, that energetic, daring, and devoted character, which such days are calculated to form. When such elements of character, no longer called into constant action by the exasperating influences of oppression, are softened down in the milder atmosphere of domestic life, they commonly afford the best examples of religious excellence, uniting patient mildness with lofty decision, and strong love for the human race with profound indifference to the frowns and flatteries of men. It is not surprising, that the mind of Brainerd, educated thus by parents with whom religion was a matter of feeling, not of form, should have been early turned with deep interest to that subject; and here, no doubt, we are to look for the beginnings of that conscientiousness and surrender of self to duty, which made him afterwards so eminent as a laborious, self-denying, and effective preacher of the Gospel.

It was well for Brainerd that his heart was open to religious influences in his early years, for he was not long permitted to enjoy the care of his parents and the blessing of home. His father died when he was nine years of age, and four years afterward his mother followed him to the grave, leaving desolate a family of five sons and four daughters. The sons, however, three of whom were older than the subject of this memoir, became useful and respected members of society; and the fifth son, John, lived to be a missionary to the Indians. After the death of David, he became pastor of the Indian church in New Jersey; thus entering upon the very scene of his brother's labors. It was an early age at which Brainerd lost the natural guardians of his childhood; but they had done their work faithfully, and the religious impressions they had made upon the tender minds of their children were strengthened, not effaced, by the lapse of years. Perhaps we do wrong to use the word impressions; for, an impression being made by external agency, must, from its nature, pass away soon after that agency is withdrawn; the soul will not retain it. But when religious principles are given, as they evidently were in this instance, they gain strength instead of growing weaker. Impressions are like branches which children break off from trees and set in their little gardens, where they look beautiful for a day; but principles are the shoots which grow from good seed sown in the heart. While impressions are dying daily, principles strike deeper roots and send out stronger boughs, till they become too firm for the elements to overthrow.

If Brainerd's parents had been longer spared to him, they could not have added any thing to his religious sensibility; for, even at that early age, his conscience was quick and delicate, and his sense of obligation

firm and high; he made it his diligent study to ascertain his duty, and was resolute in acting according to his deep convictions. But perhaps his parents might have taught him to regulate his zeal by showing him that he was bound to think of himself as well as others, and in that way might have prevented the sacrifice of his life to his labors; for no one can read his life without being aware, that his disease and death were owing to his entire want of concern for himself, and his constant and fearless exposure. His feelings, too, were of a kind which needed the sympathy of judicious friends. Being naturally reserved and retiring, he was driven too much upon himself, and, for want of communication with the world, spent too much of his time in watching the changes of his own emotions. A friend, like a parent who understood his character, might have aided him to discipline his mind, so as to make it happier in itself, while it was equally serviceable to mankind. But it should be remembered to his honor, that, while this peculiar sensibility, and a tinge of romance which ran through his character, inclined him strongly to solitude and thoughtfulness rather than society and action, he renounced his own tastes and inclinations, governed himself by his duty, not by his choice, threw himself among associates who were no better than desolation, and lived, from first to last, not for himself, but for others, and for his duty. In any man, such a sacrifice would have been great; but to him it was greater than it could have been to most other men.

We know from his own account, that serious thoughts were familiar to him at a very early age. He was not more than seven or eight years old when he began to be uneasy at the thought of dying, and forsook the common enjoyments of childhood, devoting much of his time to meditation and prayer. But this concern for his religious improvement, not being sustained by sympathy with others, gradually lessened, though it was not entirely lost. Some years afterwards, a severe sickness prevailed in his native place, and his mind was powerfully affected by the gloom and apprehension which it occasioned in the little community; he says, that he read and prayed much, and was remarkably "dead to the world." His mother's death in 1732, which left him one of a large family of orphans, drove him to a nearer dependence upon the Father of the fatherless, to whom alone he could look as the support and guardian of those helpless years. But the same circumstances, which made him thus serious in his feeling, tended to give a gloomy cast to his devotions, an unfortunate result in any condition, and particularly so in the duty to which he gave his life; in which a cheerful piety and animating views of existence are essential to keep the health of the soul, and to save it from that despondence into which one so situated is apt to fall.

The religious sentiments in which Brainerd was educated, were those expressed in the Assembly's Catechism, and these he continued through all his life to profess, and to hold in sacred regard. Not that he was in any sense a party man; he more than once laments the excesses of religious zeal to which he had himself been led, saying that he was

full of anguish and shame for having spent so much of his time in conversation which tended only to strengthen in him the spirit of party.

Shortly after the death of his mother, he removed from his father's house to East Haddam, where he spent four years. He was not at all inclined to the amusements which commonly attract the young; and, if ever he did engage in any sport, the recollection of it troubled his conscience, as if it were no better than a sin. Without well understanding what his duty was, he was very anxious to discharge it aright; and, for the want of some friendly guidance, his conscience not only disquieted him sometimes with needless accusations, but failed to enlighten him as to his real duty. He was a singular example of a boy inclined to melancholy, entirely indifferent to youthful pleasure, surpassing anchorites in self-denial and devotion, and yet upbraiding himself perpetually with his want of concern for the welfare of his soul. A judicious friend might have taught him to improve these beginnings of thoughtfulness, and to make them the foundations of a character earnest, affectionate, and enlightened. But he kept his feelings to himself; and the wonder is that his character, growing entirely in the shade, should ever have become so strong and manly as it proved itself in later years.

At this period of his life he had no idea of a liberal education. He expected to spend his life in the labors of a farm. But when he was nineteen years of age, he became very desirous to prepare himself for the clerical profession, and began to study for that purpose in the intervals of his labor. All this time he was attentive to his daily employment, zealous in improving every leisure hour, and in the midst of his active and intellectual pursuits he found time to examine his heart, keeping strict watch upon his actions, thoughts, and words. Still he felt as if his time was wasted, and reproached himself continually with his want of heart in the service of his God.

In the following year, 1738, at the age of twenty, he went to reside with Mr. Fiske, the minister of his native town. Perceiving that Brainerd's tastes were uncommonly mature, he advised him to withdraw from the companionship of the young, with whom he had no common feeling, and to associate with those more advanced in years, whose feelings were similar to his own. He took this advice, and in consequence of it became less oppressed with a sense of his own unworthiness than he was before. He studied the Bible diligently every day, and spent much of his time in secret prayer. Overcoming his reserve in a measure, he persuaded others to meet with him on Sabbath evenings, to engage in acts of devotion. But still there was something wanting. He felt as if he had only become conscious of his need of religious excellence, without having discovered the way in which the want might be supplied.

It would not be easy to find a description more full of misery, than his account of the darkness which soon after settled upon his soul. As he walked in the fields, he envied the beasts and birds their happiness,

since they could enjoy the blessing of existence without being tortured, as he was, with the prospect of an endless doom. It seemed as if mountains were rising up before him in the way to Heaven; the day brought no light, and the night no rest, to his soul. When he walked abroad, it seemed as if the earth would burst asunder and let him down to the abodes of woe. Sometimes he would retire to bed, that his agitation might not be seen by others, and there lie restless, "thinking it would be a great wonder if his soul should be out of hell in the morning." Doubts grew out of his fears; he began to detest the very name of Christianity; still his agony was not abated. For several months he continued in this deplorable state, passing through all the changes of anxiety and hope, till his mind settled down at last in the sullen calmness of despair. His description of his suffering is painfully minute, and, like that of Cowper, it is drawn with a powerful hand, and forces upon the reader the feeling, "Oh, that way, madness lies!"

Happily, a better day succeeded. As he was walking in his favorite retreat, profoundly indifferent to the loveliness of nature, and weighed down with the feeling that he was for ever lost, he entered into a thick grove, which was not penetrated by the light of the declining sun. All at once an unspeakable glory seemed to open upon his soul, affecting him like a flood of light, though he saw no external brightness, and filling him at once with admiration and delight. It was a new apprehension of God, such as never dawned upon his soul before. He continued in this state of rapture, unconscious of the passing hours, till night, and for some time after he felt as if he was in a new world; the aspect of every thing was changed. This was a happy relief to his troubled spirit; he trusted that his visitations of distress would afflict him no more. It does not appear that it was so. Soon afterward his agitation returned, but it did not last; and, in some other instances, his torture was of shorter duration than before. From this time he dated his conversion; his spirit was evidently lighter and happier, but melancholy made a part of his nature, and, in all his subsequent life, a moment of sunshine was followed by an hour of shade. Still, whatever the changes of his feeling may have been, no one could doubt the truth and purity of his religious devotion.

In 1739 he entered Yale College; and in the succeeding year he devoted himself to his studies with so much ardor as to impair his health. Though he felt as if this ambition was a sin, he could not quite resist it. In the summer he began to raise blood from his lungs, and was soon so much reduced, that his tutor advised him to go home and give up his application, as the only means of saving his life. For some weeks, he had no expectation of recovering; but he assures us, that, so far from repining at the thought, he was resigned and happy, insomuch that, when he was able to return to college in the autumn, he regretted being compelled to face the world and its temptations again.

It was at this time that Whitefield made his appearance in New England. His reputation had preceded him from Europe, and he was earnestly invited to visit the eastern States. Many of the clergy and

others in New England had become dissatisfied with the low state of religious feeling, and had been making efforts, with various degrees of success, to revive the religious affections of the people. Whitefield was the very man they wanted to aid them in their exertions; and, when he came among them, throwing off all the stiffness of the clerical manner, and speaking in natural and familiar language to the hearts of the people, his eloquence, aided by the advantages of a graceful person and an admirable voice, gave an electric start to the whole community. His progress resembled a triumphant march; wherever he went, he kindled fires and left them burning; his followers were noted for their zeal and fervor, and also for the contempt with which they regarded all those whose feelings were less excited than their own. While this fervor was spreading itself throughout the land, it could not be, that a spirit like Brainerd's should remain unkindled in the general flame. None of the officers of the college seem to have encouraged it; but the students associated themselves together, and became perhaps more zealous in consequence of the resistance of the higher powers. We are assured by President Edwards, that "an intemperate, imprudent zeal, and a degree of enthusiasm crept in and mingled itself with that revival of religion; and, so great and general an awakening being a new thing to the inhabitants of the land, neither people nor ministers had learned thoroughly to distinguish between solid religion and its delusive counterfeits; even many ministers of the Gospel, of long standing and the best reputation, were, for a time, overpowered with the glaring appearances of the latter." Such being the case, it was natural that Brainerd should be carried away with the sudden rush of public feeling; accordingly we are assured by the same authority, that "he had the unhappiness to have a tincture of that intemperate, indiscreet zeal, which was at that time too prevalent." Of this he was afterwards sensible. He had kept a journal of his feelings during that memorable year, in which he recorded all his passing emotions; but, when he was on his deathbed, knowing that such records of his religious life would be sought for, he separated it from the rest of his Diary, and caused it to be destroyed, expressing a wish that those who desired to know his manner of life, might form their judgment from passages in which "imprudences and indecent heats were less mingled with the spirit of devotion."

The results of his zeal on this occasion were unfortunate. In consequence of the jealousy of the college government and the spiritual pride of his associates, he became a victim of senseless oppression. He was made an offender for a word accidentally overheard by a Freshman in passing through the chapel after prayers. Brainerd was at that moment saying to his companions, that one of the tutors, whom he named, "had no more grace than a chair"; a phrase which that individual fully justified by his subsequent proceedings. The Freshman reported this speech to a foolish woman in the town, telling her that he believed it was said of one of the officers of the college. She went and informed the Rector, who examined the Freshman and ascertained who were present on that momentous

occasion. He then sent for Brainerd's companions, and required them to give testimony against their friend, who was directed to humble himself, and to make a public confession of his sin in presence of all the officers and students of the college. He had too much spirit to submit to this stupid malice of his superiors, who imposed upon him what was only required in cases of open and notorious crime. As a punishment for this refusal and for his attachment to the new doctrine, he was at once expelled from the institution. It was a case of such evident hardship and injustice, that a council of ministers, assembled in Hartford, solicited the government of the college to restore him, but without success. This was a heavy blow to him; and we learn from his Diary, that he found it hard to submit to the unmerited disgrace; but to the last moment of his life, he considered himself, as well he might, much abused by this arbitrary exercise of power.

It should be mentioned, however, that this act was not a specimen of the usual temper of the college government; they were at the time greatly provoked by the success of Whitefield and his followers. While the clergy of Massachusetts, particularly of Boston, gave him, to appearance at least, a hearty welcome, the clergy of Connecticut were far from rejoicing in his coming. They probably anticipated, as it afterwards happened, that wild fanatics would spring up, who would alienate the regard of the people from their ministers, and break up those principles of religious order in which the foundations of their colony were laid. This is the explanation of their exasperated proceedings, though it will not by any means excuse them. The colony passed laws against such men as Davenport and his coadjutors, and the college undertook to keep all safe within its bounds. Whoever showed a disposition to listen to them, was considered as going over to the enemy, and was treated with as little ceremony as a traitor within the walls.

The treatment, which Brainerd received from the college, does not seem to have had any injurious effect upon his reputation or his prospects, however painful it may have been to his feelings. He still continued to make preparation for the sacred office, and was encouraged by the sympathy of friends, who hoped much from his energy and self-devotion. But his chief delight seemed to be to retreat from the presence of men into the depth of the forest; not that he went there to enjoy the beauty of nature, hut because the dark shades of the wood, and the wind sounding through its hollow caverns, were always in harmony with the gloomy habit of his soul. He does not seem to have been conscious of this love of nature; but it is evident to every reader of his life, that he delighted in the visible world as a manifestation of the Creator; his spirit was filled with its silent loveliness, and, in this communion with the grand and beautiful, he felt as if he came nearest to his God. Meantime his feelings were perpetually changing; sometimes he complains of being struck with a damp and chill from the sense of his own unworthiness; he felt as if he was a wretch, unworthy to live, and yet unfit to die; he was filled with

wonder and shame, that any should offer kindness to one so undeserving; while at other times his feelings kindled into rapture; "sorrow endured for a night, but joy came in the morning;" the beams of the daybreak seemed to shine into his soul, and more than once he spent whole days of happiness without coming into the presence of men. Once he records, that, while gazing upon the flashes of the northern light, his mind was thus illuminated; but he never seems in the least aware of the power, which nature and its changes thus exerted upon his soul.

In the summer of 1742, at the age of twenty-five, he was examined by the association of ministers at Danbury, and received a license from them to preach the Gospel. Beside the depression of mind just mentioned, which continued with short intervals of happier feeling, his state of health made it difficult for him to engage in public labors. But he entered at once upon his duty, and was relieved to find that he had power over the hearts of his hearers. His evident sincerity alone would have made him an impressive preacher; but, in addition to this, he had talent and facility of expression. Beside he always spoke with the solemnity of one who stood within the shadow of death. The hope of preaching the Gospel to the heathen was his chief inducement for choosing the sacred profession; and one of his earliest attempts was addressed to the Indians at Kent, upon the borders of Connecticut, where was one of those wasting communities of that ill-starred race, which have now entirely disappeared, though they were then so common in New England. Before he began, he was oppressed, not so much with the magnitude of the duty, as with a sense of his unworthiness to discharge it. He seemed to himself like an evil spirit, "worse," he says, "than any devil"; he wondered that people did not stone him, instead of listening patiently to his words. But when his audience were assembled, and he was obliged to address them, he delivered himself with freedom and power. The hearts of the poor Indians were carried away by his fervor; they heard him with strong and evident emotion, and the sight of his success in reaching their hearts gave him an encouragement, such as he had never felt before.

In the course of his preaching he came to New Haven, where he had made friends while he was a student in the college; but, such was the exasperation of party, that he found himself in danger of arrest should he be publicly seen in the streets. He was informed by his friends, that, if he were discovered there, he would be seized and imprisoned; a fact which it would be difficult to credit, did we not know, that, in times of such excitement, any outrage will be attempted and justified by a party. It was a great disappointment to him not to be able to meet his classmates at the Commencement; but he was obliged to withdraw to the house of a friend at a distance from the town. In the evening he ventured into the place, cautiously however, believing that his enemies were on the watch for him; but he passed the day of Commencement, not in cheerful society as he intended, but in solitary prayer in his favorite retreat, the depth of the woods. His mind was so constantly



turned in one direction, that, about this time, he wrote in his Diary, that he had hardly seen the day for two months, which would not have been more welcome to him, if it could have been his last; not so much because he was weary of life, as because he wished to enjoy the Paradise which was continually before his soul. In the day he was dejected and troubled. Before he entered the desk to preach, his powers of body and mind seemed to fail him; but, after being warmed with his subject, he took hold of the hearts of his audience, and produced an effect which surprised him. But, when the evening came with its silence and thoughtfulness, he rejoiced that he was one day nearer to his heavenly home; firmly resolved to be faithful unto death, but yet longing for the hour when the evening of life should release him from the labors of the restless day.

In November of the year in which he was licensed, he received a communication from New York, which decided his destiny for life. The Correspondents of the Society for propagating Christian Knowledge were assembled in that city, and having heard of his ability, were desirous to engage him as a missionary, to fulfil the purposes of their association. It was the very opportunity which he had long desired; but a doubt of his own fitness, and a fear that he might stand in the place of some better man, made him shrink from it, when it was offered him. After consulting with some of his friends, he went to New York, where he was examined by the officers of the Society, and found in every respect qualified for the difficult and responsible station. But the approbation of others could not give him confidence; and, when he thought of the responsibility which he was assuming, he felt as if he must retreat from it in despair. He says, that he grew more and more sensible of his unfitness for public service; he felt as if he was deceiving his employers; "how miserably disappointed," he says, "they would be, if they knew me! Oh, my heart! In this depressed condition I was forced to go and preach to a considerable assembly, before some grave and learned ministers; but felt such a pressure from a sense of my vileness, ignorance, and unfitness to appear in public, that I was almost overcome with it. I thought myself infinitely indebted to the people, and longed that God would bless them with the rewards of his grace." In all this there was no affectation; he was a man of great singleness of heart. It was a natural expression of his dark-colored feelings, and his depression at the time was increased by the noise and confusion of the city. He could not be intimate with himself in the midst of crowds, and he longed to escape once more to the quiet of the country, where he could be thoughtful and alone.

It will be observed, that all his hesitation to accept this charge arose from a distrust of his own ability. So far from being dismayed at the prospect of its difficulties, there was nothing for which he so ardently longed, as to bear the message of salvation to that unfortunate race; though he well knew that the hardships and discouragements of the service would be formidable to the strongest heart, and that he, an invalid, gentle and sensitive by nature, would find it doubly hard to

endure them. That he should have been so entirely indifferent to personal considerations, gives us the highest idea of his amiable and generous character. The Apostles themselves were not more ready to encounter hardship and privation, nor were they more ready to sacrifice all prospects of comfort, happiness, and fame. Far was he from anticipating the renown, with which his name is now surrounded. The service to which he was called was obscure and unhonored, as well as disheartening; it offered no attraction, except to those whose "witness was in Heaven, whose record on high."

## Chapter II

*Act of Liberality. — Mr. Sergeant. — Sent to Kanaumek. — His Weakness. — His Manner of Life. — His Success in Preaching. — Visit to New Haven. — Failure to regain his Standing. — His Health unequal to his Labor. — His Charities. — Alarm of Invasion. — He studies the Indian Language. — His Removal from Kanaumek. — Refusal of Invitations.*

Being thus fairly enlisted in his new service, Brainerd gave an example of disinterestedness, which some might pronounce injudicious, in his circumstances, but all must allow was an evidence of pure and generous feeling. He was fully determined to throw himself among the Indians, and to fare as they did, so long as he lived. Supposing, therefore, that he should need nothing more than his allowance as a missionary to support him, he resolved to appropriate what was left him by his father to the purpose of educating some young man for the ministry, who might, perhaps, at some future time enter into his labors. He immediately made arrangements to this effect, and selected a young friend of promising talents and dispositions, whom he supported as long as he lived.

He was destined to be for a time associated with a man of similar disinterestedness, Mr. Sergeant, missionary to the Stockbridge Indians, who had left Yale College when he had high prospects of usefulness and honor, to go and attempt to civilize and enlighten that miserable people. Mr. Hollis, nephew to Thomas Hollis, the liberal friend of Harvard College, hearing of Mr. Sergeant's efforts and sacrifices, offered him an annual allowance among some other appropriations, which he was making for the benefit of the Indians; but the single-hearted missionary at once declined the offer, telling him that he could accept nothing from him but his prayers for the success of his labors.

The original design of the Commissioners, who engaged the services of Brainerd, had been to send him to the Indians upon the Delaware and Susquehanna rivers; but some difference had arisen between the Indians and their neighbors, respecting their title to certain lands, which made the time an inauspicious one for sending him among them. Mr. Sergeant had also written to them, that there was a settlement, called Kanaumek, in New York, about half way between Stockbridge and Albany, where a missionary was needed, and could do much good. For these reasons Brainerd's destination was changed, and he was sent

to this settlement, which was then in the heart of the woods.

It is quite clear from his Diary, that his health was entirely unequal to such an enterprise. He speaks repeatedly of dizziness, pain, and such weakness that he was not able to stand. When he became once engaged in religious services, his strong excitement would bear him through; but such efforts were made at the expense of his constitution. The account which he gives of the state of his mind, the changes of which he examined and recorded every day, shows that he was an invalid who needed indulgence and repose. He complains of his deep depression, of his "everlasting uselessness," and unworthiness to creep on God's earth; sometimes he endures, he says, "the tortures of the damned"; he felt as if the wretch who is on his way to execution was far more to be envied than he. There were times, particularly when he retired to the stillness and solitude of the woods, when his spirit felt lightened; but in general he could not escape from the blackness of darkness within. The only relief he had under these sufferings was the thought that they must be over soon. "It seemed to me that I should never do any service, or have any success among the Indians. My soul was weary of my life. I longed for death beyond measure. When I thought of any godly soul departed, my soul was ready to envy him his privilege. Oh! when will my turn come? Must it be years first?"

Such was his condition of body and mind when he first went among the Indians at Kanaumek, April 1st, 1743. The first night he slept upon a little heap of straw, which was a fair earnest of the privations which he must encounter. He described the place as a most lonely and melancholy desert, about eighteen miles from Albany. Among the Indians he found a poor Scotchman, with whom he took up his abode. The house in which he resided was a log hut, containing but a single apartment, and wanting even the comfort of a floor. His table was principally supplied with hasty-pudding, boiled corn, and bread baked in the ashes. He could hardly understand the Highland dialect of his host, and with his wife he was not able to converse at all. The only person with whom he could talk freely in his native language was his interpreter, a young Indian, who had been educated in Stockbridge. These circumstances are incidentally mentioned, not as if he thought them of any importance; indeed, he says in a letter to his brother, that he might almost consider himself living in luxury, were it not for his distress within. The Indians were kind to him, and seemed well disposed to listen to his instructions; but, like all the rest of their race in the neighborhood of what is called civilization, they were crowded by knavish and grasping adventurers, who were waiting to seize their lands when any pretext could be found for driving them away; and of course were not so much satisfied by lessons of religion from white men, as if they had seen less of the practical Christianity of their civilized neighbors. They all were attentive to his exhortations; some appeared considerably affected; one woman told him, that "her heart had cried ever since she heard him first." Nothing in their treatment of him was ever disrespectful; but he was sometimes annoyed by white

men, who came from the neighboring settlements, and whose profane and licentious conversation formed an odious contrast with the grave dignity of the Indians. He says of them, in complete disgust, "Oh! what a hell it would be to live with such men to eternity!" and he felt the most sensible thankfulness to God, who had made him to differ from such beings as they.

Solitude was pleasanter to him than such society, and indeed than any other. He was constantly in the habit of retiring into the forest in the intervals of his labor; and sometimes he passed whole days in such retreats, engaged in solitary prayer. His first lodging was at such a distance from the Indians, that he was compelled to walk a mile and a half to reach them. He soon left it for a wigwam; but, finding this a dwelling unsuited to his purpose, he employed himself in building a log hut with his own hands. The work was difficult and slow; but, after great perseverance, he succeeded in it, and seemed to think it luxury when he had a dwelling of his own, in which he could be alone whenever he pleased, and pass his time uninterrupted, in meditation and prayer.

Finding that the only way to make a permanent impression on the Indians was to educate their children, he took a journey to New Jersey to propose to the Commissioners to establish a school. This was immediately done upon his recommendation, and his interpreter was appointed to instruct it. Having reflected much on his misguided zeal when at college, and being always more ready to accuse himself than others, he resolved to humble himself before the college authorities; but they refused to receive his submission. His mind was so bent on this attempt, that he took another journey to New Haven shortly after, when he renewed his offers, but with equal ill success. That such journeys were not then the trifles which they are now, may be inferred from the circumstance, that, when he was returning from this last expedition, he lost his way in passing from Stockbridge to Kanaumeeek, and was compelled to pass the night in the woods.

His anxiety to bring about this reconciliation was very great; not because he could derive any personal advantage from it, for college honors were of small importance to one in his situation, but because his conscience accused him of having done wrong, and he did not regard the misdeeds of others as any excuse for his own. The terms in which he offered his submission are characteristic of his self-accusing spirit. "Whereas I have said before several persons concerning Mr. Whittlesey, one of the tutors of Yale College, that I did not believe he had any more grace than the chair I then leaned upon; I humbly confess, that herein I have sinned against God, and acted contrary to the rules of his word, and have injured Mr. Whittlesey. I had no right to make thus free with his character, and had no just reason to say as I did concerning him. My fault herein was the more aggravated, in that I said this concerning one who was so much my superior, and one that I was obliged to treat with special respect and honor, by reason of the relation I then stood in to the college. Such a behavior, I confess, did

not become a Christian; it was taking too much upon me, and did not savor of that humble respect that I ought to have expressed towards Mr. Whittlesey." "I have often reflected on this act with grief; I hope, on account of the sin of it; and am willing to lie low and to be abased before God and man for it. I humbly ask the forgiveness of the governors of the college, and of the whole society; but of Mr. Whittlesey in particular." "And whether the governors of the college shall see fit to remove the censure I lie under or not, or to admit me to the privileges I desire; yet I am willing to appear, if they think fit, openly to own, and to humble myself for those things I have herein confessed."

One would think this sufficiently humble to appease the offended majesty of the college government; but they refused to accept his concessions. Application was made in his behalf by men of great influence, who saw that what was called discipline was no better than revenge. But all their efforts could only prevail with those potentates so far as to make them add insult to injury, by consenting that if he, a licensed minister of the Gospel, and already engaged in labors which they knew he could not abandon, would return to college, and pass a year within its walls as a student, he might be restored to his former standing. This, of course, was impossible; and Brainerd had nothing to do but to witness the ceremony of giving degrees to his classmates, among whom, had justice been done, he would have taken the most honored station. He says in his Diary, September 14th, 1743, "This day I should have taken my degree; but God sees fit to deny it to me. And though I was afraid of being overwhelmed with perplexity and confusion when I should see my classmates take theirs, yet, in the very season of it, God enabled me with calmness and resignation to say, 'The will of the Lord be done!'" The whole affair is illustrative of his character. After the most impartial examination, he believed that he was in the right; but he says, that, if he had offered the least injury to one who had offered a thousand to him, he would ask that man's forgiveness on his knees, however insolently and unworthy his submission might be treated. He feared nothing so much as doing wrong; and he would rather go to excess in the path where his conscience directed him, than run the hazard of leaving any thing undone which it might possibly be his duty to do.

One short extract from his Diary, of his proceedings at Kanaumeek, will give a good idea of his manner of life. "Spent most of the day in labor to procure something to keep my horse on in the winter; was very weak in body through the day, and thought this frail body would soon drop into the dust; had some realizing apprehensions of a speedy entrance into another world. In this weak state of body, was not a little distressed for want of suitable food. Had no bread, nor could I get any. I am forced to go ten or fifteen miles for all the bread I eat; sometimes it is mouldy and sour before I eat it, if I get any considerable quantity; and then again I have none for days together, for want of an opportunity to send for it, and not being able to find my horse in the

woods to go myself; this was my case now. But through divine goodness, I had some Indian meal, of which I made little cakes and fried them. I felt contented with my circumstances, and blessed God as much as if I had been a king." Strange way of life for one, who was constantly afflicted with bodily weakness and suffering. But these privations seem to have been nothing to him, and all his physical pain was forgotten in the affliction of his soul.

He says, "I fell down before the Lord and groaned under my deadness, barrenness, vileness, and felt as if I was guilty of soul-murder in speaking to immortal souls in the manner I had done. Was very ill and full of pain in the evening, and my soul mourned that I had spent so much time to so little profit. At night I spent some time in instructing my poor people. Oh that God would pity their souls! I thought, if God should say, 'Cease making any provisions for this life, for you shall in a few days go out of time into eternity, my soul would leap for joy. I always feel comfortably, when God realizes death and the things of another world to my mind. Whenever my mind is taken off from the things of this world and set on God, my soul is at rest."

How ill suited this way of life was to his delicate frame, appears from what befell him on his return from New Haven. As he was travelling homeward, he was taken with shivering chills and a violent pain in his face, which obliged him to stop at the nearest shelter. He was in pain all night, and the next morning was ill with a fever. He continued several days under the care of kind friends, and it was nearly two weeks before he reached his home. He tells us, that, glad as the Indians were to welcome his return, yet, had this disorder seized him when at home, in his comfortless lodgings, he should inevitably have died for want of proper care and attention. It shows how much the fervent spirit can do to sustain the weak frame, when we see him, though suffering at times with cold and hunger, often lost in the trackless woods, obliged to pass the night in the open air, and sometimes drenched in the streams through which he rode, still able to attend to the instruction of the people of his charge, and never once thinking of giving up his hard service, and going back to the abodes of civilized men. He seemed to think himself well provided with comforts; he writes, "I was still more indisposed in body and in much pain most of the day, was scarcely able to study at all, and still entirely alone in the wilderness; but, blessed be the Lord, I am not exposed in the open air; I have a house and many of the comforts of life to support me." His house, simple as it was, became very dear to him. Once or twice he speaks of riding to Kinderhook, a distance of twenty miles through the woods, and returning the same day, saying that he would rather encounter much fatigue, to reach his own habitation, than pass the evening with those who had no regard for God. Oh, a barn, a stable, a hedge, or any other place, is truly desirable, if God is there."

It would be wrong to give the impression, that he had no happy moments in all these days of trial, though they were certainly but few. His whole effort was to bring his mind to a religious temper; he

generally complains that he does not succeed; but, whenever his feeling is such as his conscience approves, he expresses himself with great delight. "This morning spent an hour in prayer, with great intentness and freedom, and the most tender affection toward all mankind. I longed that those, who I have reason to think bear me ill will, might be eternally happy; it seemed refreshing to think of meeting them in Heaven. Oh, it is an emblem of Heaven itself, to love all the world with a love of kindness, forgiveness, and benevolence; to feel our souls sedate and meek; to be void of all evil surmisings and suspicions, and scarce able to think evil of any man on any occasion; to find our hearts simple, open, and free to those that look upon us with a different eye. Prayer was so sweet an exercise to me, that I knew not how to cease, lest I should lose the spirit of prayer."

One circumstance evidently gave him satisfaction, though in his Diary he passes over it very lightly. Feeling as if his services were poor, and yet ardently desiring to do something for the cause of charity and religion, he denied himself every thing which he could live without, for the sake of others. At the end of fifteen months, he had been able to devote to charitable purposes, the sum of one hundred pounds. Had such an amount been devoted to such an object by some rich merchant or nobleman, it would have been celebrated as a generous benefaction; he, it should be remembered, cast it in, not of his abundance, but of his penury; it was only by abridging his own comforts, and denying himself even the common necessaries of life, that he was able to save it, for a purpose so exalted. But his whole life was a sacrifice; he was like a taper, itself wasting, while giving light to others.

His situation at Kanaumek was not wholly free from danger. That settlement, though now in the heart of the country, was then situated upon an exposed frontier. Whenever war arose between England and France, the Indians, excited by the latter nation, fell at once upon the border settlements, killing, burning, and destroying. Nothing could be more alarming than such inroads. They came like the lightning; no one could tell where the bolt would strike till it was actually fallen; so that the least prospect of war occasioned deep and painful excitement. Those who lived upon the frontier had no choice, but to remain in their place without protection, or to leave their homes to plunder and ruin. One night, when Brainerd was engaged with his Indians at Kanaumek, an express arrived in haste, informing him that the Governor had ordered Colonel Stoddard to give warning to all who were in exposed situations, that there was every prospect of a sudden invasion, and that they must secure themselves, as well as they were able, without delay. The manner in which he notes this occurrence in his Diary is characteristic. He says, that, when he read the letter, it seemed to come in a good season; for his heart was fixed on God, and was not surprised with ill tidings; but it taught him that he must not attach himself to the comforts of life which he had been preparing. This is all the notice which he takes of the startling missive. As to his comforts, they were much to him, though they were such as most men

would find it easier to surrender than to enjoy. Instead of dwelling upon the prospect thus suggested to him, he says, that he has some hopes of success in his mission, for some of his hearers had come to him, asking what they must do to be saved; and that his heart is greatly rejoiced when he can promise himself that he shall do good, for there is nothing else which he cares much for in the present world. He asked himself whether he could be resigned to be taken captive or murdered by the Indians, and found, such was his trust in divine Providence, that he had no anxious fears.

One part of his duty at Kanaumeeek imposed on him more hardship than all the rest. It was that of learning the Indian language, for which purpose he was obliged to ride to Stockbridge to take lessons of Mr. Sergeant, who was familiar with the Mohegan tongue. The Commissioners had urged this point upon him. To communicate with the Indians by means of an interpreter was very unsatisfactory; since he could never be sure that the interpreter himself understood the meaning of that which he undertook to convey. Still the difficulty of learning their unwritten language was so great, that it was not often attempted. Brainerd began the study in November, riding over often to spend a few days at Stockbridge, and then returning to his people. He had become so used to solitude, that these days spent in society were irksome to him. He says, "I love to be alone in my little cottage, where I can spend much time in prayer." That his study required some exertion appears from his Diary, where he says; "December 26th. Rode to Stockbridge. Was very much fatigued with my journey, wherein I underwent great hardship; was much exposed, and very wet by falling into a river." "December 31st. Rode from Stockbridge home to my house. The air was clear and calm, but as cold as I ever felt it. I was in great danger of perishing with the extremity of the season." But he says, that, after returning from these expeditions, which he never enjoys, because intercourse with the world makes him less familiar with Heaven, as soon as he returns a new scene opens upon his mind. His heart grows so warm in devotion, that he is unwilling to give the time to sleep. "In the evening, though tired, yet was enabled to continue instant in prayer for some time. Spent the time in reading, meditation, and prayer, till the evening was far spent. Was grieved that I could not watch unto prayer the whole night. But, blessed be God, Heaven is a place of continual and unceasing devotion, though earth is dull." When we know, that all this was the simple and unaffected expression of his feelings, it is difficult to imagine one who should carry into his sacred calling more of the spirit of the apostle and the martyr.

Brainerd had not been many months at Kanaumeeek, before he saw that he might be more usefully employed at some more distant station. The Indians there were few in number, and greatly harassed by the avarice and extortion of their white neighbors, which tended neither to make them open to instruction, nor to give them very exalted ideas of Christian morality. Besides, in case of such wars as took place not



many years after, they were in the highway by which the French and their savage allies descended on New England; and, in case of such invasion, they must either be exterminated or take part with the enemy, and, when the wave of war rolled back, they must be the victims on whom the white men wreaked their revenge. It occurred to Brainerd, that, if they could be prevailed on to remove to Stockbridge, they would be under the care of an excellent pastor, who knew their wants, their manners, and their language, and would do all that could be done for their improvement and their welfare; while the same measure would release him from his engagements, and leave him at liberty to go, not to an easier station, but to some of the other tribes, who enjoyed no such means of instruction.

President Edwards, to whom we are indebted for most of the facts in Brainerd's history, tells us, that he has omitted all particulars relating to his manner of instruction and his intercourse with the Indians, for brevity's sake, which is to be regretted, especially as much space is occupied with particulars not more important. All we know is, that the change was owing to Brainerd's representations, and shows how great was his influence among them; since the Indians, though their habits of life compel them to be rovers, have no taste for such removals; and, when they have once built their wigwams and broken up the ground for their corn, they form local attachments in a very short time, and are not easily induced, except by the pressure of necessity, to give up their settlement for another, even if it is in all respects a better home.

As soon as this result was known in the country, some parishes, which were well acquainted with Brainerd's reputation, were anxious to secure the ministrations of so faithful and devoted a servant of the cross. The town of East Hampton, on Long Island, was foremost in its application; and for a short time he seems to have hesitated whether or not to decline it. The place was large, pleasant, and had the attraction of being entirely unanimous in its invitation to him. These, however, were not its recommendations to his mind. He was more influenced by certain difficulties attending the station, which he thought he might be better able to deal with, than a minister who should go to them with a less general welcome. Before he had made up his mind upon the subject, he received another application from the town of Millington, in Connecticut, a place not far from his native village. This would have placed him near his early friends. But he never seems to have given the least consideration to such advantages; he was governed solely by a sense of duty. He therefore did not hesitate to decline this last invitation, and soon after came to a decision respecting the former; leaving such places for other men to fill, while he adhered to his original purpose of giving his life to a service which was so difficult and disheartening, that the laborers were very few; so few, that, if one deserted it, his loss could not be repaired. The parish at Long Island pursued their object for a considerable time; urging, and with much reason, that he might be useful to them for many years, while he would soon sink under the hardships of his mission, as the winter he had

passed at Kanaumeeek abundantly proved.

But having once determined what his duty required, he was not to be moved. As soon as his health would permit, he went to New York; but so much exhausted was he by sickness, that he was several days upon the way. In his Diary he mentions his disease as a thing of little moment, while he dwells at length upon the changes in his own feelings, in which as usual, there was a small portion of sunshine flashing at intervals through days of heavy gloom. In New Jersey he met the Commissioners, and arranged the plan of his future operations. Immediately after, he became so ill that he could not set out on his return for several days. It is a little singular that it should not have occurred to them, that to send him on such a mission was like employing him to dig his own grave. That he was not unaware of his own condition, appears from his words. "Eternity appeared very near; my nature was very weak, and seemed ready to be dissolved; the sun declining, and the shadows of evening drawing on apace. Oh, I longed to fill the remaining moments all for God!"

The manner in which he speaks of New York shows how entirely his mind was engrossed with a single pursuit. That city had then begun to develop its great natural advantages, and its business was perhaps as active and surprising to one unused to such scenes, as it would be now; though it was surpassed in extent and numbers by many other cities in the country. But nothing of this kind excited the least attention in him. The only thing he was struck with in New York was, that he found it impossible to be in solitude and silence there, and of course he could not be happy. He writes, "Oh, it is not the pleasures of the world that can comfort me. If God deny his presence, what are the pleasures of the city to me? One hour of sweet retirement where God is, is better than the whole world."

Though his residence among the Indians at Kanaumeeek had been short, he had gained their confidence and affection. He parted from them with great reluctance; and they had been so fully convinced of his entire disinterestedness, and his deep interest in their welfare, that they were unwilling to let him go. He addressed them with warmth and feeling. Though he could not speak their language, the expression of such emotions hardly needs an interpreter, and cannot be misunderstood. He had so much to say to them, that he hardly knew when to leave off speaking. On the 1st of May, 1744, he disposed of his clothes and books at Kanaumeeek, that he might travel without incumbrance to his southern station. One would suppose that books were an article not much in demand in so retired a place, particularly the works of ancient divines. This, however, would be a hasty conclusion. For among the hardy men, who were then subduing the forests of New York and New England, there were few who were not furnished with some volumes of the kind, with which they solaced themselves upon the Sabbath, and in other seasons of rest. They would go from far to seize such an opportunity of adding to these treasures, which, if they did but little to enlighten their minds, answered a good

purpose by keeping up a reverence for sacred subjects in their own minds and their children's.

Having thus broken up his establishment, and left the house, which he had built with so much labor, to chance inhabitants, he returned to Stockbridge at the close of a laborious and exciting day. He records that he rode by night in a heavy rain, and was so completely disordered that he was continually throwing up blood. Such was his preparation for a new campaign!

### **Chapter III**

*He goes to the Delaware. — His Ordination. — His bodily Weakness. — His Influence with the Indians. — Journey to New England. — Visit to the Susquehanna River. — Some Impression made. — Journey to the East. — To Philadelphia. — To the Susquehanna. — Original Letter. — Difficulties in the Way of a Missionary to the Indians.*

Though Brainerd's resolution never failed, he had not enthusiasm enough to take a cheerful view of the prospect before him. He felt as if he had done but little at his former residence to advance the objects of his mission, and he dared not hope for better success in any other region, since he ascribed his failure to himself and not to the difficulties of the undertaking. In truth, it was partly owing to himself; his thoughts were too constantly turned within; always employed in watching his own rising and falling emotions, he was not so well fitted for communication with the outward world, as some other men of less intellectual ability, who were more familiar with mankind. That he did not flatter himself with excessive hope, appears from his Journal; "Spent much of my time, while riding, in prayer, that God would go with me to Delaware. My heart was sometimes ready to sink with the thoughts of my work, and of going alone into the wilderness, I knew not where. Still, it was comfortable to think, that others of God's children had wandered about in dens and caves of the earth; and Abraham, when he was called to go forth, went out, not knowing whither he went. Oh that I might follow after God!"

On the 8th of May he began his journey, and travelled to Fishkill, a distance of forty-five miles; thence, crossing the Hudson River, he went to Goshen, in the Highlands. There he struck across the country, through the woods, in a course which led him through a desolate and hideous region, in which were very few settlements, and suffered much from fatigue and hardship on the way. Occasionally he encountered some tribe of Indians, and attempted to explain the principles of Christianity to those uninterested hearers. But no employment nor weariness could prevent his feeling the utter loneliness of his situation. He was fond of solitude; but the ghastly desolation of the wilderness seemed to go to his very soul.

The Sabbath had always been a day of happiness to him, wherever it was passed; but the first Sabbath of his journey was spent among some Dutch and Irish people, about twelve miles from the Fork of the

Delaware. In the morning he rose early, feeling miserable after this fatigue and exposure, and hoping that the rest of the Sabbath would restore him. But the day seemed the most dreary that ever dawned; the children were all at play; no one appeared to keep it holier than any other day; no one had the least sympathy with him or his pursuits; no one was disposed to listen to his words, however affectionate they might be. He felt like a "creature banished from the sight of God." After addressing himself to the Irish, some of them seemed to be serious and inclined to pay attention to the subject; but he felt himself, as he says, "loose from all the world. I seemed lonesome and disconsolate, as if banished from all mankind and bereaved of all that is called pleasurable in the world; but I appeared to myself so vile and unworthy, it seemed fitter for me to be here than anywhere."

After remaining in this place about two weeks, he was required by his instructions to present himself at Newark to receive ordination as a minister of the Gospel. On the 11th of June the Presbytery were assembled, and, according to the usual practice, he preached before them, and afterwards passed through an examination. Mr. Pemberton, in a letter to the Society in Scotland that employed him, states, that "Mr. Brainerd passed through his ordination trials to the universal approbation of the Presbytery, and appeared uncommonly qualified for the work of the ministry. He seems armed with a great deal of self-denial, and animated with a noble zeal to propagate the Gospel among those barbarous nations, which have dwelt so long in the darkness of heathenism." The writer of this letter preached at the ordination. Brainerd's mind was deeply impressed with the solemnity of the service and the obligations which it enjoined. The first day after this ceremony was spent in writing a communication to Scotland, respecting his mission. The next day he went forward, or rather attempted to go; in the morning he was prevented by pain; in the afternoon he resolved not to be hindered by so slight an obstacle; but, when he endeavored to go, his pain increased so as almost to deprive him of reason, and he was obliged to submit to medical restrictions. He found no relief from his distress for three days. He was not able to walk till the Monday after, and this he considered as a signal for his departure. Accordingly on Tuesday he mounted his horse, and set out on his laborious journey; but it seems to have been a happy one, for, while his feebleness continued, so that at the end of his three days' ride he was hardly able to walk, he felt lighter in spirit than for a long time before. He seems to have had a presentiment at times, that the wish of his soul would be gratified at last, and that he should accomplish something after all his labors. He says that midnight itself was not so dark as the prospect of converting the Indians. Still, though impossible to men, it was possible to the Most High; and, relying on the confidence that the work was his, he "could not but hope to accomplish something glorious among them."

Encouraged by this occasional hope, he went forth resolutely to his post, and was soon rewarded by observing more attention among them

than ever he had witnessed before. It could not be, that with his eloquence and feeling he should speak to them entirely in vain; for, observant and suspicious as their intercourse with the whites had made them, they could not but see that he had no personal object to accomplish by coming among them. His appearance showed that his days were numbered. The contrast between his bodily weakness and his inward energy could not escape them, and they must have felt some curiosity to know what it was that could strengthen so feeble a frame to go through with such laborious duties. He says, "My nature, being very weak of late and much spent, was now considerably overcome. My fingers grew very feeble and somewhat numb; I could hardly stretch them out straight. When I alighted from my horse, I could scarcely walk; my joints all seemed to be loosed. But I felt abundant strength in the inner man. God helped me much, especially in prayer, as I preached to the white people. Sundry of my poor Indians were so moved as to come to meeting, and one appeared much concerned."

Soon after he came among the Indians, they made preparations for an idolatrous feast and dance; a movement very unpropitious to the increase of his influence among them. This put him in anguish; he felt as if he ought to go and endeavor to prevent it, and yet did not see how it was possible for him to interfere on such an occasion. He withdrew into the woods for prayer; and, while engaged in devotion, he was in such agony, that the sweat ran down from him; when he arose, he could not walk; his frame seemed as if it would sink into the dust. The next day he rode to the place of their meeting, and found the Indians engaged in their riotous festival. Such was his influence among them, though almost a stranger, that he prevailed upon them to break up their noisy assembly, to leave their unfinished revels, and to sit quietly to hear him preach the Gospel. In the afternoon they again assembled, and heard him with more attention than before. Surely, if he could prevail upon them thus, he had reason to hope for some success.

While he remained at this Irish settlement, he rode round in all directions to preach to the Indians, enduring great fatigue both of body and mind. The greatest difficulty in his way seemed to be the fear of the Powows, who hold the Indians in slavish subjection by means of their wild and barbarous superstitions. Brainerd openly defied these men, telling them to do their worst to injure him; then he showed the Indians, that though he had challenged and provoked these great sorcerers, they had not power to harm a hair of his head. But their credulity is not to be overcome. Heckewelder saw a public experiment made upon a friend of his, who in like manner defied these enchanters. After trying all kinds of incantation to work upon his fears, but without success, the Powows declared that their charms had not the usual effect upon him, because he ate so much salt with his food; and the implicit faith of the tribe was not shaken in the least, even by this public exposure.

It was not long before he was worn out with his constant exertions. On

the 5th of August, which was the Sabbath, he preached to the Indians twice, though he was obliged to address them without rising, being wholly unable to stand. "At night, was extremely weak, faint, sick, and full of pain. And thus I have continued much in the same state that I was in last week; unable to engage in any business, frequently unable to pray in the family. I am obliged to let all my thoughts and concerns run at random; for I have neither strength to read, meditate, or pray. I seem to myself like a man that has all his estate embarked in one small boat, unhappily going adrift down a swift torrent. The poor owner stands on the shore, and looks, and laments his loss. But alas! though my all seems to be adrift, and I stand and see it, I dare not lament; for this sinks my spirits more, and aggravates my bodily disorders. I am forced therefore to divert myself with trifles; although at the same time I am afraid, and afterwards feel as if I was guilty of the misimprovement of time. And often my conscience is so exercised about this miserable way of spending time, that I have no peace; though I have no strength of mind or body to improve it to better purpose. Oh that God would pity my distressed state!"

As soon as he was able to mount his horse, he left his place of residence at the Fork of the Delaware, and took a journey to New England. He was absent about three weeks, great part of which was taken up with travelling several hundred miles over roads which did not permit those in health, much less invalids, to move with expedition. The moment he gained a little strength he returned, and, as soon as he reached his home, made preparations for a journey to the river Susquehanna, where were Indians who were embraced in the plan of his mission. He went in company with another clergyman, an interpreter, and two of his Delaware Indians, over the most rough and dangerous travelling that any of the party had ever seen. There seemed to be no level ground; all was rocks, valleys, and mountains. In one of these passes his beast fell under him, and was so much injured that he was compelled to kill her to put her out of pain. He himself was not injured; but the party was compelled to encamp in the woods, which, in the month of October, affords no attractive lodgings. By kindling a fire and covering themselves with bushes, they contrived to pass the night without suffering. The next day he proceeded on foot, and at night encamped as before. Instead of being depressed by the accident, he was full of praise for his preservation from injury in so dangerous a fall.

After a journey of three days, they arrived at the place of their destination on the Susquehanna river, where they found a settlement consisting of twelve Indian houses. When he had paid his respects to the king, he explained to him that he had come for the purpose of teaching Christianity. He made no objection, but gathered his Indians to listen. After attending to what he had to say, they consented to hear him the next day, though they were busy in preparing for a hunting expedition. So far from manifesting any disrespect, they even deferred the enterprise in question for the sake of hearing him; but he

complains, that, though they heard with candor, they made many objections to Christianity. He does not say what the objections were; but they were doubtless founded upon the treatment which the Indians received from those who professed to be governed by the Christian law. It is not to be expected, that Indians should make the necessary distinction between Christianity and Christians; and, if they receive injuries from those who bear the name of that religion, they will very naturally infer, either that the religion allows such immorality, or that it has not strength to prevent it; and neither view of the subject will tend to give them the feeling of reverence for Christianity. The conference produced no decided results; the Indians went forth to hunt, and the party returned, walking by day and encamping by night as before, much troubled by the howling of wolves which disturbed their rest, but feeling neither uneasiness nor fear.

A perpetual restlessness, owing, perhaps, to his disease, seemed to keep him in constant motion. Shortly after his return from the Susquehanna, he went to attend a meeting of the Presbytery in New York. President Edwards says that he entered upon this journey with great reluctance, fearing lest the diversions of it might be the means of cooling his religious affections. What these diversions were, may be inferred from a leaf of his Journal giving an account of his return. "November 22d. Came on my way from Rockciticus to the Delaware river; was very much disordered with a cold and pain in my head. About six, at night, I lost my way in the woods, and wandered over rocks and mountains, down hideous steeps, through swamps, and most dreadful and dangerous places. The night being dark, so that few stars could be seen, I was greatly exposed; I was much pinched with cold, and distressed with extreme pain in my head, attended with sickness at my stomach, so that every step I took was distressing to me. I had little hope, for several hours together, but that I must lie out in the woods all night. But, through the abundant goodness of God, I found a house about nine at night, and was hospitably entertained. Thus have I frequently been exposed; but God has hitherto preserved me, blessed be his name. Such fatigues and hardships serve to wean me more from the earth. Formerly, when I was thus exposed to cold and rain, I was ready to please myself with the thoughts of enjoying a comfortable house, a warm fire, and other outward comforts; but now these have less place in my heart."

For about a month, he continued constantly and warmly engaged in teaching, but not with uniform success. The power of old habit was too strong for him at times; when the season of the festival came, he could not prevail upon the Indians to give up their favorite indulgence. But he secured some little additional comfort for himself, by providing a small house like that at Kanaumeek, where he could be quiet and alone. It was near the habitation of a white family, with whom he had formerly resided, and with whom he still made it his practice to attend morning and evening prayers. By the last of December, he began to perceive that some impression had been made. As he preached to his

attentive audience, one aged man, apparently more than a hundred years old, was so much affected, that the tears ran down his eyes. The others, having been educated in profound reverence for old age, were moved at the sight; and, though they did not manifest much interest in the subject, it was evident that he came nearer their hearts than ever he had done before. These indications were not followed by any decided results; and, after spending the winter among them, he undertook a journey of several weeks in the spring, travelling through New Jersey, New York, and New England, in order to raise means for supporting a colleague in his mission, who should at once extend its usefulness and relieve the solitude of his labors. His biographer does not inform us whether he succeeded or not, nor indeed does he furnish us with any particulars; a reserve, for which we are but poorly compensated by whole pages of extracts descriptive of his feelings from day to day. Immediately after his return, he went to Philadelphia, to engage the good offices of the Governor. Having formed the plan of living at the Susquehanna settlements, it was necessary to ask permission of the chief of the Six Nations, who claimed the territory on which those Indians resided. It is impossible to tell whether there was any foundation for this pretence of vassalage; but, whether it was true or not, the Six Nations were powerful, and it was easier to gain their friendship, than to defy them. Here again his biographer says not a single word concerning his success, his adventures, or his return, unless we make an exception of the unimportant fact, that on his way, he lodged with one Mr. Beaty, a young Presbyterian minister. President Edwards says, that, in his work, many things are left out for brevity's sake, which would have been a great advantage to the history, if they had been inserted. Without disparagement to so great a man, we must say, that the better course would have been to have left out that which was of no advantage to the history, and to find room for particulars which every reader desires to know.

He did not allow himself time to rest when he returned from Philadelphia, before he went to the Susquehanna Indians, though he was well aware that he had not strength for the journey; not being able, according to his usual practice, to spend a day previously in fasting and prayer. But, without any confidence in his ability to go through, he set out with his interpreter, and encountered hardships even greater than he had expected from his former knowledge of the country. The first night he was compelled to lodge without shelter in the woods; the next day he was overtaken by a violent northeasterly storm, which chilled him so that he was ready to perish; having nothing to protect him from the rain, he could not stop, though he was hardly able to go, and therefore pressed forward, in hopes of finding some protection from the elements, without which, it seemed to him that he must die. But unfortunately their horses had eaten some poisonous herb the night before, which made them so sick that the riders were obliged to dismount and drive them. They were not, however, discouraged; and, as the night came on, they reached a deserted wigwam, which, in their circumstances, was more to them than a palace to a king. Thus



preserved, he was able to reach the Susquehanna River, on the borders of which he travelled more than a hundred miles, visiting several different nations, and attempting to preach the Gospel to them also. But they received it with a coldness, which quite discouraged him. The only satisfaction he had was an accidental meeting with some of his old hearers at Kanaumek, who welcomed him with great delight, and rejoiced in the opportunity of listening once more to his instructions. Under all discouragement he kept on, travelling about to preach by day, and at night lodging upon the ground, sometimes in the open air. At last he was struck with a fever, as he was riding in the forest. It came on with burning pain and a great discharge of blood, which reduced him so, that, had he not been near the hut of an Indian trader, he must have perished upon the ground. Here he had neither medicine, attendance, nor proper food; but after a time, he recovered, and was able to make his way homeward to the Fork of the Delaware, which he reached after the most difficult journey he had ever gone through. His body was almost worn out. After each recovery his strength was less than it was before; and, what was far more painful to him, his hopes of making an impression on the Indians grew less every day. He never had depended on his own exertions, and it seemed to him as if it was not ordained in the counsels of Heaven, that the hour was come.

A letter from Brainerd to Mr. Sergeant, which has never before been published, is here set before the reader. It was written just before the three journeys last mentioned.

"Woodbury, 15 March, 1745.

"Reverend and Honored Sir,

"In November last, I attempted to send you a line by Mr. Van Schaick, to inform you of the state of affairs with me, and actually wrote; but, he leaving New York an hour sooner than I expected, I was disappointed. And now I am in the greatest hurry, and can but hint at things I would otherwise be a little more particular in. As to my affairs here, I took a journey last October to Susquehanna, and continued there some time; preaching frequently to the Indians in a place called Opehollaupung, about fifteen or twenty miles down the river from the place you formerly visited. I supposed I had some encouragement among them, and I propose to visit them again about the middle of next month, with leave of Divine Providence, and think to spend most of the summer in those parts, if a door opens for it. There is one peculiar difficulty in the way; the lands these Indians live upon belong to the Six Nations, that is, the Mohawks, and it is something doubtful whether they will suffer a missionary to come among their tributaries, and on their lands. Yet this difficulty, we hope, may be removed by the influence of the Governor of Pennsylvania, who maintains a strict friendship with the Six Nations, whose assistance the Correspondents have endeavored to engage in this affair. May He, who has the hearts of all men in his hands, open their hearts to receive the Gospel.

"I have, this winter past, had more encouragement among the Indians

of the Delaware than ever before. A spirit of seriousness and concern has seemed to spread among them, and many of them have been very attentive and desirous of instruction. But I have also met with many discouragements, so that I scarcely know what to say. Yet I am not discouraged, but still hope that the day of Divine power shall come, when they shall become a willing people.

"I long to hear of your affairs; and especially how things are like to turn out with respect to your plan of a free boarding-school, which is an affair much upon my heart amidst all my heavy concerns, and I can learn nothing whether it is likely to succeed or not.

"I fully designed to have given something considerable for promoting that good design; but whether I shall be able to give any thing, or whether it will be my duty to do so under present circumstances, I know not. I have met with sundry losses lately, to the value of sixty or seventy pounds, New England money. In particular, I broke my mare's leg last fall in my journey to Susquehanna, and was obliged to kill her on the road, and prosecute my journey on foot, and I can't get her place supplied for fifty pounds. And I have lately moved to have a colleague or companion with me, for my spirits sink with my solitary circumstances. And I expect to contribute something to his maintenance, seeing his salary must be raised wholly in this country and can't be expected from Scotland.

"I sold my tea-kettle to Mr. Jo. Woodbridge, and an iron kettle to Mr. Timothy Wood-bridge, both which amounted to something more than four pounds, which I ordered them to pay to you for the school. I hope you will use the money that way; if not, you are welcome to it for yourself. I desire my tea-pot and bed-ticking may be improved to the same purpose.

"As to my blankets, I desired Mr. Woodbridge to take the trouble of turning them into deer skins. If he has not done it, I wish he would, and send the skins to Mr. Hopkins, or, if it might be, to Mr. Bellamy. Please to remember me to Madam and all friends.

"I am, Sir, in greatest haste,  
"Your obedient humble servant,  
"David Brainerd."

This letter is thus given at length, because it is fully expressive of the direct and simple-hearted character of the writer. It shows, that he was never so much wrapt up in his own plans, as not to feel a quick and active sympathy for those of others. While it makes manifest how slender his own resources were, it is an eloquent proof of his readiness to do and to sacrifice all in his power to aid the great cause which he had at heart.

Brainerd, in his work called "Divine Grace Displayed," gives a minute account of his difficulties and discouragements, which it is necessary to know in order to do justice to his strength of heart. His charge, as a

pastor of the Indians, required constant attention; they were so entirely destitute of all that common information, which usually forms a preparation for receiving further instruction, their minds were so unaccustomed to any kind of simply intellectual action, and their tastes and habits so unpropitious to reflection, that it was only by explaining, again and again, that he could bring them to the most distant comprehension of Christian truths. Besides, they were a spiritless and vacant race, except when under the influence of some strong excitement; at such times they thought and acted with energy and decision, while at other times they were wholly destitute of animation. To excite them to a deep interest in Christianity was no easy thing; for how could they be made to concern themselves for the future existence, who did not even look forward to the next day? In addition to his preaching, which did little more than call their attention to the subject, he was obliged to catechize and converse with them day after day. Beside the spiritual charge, he had all the secular concerns of his people on his hands. He was expected to arrange all their differences, to provide for their wants, to attend to their affairs of every description, like a guardian of so many children. It may be easily conceived, that, while he was compelled to bear this burden, and at the same time to ride four thousand miles a year for the necessary purposes of his mission, his duty was quite as extensive as one man can be expected to do.

Unfortunately this constant activity prevented his learning the Indian language, and thus deprived him of the best means of influence over his people. For, as has been said, any interpreter is a poor substitute for personal communication; and the one whom he employed, though worthy enough in other respects, was obstinately incredulous as to his ever making any impression on the Indians. Of course, Brainerd's most earnest appeals came from his mouth cold, lifeless, and unaffecting. After a time, however, this difficulty was happily removed; the interpreter, who was a man fifty years old, intelligent, and familiar with the Indian character, became himself deeply interested in Christianity. He then addressed his own race in a different tone; with an earnestness and feeling, which he had never manifested before. This was the beginning of Brainerd's success.

He found it extremely difficult to bring the Indians to any right understanding of the doctrines which he endeavored to teach. They had their own religious ideas, believing in the Great Spirit, and a future state of rewards and punishments; beyond their rude conceptions of these things, they could hardly be made to go. He said, that "it was next to impossible to bring them to any rational conviction that they were sinners by nature, and that their hearts were corrupt and sinful." They could not conceive of being a sinner, without having done wrong. He said also, that it was "extremely difficult to give them any just notion of the undertaking of Christ in behalf of sinners; of his obeying and suffering in their room and stead, in order to atone for their sins; and of their being justified by his righteousness imputed to

them." They could not conceive why God might not forgive without it; nor, if all deserved to suffer, what justice there was in one's suffering for the whole. Many other questions were proposed to him, to which he found it hard to make any satisfactory reply. Such, for example, as this; how the Indians came to be dark-colored, if they descended from the same parents with white men; and how it happened, that, supposing all to have come from one place, the Indians only should have removed to this country, and all the white men remained behind.

The manners of the Indians also presented a serious obstacle to a missionary educated in the refinements of civilized life. To go and talk with them in their houses, filled as they were with smoke and cinders, and disgusting with all manner of filth, gave him sick head-aches and other disorders. The children would cry at pleasure when he was speaking, and their mothers would take no care to quiet them. Some would be playing with their dogs, others attending to some household business, without the least regard to him; and this, not out of disrespect, but only because they had never been trained to better manners. These things often oppressed him so much, that he gave over in despair, believing that it would not be possible for him ever to address an Indian again.

Such are a few of the difficulties which he had to encounter; and all these were increased a thousand fold by the agency of white men. Not only by the infamy, which their frauds and extortions associated with the name of Christian in the minds of the Indians, but by the direct resistance which they offered to elevating a race, whom they considered as their prey. So it has always been with white men on the Indian borders; all that is vile in them is brought out in bold relief; they are apt to be strangers to conscience, humanity, and shame; so that one who regards character alone, asks, Which is the savage, and which the civilized man? The question is easily answered.

## **Chapter IV**

*His Preaching at Crossweeksung. — His Success. — The general Impression produced. — His enforcing the Marriage Law. — The Baptism of the Converts. — His Visit to the Susquehanna. — Festival at Juneauta. — Some peculiar Customs. — Singular Description of a Powow. — An Indian Reformer. — Brainerd's Return. — He relieves the Indians from their Debt. — Change in the Habits of the Community. — Their Removal to Cranberry. — His last Visit to the Susquehanna Indians.*

Up to this time, Brainerd, though he had exerted himself diligently and given great attention to every favorable indication among the people of his charge, could not disguise from himself, that he had met with very little success. But now the scene began to change; a new and surprising interest in the subject began to prevail among the Indians. The desponding took courage; the incredulous began to wonder what the change could mean; those, who had least faith in such reforms, could not help admitting that here was one such as they had never expected to see; and the missionary, who had so long labored against hope,

rejoiced in the assurance of gathering a harvest where few had been able to reap before him. It was doubly welcome, because so long deferred; it came just in time to cheer the setting of his day.

Hearing that there were Indians at a place called Crossweeks or Crossweeksung, in the province of New Jersey, about eighty miles from his station at the Fork of the Delaware, Brainerd determined to visit them, to ascertain if they could be induced to receive Christianity. He found them living in small settlements, at a considerable distance from each other, which made it difficult to address them; but, when he made the attempt with the few whom he could assemble, he found them well disposed to listen, and not full of cavils and objections like most other Indians. They were indeed only a few women and children; but they readily undertook to travel twelve or fifteen miles, at their own suggestion, to give notice to their companions, that a preacher would address them on the next day.

They assembled to the number of seven or eight, and this audience, like the former, listened with fixed attention, making no objections to any of his assertions. For a week he preached to them once each day, their number and attention continually increasing; and then they requested him, in order that they might improve the time that he was with them, to speak to them twice a day. To this he cheerfully consented, though the effort was too great for his strength. They were so engaged in the subject which he presented to them, that they took no care for their own subsistence, and would have suffered, had it not been for some deer which came near the place in which they were assembled, and were immediately secured. After preaching ten days, his hearers amounted to fifty, all of whom seemed animated by one spirit of concern for the welfare of their souls.

He was soon overcome by this constant effort, and, much against his will, was compelled to leave them, to restore himself by visiting some of his friends in New Jersey. They all expressed the most anxious desire to see him again, and promised that they would gather many more to hear him when he returned. One woman told him with many tears, that she wished God would change her heart; and an old man, who had been one of their chiefs, wept bitterly with concern for his future salvation. Under these circumstances, he was very reluctant to leave them, fearing lest their good impressions should die away; but it was necessary for him to go. It appears from his Journal, that he was so animated by the prospect now before him, that his melancholy entirely left him; he was more free from depression than he had been for years.

As soon as he could leave the Indians on the Delaware, he returned, and arrived at Crossweeksung on the 1st of August, 1745. He was received with enthusiasm by all his former hearers and many more. He preached to them as before, and almost all present were dissolved in tears. In the evening they gave some proof of the change in their feelings, by refusing to taste their usual food till they had sent for him

to come and ask a blessing upon it; which he did, reminding them of their idolatrous festivals and other unworthy practices, from which Christianity was now to save them.

On the 5th of August he addressed them again, and found that they were in a state of increasing anxiety; the interpreter was obliged to be with them day and night, to answer the thousand questions which they were constantly proposing. The next day, he says, "they seemed eager of hearing; but there appeared nothing very remarkable, except their attention, till near the close of my discourse, and then divine truths were attended with a surprising influence, and produced a great concern among them. There were scarce three in forty who could refrain from cries and bitter tears. They all, as one, seemed in an agony of soul to obtain an interest in Christ; and the more I discoursed of the love and compassion of God in sending his Son to suffer for the sins of men, and the more I invited them to come and partake of his love, the more their distress was aggravated, because they felt themselves unable to come. It was surprising to see how their hearts seemed to be pierced with the tender and melting invitations of the Gospel, when there was not one word of terror spoken to them." "Most were much affected, and many in great distress; some few could neither go nor stand, but lay flat on the ground, as if pierced at heart, crying incessantly for mercy. Several were newly awakened; and it was remarkable, that, as fast as they came from remote places round about, the spirit of God seemed to seize them with concern for their souls."

Brainerd stood amazed at the scene that was passing under his eyes. He could compare it to nothing but to some mighty deluge, that bears down with insupportable weight and sweeps before it whatever stands in its way. Almost all persons of all ages were struck with concern together, and hardly one was able to withstand the force of the impression. Old men and women, who had been abandoned for years, and children of six or seven years of age, were in the same distress. A chief man among them, who thought highly of himself because he knew more than most of the Indians, and was proud of his moral character, came forward to humble himself and confess that he was miserably unworthy. One of their Powows, the class who were most hardened against Christianity, because it threatened to destroy their influence, cried for mercy with many tears, lamenting that he could not be more anxious when he saw that his danger was so great.

Brainerd gives a striking description of this singular and imposing scene. "There was now a great mourning, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon. They were universally praying and crying for mercy, in every part of the house and many out of doors, and numbers could neither go nor stand. Their concern was so great, each one for himself, that none seemed to take any notice of those about them, but each prayed as freely for themselves, and I am apt to think, were, to their own apprehension, as much retired as if they had been alone in the desert; or, I believe rather, that they thought nothing about any but themselves and their own state, and so were praying every one apart,

though all together."

Some of the whites in the neighborhood, who heard what was passing, came to ridicule and resist him, but they too were affected like all the rest. There were some scoffers among the Indians, who came with the same design. One Indian girl, who never heard that she had a soul, and knew nothing about the subject, came to see what was going on; she called at Brainerd's lodgings on her way, and, when he told her that he intended to preach to the Indians, she laughed at him with disdain. She attended the service, however; and, before he had proceeded far in his address, he says that she was like one struck through with a dart, crying out in anguish and wholly unable to stand. During the service, and long after it was over, she lay on the ground, refusing to speak to any one, and praying in a low voice. From his knowledge of the language, he could distinguish these words; "Have mercy upon me, and help me to give you my heart."

Some incidents occurred, which he apprehended would do something to change the direction of their feeling. It was admitted among the Indians, that a man had a perfect right to put away one wife and to take another at pleasure. One person, who had done this, was troubled in his mind respecting it, doubting whether it was right, though it was the prevailing custom of his country. Brainerd saw, that his determination of this case of conscience might prejudice the minds of many against a self-denying religion. But he was not the man to make any compromise with his duty. He therefore showed the Indian the Christian rule respecting marriage; and, when it appeared on inquiry, that the woman had given him no sufficient cause to desert her, and that she was willing to forgive his unkindness, he was told that it was his indispensable duty to give up the wife he had last taken, and to receive the former to his dwelling again. This was against his inclination; but he complied at once, when he was assured that it was right; and the other Indians, when the matter was made known to them, admitted that the Christian rules respecting marriage were far better than their own.

The interest was sustained without abatement. Nearly two weeks after his return, he says, "God is powerfully at work among them! True and genuine convictions of sin are daily promoted in many instances, and some are newly awakened from time to time. I never saw the work of God appear so independent of means as at this time. I discoursed to the people, and spoke what, I suppose, had a proper tendency to promote convictions, and God's manner of working upon them appeared so entirely supernatural and above means, that I could scarce believe he used me as an instrument, or what I spake as means of carrying on his work. I seemed to have nothing to do but to stand still and see the salvation of God. I saw no room to attribute any part of this work to any created arm."

The ceremony of baptizing these converts was simple and striking. It was performed under the open sky, in presence of their native woods

and waters; himself, the young apostle, intellectual and delicate, with the red seal of consumption on his cheek, standing in the midst of these wild and hardy forms, which looked up to him as to a superior being. Many came from far and near to behold the scene, which was certainly as impressive as any that was ever witnessed in the land. When the spectators were gone, and the pastor was left alone with his people, he reminded them of the solemn obligations they were under, of the danger of dishonoring their profession, and the need of constant watchfulness and devotion to prevent their good resolutions from dying away. "They then took each other by the hand, with tenderness and affection, as if their hearts were knit together, while I was discoursing to them; and all their deportment was such toward each other, that a serious spectator might justly be excited to cry out with admiration, 'Behold, how they love one another!' Sundry of the other Indians, at seeing and hearing these things, were much affected and wept bitterly, longing to be partakers of the same joy."

The number of those who were seriously impressed by his instructions was ninety-five persons, both old and young, not all baptized, but all engaged with the same earnestness in the duties of devotion. When he had spent three weeks with them, he reminded them that there were others who had claims upon his services, and to whom he was bound to go. He wished them, therefore, to join with him in prayer on the last day of his visit, that the divine blessing, without which he could do nothing, might attend him, and open the hearts of other Indians to receive his words. They readily consented, and remained with him till the evening, when he bade them an affectionate farewell and set out on his journey as the sun was going down. He was afterwards assured by his interpreter, that they continued in the place where he left them, without being conscious of the flight of time, till, going out from the house, they saw that the morning star was risen and the first beams of daybreak kindling in the sky!

When he returned to the Delaware, some of his converts went with him, and his Indian audience, and the whites who attended, listened with more seriousness than ever before; but, when he went to the Susquehanna, a different scene awaited him, and seemed to bring back the gloom which of late had been so happily dispelled. The place of his destination was an Indian village called Shaumoking, about one hundred and twenty miles westward from the Fork of the Delaware. It lay partly on the east and partly on the west side of the river, and partly on a large island in it, and was larger than most of the Indian settlements, being curiously made up of people from three different tribes, whose dialect was wholly unintelligible to each other. They amounted in all to about three hundred, and were considered the wildest and most degraded Indians in the country. Brainerd says of them, that Satan seems in an eminent manner to have fixed his seat in their town.

They received him with sufficient kindness in their way, but he had no influence over them. After encamping on the ground for three nights,



he needed rest; but a dance and revel were going on in the house where he was compelled to lodge; and, though one of their number was sick in it, and his life endangered by their wild uproar, all Brainerd's remonstrances could not induce them to remove nor lessen their rejoicings. The next day he visited the Delaware king, and spent some time in endeavoring to render him favorably disposed towards Christianity. He seemed willing to be instructed, though not much interested in what was said to him. Brainerd was in hopes of having his influence exerted in favor of religion. As for his subjects, they were in such a state of perpetual intoxication, that it was impossible to collect an audience among them, however small. The next day, he was fortunate enough to find one part of the village where they had not shared in the orgies of the preceding festival. Fifty hearers were collected, and listened with encouraging attention; but all his hopes were destroyed by a hunting expedition, which took place immediately after, and left the town almost deserted. His Diary at this time, which was, probably for want of ink, written with the juice of some berry which he found in the woods, was entirely obliterated; but his public Journal gives an account of his movements from day to day.

Travelling down the river, he came to an island, named Juneauta, where he had been well received on former occasions; but now they were less cordial, it might be, from the circumstance that they were making preparations for a great sacrifice, which they did with a sort of defiance to him. He could not collect them to speak to them on the subject of religion; and, if he had, his only interpreter was one of their own number, who could speak the English language, but had not the least interest in Christianity. His own interpreter, not being able to speak the dialect of these Indians, was not with him on this journey; so that he was entirely alone. He could do nothing more than wait for a favorable opportunity to address them.

In the evening they kindled an immense fire that threw its red light afar upon the stream and the woods that bordered it. Their religious service seemed to consist in dancing round it, with such outcries that they could be heard at the distance of miles in the stillness of the night. At times they threw in the fat of deer which they had prepared for the occasion, yelling fearfully as it rose in bright columns of flame. The missionary must have formed a singular contrast to this riotous assemblage, as he, the sole representative of civilization, stood gazing upon them, making no attempt to interfere, for it would not have been tolerated, but anxious to observe every thing in the ways and customs of a people, whom it was the first wish of his heart to reform. It was not till daybreak, that they sat down to eat the flesh of the deer, which they had prepared. He then crept into a little crib made for corn, and there slept, as he might, on the poles which formed the floor.

The next morning being the Sabbath, he made new attempts to gain a hearing; but he soon found, that they had other employment on their hands; for about noon they gathered their Powows, and set them at work to ascertain, by their incantations, what was the cause of a

disease, which at the time prevailed among them. In this business they were engaged for several hours, making all manner of wild outcries and contortions; sometimes stroking their faces with their hands, then reaching out their arms at full length with all their fingers spread, as if to keep something away; sometimes bowing down with an expression of deep reverence to some invisible presence, and then lying prostrate on the ground. Their motions were well calculated to give the impression to the Indians, that some unseen beings were present, and this probably was the reason of the fear with which they were regarded. In fact, Brainerd himself says, that it was impossible to witness them without sensations of horror and dread. He sat near them with his Bible in his hands, looking on them with that expression of pity, which their ignorance could not but inspire.

The Indians of this island had been much acquainted with the whites; they had many of them learned the English language, and, as a matter of course, had acquired a taste for drunkenness and other civilized vices. This was the reason of their being so unpromising subjects of instruction. They differed in some of their customs from other Indians. When one of them died, the body was deposited in a close crib above ground for about a year, till the flesh was almost gone; then the bones were scraped and washed, and afterwards buried with their usual forms. Their medical practice consisted in striking their hands together over the sick, and other means of conjuration on which they relied, without resorting much to outward or internal applications; this was apt to remove the disease and the patient with it; but the confidence of the Indians in it was unbounded.

Brainerd had the opportunity of visiting many different tribes of Indians, each having some peculiarities in which they differed from the rest; but he says, that, of all the sights he ever saw among them or anywhere else, nothing ever excited such images of terror in his mind or came so near what he imagined of the infernal powers, as the appearance of one of these sorcerers, who had the reputation of a reformer among them, being anxious to restore the ancient purity of their religion. His pontifical vesture was a coat of bearskin, with the hair outside, falling down to his feet; his stockings were of the same material; and his face was covered with a hideous mask painted with different colors, and attached to a hood of bear-skin, which was drawn over his head. He held in his hand an instrument made of a dry tortoise-shell, with corn in it, and fitted to a long handle. As he came up to Brainerd, he beat a tune with this rattle and danced with all his might, suffering no part of his form, not even his fingers, to appear. Brainerd tells us, that when this figure came up to him, he could not but shrink from it in dismay, though he knew that the sorcerer had no hostile feelings or intentions. If it were so with him, it is easy to imagine how the credulous Indians must be affected.

At his invitation, Brainerd went into his house with him, and conversed much on the subject of religion. Some parts of his doctrine the sorcerer seemed to approve, but from others he strongly dissented. He said, that

the Great Spirit had taught him his religion, which he did not mean to abandon, but on the contrary wished to find some who would join him in sincerely professing it; for the Indians were grown so corrupt and degenerate, that he could no longer endure them. He believed that there must be good men somewhere, and he intended to go forth and travel in order to find them. Formerly he had acquiesced in the prevailing corruption; but, several years before, his spirit had so revolted from it, that he had left the presence of men and dwelt alone in the woods. While he was in solitude, the Great Spirit had taught him, that, instead of deserting men, he ought to remain with them and endeavor to do them good. He then immediately returned to his associates, and, since that time, he had no other feeling than that of friendship for all mankind. The Indians confirmed the account which he gave of himself; saying, that when strong drink came among them, he warned and implored them not to use it; and, when his counsels were disregarded, he would leave them in sorrow and go crying into the woods.

Brainerd's curiosity and interest were strongly engaged by this remarkable man, and he took great pains to explain to him the principles of Christianity. Sometimes while he was speaking, the sorcerer would interrupt him, saying, "Now, that I like;" or, "So the Great Spirit has taught me." It was evident that he had thought upon the subject and matured a religious system in his own mind, far more exalted than was conceived by any other of his people. But on one point, and a singular one, considering his profession, Brainerd was concerned to find him immovable. "He utterly denied the being of a Devil, and declared that there was no such a creature known among the Indians of old times, whose religion he supposed he was attempting to revive." But the missionary said of him, that he seemed to be sincere, honest, and conscientious in his own way; and he must confess, that there was something in the temper and disposition of the man, which looked more like true religion, than any thing he had ever seen among the Indians before.

This man, however well disposed, could not have aided Brainerd, since the Indians, though they feared and respected him, looked upon him as needlessly zealous on the subject of their religion, and took special care to keep out of his way. After several more ineffectual attempts, Brainerd was compelled to leave them without the least hope that any thing could be done. "Alas!" he says, "how deplorable is the state of the Indians on this river! The brief representations I have given of their notions and manners, is sufficient to show, that they are led captive by Satan at his will in the most eminent manner; and, methinks, might likewise be sufficient to excite the compassion and engage the prayers of pious souls for these their fellow-men, who sit in the regions of the shadow of death!"

It was a great relief to Brainerd to return to his parish at Crossweeksung. Speaking of the difference between the two, he says, "to be with the former seems like being banished from God and all his

people; to be with these is like being admitted into his family, and to the enjoyment of his divine presence." On a former occasion he had baptized twenty-five, and now fourteen were added to the number. One of them was fourscore years of age. Two others were men of fifty, who had been remarkable, even among the Indians, for their vices; both were drunkards and one had even committed murder. He was not ready to believe in the indications of their reform, and thought it not unlikely, that, if sincere at the moment, they might afterwards return to their corruption. But, after a probation of several weeks, he was convinced that their change was real, and therefore admitted them to the ranks of the believers. In all this work, Brainerd assures us, there were none of those disorders which have sometimes prevailed; no faintings, screaming, nor convulsions. Neither were there visions, trances, and inspirations, which he regarded as signs of spiritual pride; and all these effects were produced without resorting to terror, since the mildest invitations of Christianity suited his disposition best, and he never employed any other.

There were those, as has been stated, who set themselves in violent opposition to his work of reform, which threatened to put an end to the knavery and oppression they exercised upon the Indians. Part of their hostility was directed against himself; representing him as a Roman Catholic in disguise, a cry which, strange as it may seem, exposed him to considerable suspicion. But their most efficient plan was, to attract the Indians with ardent spirit, to entice them to drink, and to give them credit till they had run into debt far beyond their means to pay. This plan was resorted to on the present occasion. Finding that the Indians could not be alienated from their pastor, they brought in a heavy charge against them, and in default of payment laid claim to the lands on which they lived. Happily, Brainerd had it in his power to prevent this disgraceful consummation; he immediately advanced the sum of eighty-two pounds to discharge the debt, and for that time saved the community from destruction.

This work still went on successfully, and in some instances he succeeded beyond his warmest hopes. One of their sorcerers, an artful and able, but most profligate man, constantly attended his preaching, seeming at times a little affected, but generally exerting a powerful influence against him. So great was his influence and so bitter his opposition, that Brainerd confesses, "he often thought that it would be a great favor to the design of gospelizing the Indians, if God would take that wretch out of the world." But his resistance was more effectually removed; for, in listening to the missionary, his conscience was awakened, and he began to condemn himself bitterly for what he had done to shut out his countrymen from the light of truth.

He remained for months in a state of self-reproach, laying aside all his enmity to religion, but finding no relief from conscience and its up-braidings. At last, Brainerd says, he seemed to settle down into a state of calmness, but had no hope that he could ever be forgiven. His conversation was energetic and expressive. Brainerd asked him, how

he did? he answered, "'T is done, 't is done, 't is all done now;" on being asked what he meant, he said; "I can do nothing to save myself; 't is done for ever; I can do no more." Brainerd asked, if he could not do something more rather than suffer; he replied, "I can do nothing more; my heart is dead." We are assured, that not long after, he became a humble, devout, and affectionate Christian.

The whole number whom Brainerd baptized at Crossweeksung amounted to seventy-seven. But these were only a part of those who were seriously impressed; for, knowing the Indian character, and fearing lest they should relapse into indifference when the first excitement passed away, he was extremely careful never to suffer any one to proceed so far, till a probation of some length had given a reasonable hope of his persevering. In order to confirm the good beginnings he had made, he established a school among them, and was assured by the instructor that he never taught English children who learned so rapidly, most of them being able in the course of three or four months to read freely in the Scriptures. They all, old and young, were ambitious to be acquainted with the English language, and made much more proficiency in it than he did in the Indian; so that, while he was never able to address them in their own dialect, without an interpreter, most of his audience were able to understand him when he was preaching in his own tongue, as he frequently did to the white men who came to his meetings.

The whole character of the community was entirely changed, in this surprising reform. In their domestic connexions, they abandoned their old practices, and divorce became disused among them. Before the change, drunkenness was a prevailing evil; the Indian became intoxicated as often as he could procure the means; but, though, for the reason already suggested, it was more easy to procure the means than in former times, the instances were extremely rare in which any took advantage of it. Formerly, they were very indifferent to the debts which they had contracted; but afterward they considered it a sacred duty and used every effort to discharge them. They showed a strong disposition to assume the habits and manners of civilized life, giving up the precarious resource of hunting to secure a living from the soil; and throwing off the rough and disorderly bearing of the Indian, they became peaceable, gentle, and humane as cultivated men.

The land at Crossweeksung was not so favorable to a permanent residence as some other parts of the tract belonging to the Indians. Considering it of great importance that they should have the means of living among themselves, so as not to be exposed to the temptation of trading with white men, he proposed to them to remove to a place called Cranberry, at the distance of fifteen miles. They complied without hesitation, and early in the spring of 1746, proceeded to the spot and broke up the ground for the labors of the year. He could not be constantly with them for want of a shelter; he therefore remained in a little hut which he had built at Crossweeksung; but visited them often and superintended their operations. When he came among them, the

sound of the conch-shell called them from their labor, they joyfully assembled round him, and the ancient forest echoed with their morning and evening hymn.

He was now in much doubt as to what it was his duty to do. He seems to have understood the peculiar restlessness, which made a part of his nature. He had apprehended, he says, that it was the design of Providence that he should settle with the society which he had gathered, and enjoy the blessing of repose, which his health so much required; but he was never "quite pleased with the thought of being settled and confined to one place." At times, the prospect of having leisure for study and meditation, of a fixed abode, and of the attachments which a wanderer cannot easily form, presented itself to his mind with irresistible attraction; but, when he thought of gaining souls among the heathen, and extending the borders of the Saviour's kingdom, this prospect diminished in brightness "like stars before the rising sun." On the whole it seemed to him, that God had fitted him for a life of solitude and hardship, and that, never having enjoyed for any length of time the comforts of house and home, he was better able than others to renounce them. He therefore made up his mind, that this was the service to which he was called, and that he would be a hermit and pilgrim in the wilderness, to his dying hour.

It is easy to trace in his Diary a presentiment that the hour was not distant; he gives the texts from which he preached, and, though he says nothing concerning it, they seem chosen because so much in harmony with the state of his feelings. They were such as this; "Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem;" and this; "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more." But, feeble as he was, he felt it to be his duty to make one more attempt to do something for the Susquehanna Indians; accordingly, he set out in the month of September, a time too near the autumn for such exposure as his journey required. He went, and made the most earnest efforts to persuade them to receive Christianity. At one time, he seemed to have hopes of success; but these were soon darkened, and he was constrained to acknowledge, that the time to reach their hearts was not yet come. Meantime his health was fearfully endangered; sometimes he slept in cabins, where the smoke affected his lungs in such a manner, that he was obliged to go out into the air; sometimes he slept abroad, with neither fire nor shelter, protected only by some branches which he had broken from the pines; he was repeatedly drenched with thunderstorms and chilled with the damps of night. Every night he was tormented with profuse cold sweats, and by day he was perpetually discharging blood from his lungs. It was evident enough, that the weary frame was worn out and must soon be in the dust. But in all his sufferings, he breathes not a single prayer that his days might be lengthened, nor even that he might be spared from his visitations of pain. When he returned to his own people, he found them at that moment engaged in prayer. He went in among them, and poured forth his offering of praise. "Oh that my soul were truly

thankful for these renewed instances of mercy. Many hardships and distresses I endured in this journey; but the Lord supported me under them all.

## Chapter V

*His increasing Weakness. — Quotation from Mr. Shepard. — His persevering Labor. — His Removal to Cranberry. — Communion Service. — His Sickness at Elizabethtown. — His Farewell to the Indians. — His Journey to Northampton. — President Edwards' Account of Him. — Miss Edwards. — His Visit at Boston. — Attentions paid Him. — His Return to Northampton. — Circumstances of his Death. — His Example.*

The last journey to the Susquehanna seemed to put the finishing blow to the constitution of Brainerd. From that time, he was compelled to change his habits of life, not to prolong it, which now appeared hopeless, but to smooth his passage to the grave. Even his Diary, which he had formerly written under all circumstances, at home and abroad, in the cabins of Indians or by the light of the pine torch under the open sky, was now comparatively neglected; though he still took advantage of his short intervals of strength, to supply its deficiencies, and above all, to write down the history of his own heart.

But this was a dangerous indulgence, and a quotation from his biographer, President Edwards, which he applies to Brainerd, will show that he was of the same opinion. "Mr. Shepard, in his 'Select Cases resolved' under the first case says as follows; 'I have known one very able, wise, and godly, put upon the rack by him, who, envying God's people's peace, knows how to change himself into an angel of light; for it being his usual course, in the time of his health, to make a diary of his hourly life, and finding much benefit by it, he was in conscience pressed by the power and delusion of Satan, to make and take the same daily survey of his life in the time of his sickness; by means of which, he spent his enfeebled spirits, and cast on fuel to fire his sickness. Had not a friend of his convinced him of his erroneous conscience misleading him at that time, he had murdered his body, out of conscience to save his soul, and to preserve his grace. And do you think that these were the motions of God's Spirit, which like those locusts, Rev. ix. 9, 10, had faces like men, but tails like scorpions and stings in their tails?'"

Though he was troubled all day with a violent cough and fever, and kept awake at night by violent pain, he still thought it incumbent on him to discharge his duty to his people. He discoursed to them, sitting in his chair, with his audience gathered round him. Every day, he mounted his horse, with the assistance of others, and rode over to the new settlement, about two miles distant from the place of his abode, to direct the movement of the Indians, who looked to him for direction in every thing, and were at that time employed in building a house in order that he might reside among them. Much of the time he was unable to walk, and he could never sit up through the whole day. But

in spirit he was calm and composed; his melancholy seemed to haunt him no longer; he says, "Whether I should ever recover or not seemed very doubtful; but this was a comfort to me, that life and death did not depend upon my choice. I was pleased to think that he who is infinitely wise had the determination of this matter; and that I had no trouble to consider and weigh things on all sides, in order to make the choice whether I would live or die. I had little strength to pray, none to write or read, and scarce any to meditate; but through divine goodness I could look death in the face, at all times with great composure, and frequently with sensible joy."

It seemed to be one of the greatest privileges to him to have a house of his own; and, in this state, he removed to the one which the Indians had made for him at Cranberry. This was the fourth of these humble habitations; the three first of which, at Kanaumeeek, Crossweeksung, and the Forks of the Delaware, he had reared with his own hands. Humble enough they were, in point of furniture and construction; still they were his own, and were always kept sacred for his use by the Indians, who seem to have been sufficiently sensible of their obligations to him, and disposed to manifest their gratitude by all the small means in their power.

When the Sabbath came, he attempted to preach; and by great exertion was enabled to speak about half an hour. He then fainted with exhaustion, and, when conveyed to his bed, lay in a burning fever, and almost delirious, for many hours. He says, it was the most distressing turn he had ever suffered; but he was entirely at rest in mind, because he had made his utmost efforts to speak for God, and knew he could do no more. When he had not strength to ride, he lay on his bed and discoursed to his people on the subject which lay nearest his heart.

When the Lord's supper was to be attended, he was carried by some of his faithful Indians to the place of their meeting, where he administered the ordinance to forty of them, together with several of the whites from the neighboring settlements, who had begun to consider it a privilege to go even from a distance to hear him. "It seemed to be a season of divine power and grace; and numbers rejoiced in God. My soul was refreshed, and my religious friends, of the white people, with me. After the sacrament, could scarcely get home, though it was but twenty rods. I was supported by my friends and laid on my bed, where I lay in pain till some time in the evening, and then was able to sit up and discourse with friends. O, how was this day spent in prayers and praises among my dear people! One might hear them all the morning before public worship, and in the evening till near midnight, praying and singing praises to God in one or other of their houses. My soul was refreshed, though my body was weak."

He soon became wholly unable to speak to his people, and, though extremely unwilling to leave them without a pastor, knowing how much they would be exposed, he felt that it was necessary to afford himself some relief, or, as he characteristically expresses it, "he was



compelled to consume some time in diversions." He was almost overcome by the interest that was manifested towards him; his friends came to see him, and he "was surprised and even ashamed" to find that some had come as many as thirty or forty miles for that purpose alone. He made his way toward Elizabethtown, intending to rest there a short time, and then prosecute his journey to New England; but he was disappointed. An hour or two after his arrival, he became so much worse, that he was compelled to take to his bed. A letter to his brother shows how he bore the trial.

"I had determined," said he, "to make you and my other friends in New England a visit this fall; partly from an earnest desire I have to see you and them, and partly with a view to the recovery of my health, which has, for more than three months past, been very much impaired. And, in order to prosecute this design, I set out from my own people about three weeks ago, and came as far as this place; where my disorder greatly increasing, I have been obliged to keep house ever since, until the day before yesterday; at which time I was able to ride half a mile, but found myself much tired with the journey. I have now no hopes of prosecuting my journey to New England this winter, supposing that my present state of health will by no means admit of it. Although I am by divine goodness much better than I was some time ago, yet I have not strength now to ride more than ten miles a day, even if the season were warm and fit for me to travel in. My disorder has been attended with several symptoms of consumption; and I have at times been apprehensive that my great change was at hand; yet, blessed be God, I have never been affrighted, but on the contrary, at some times, much delighted with a view of its approach. Oh, the blessedness of being delivered from the clogs of flesh and sense, from a body of sin, and spiritual death! Oh, the unspeakable sweetness of being translated into a state of complete purity and perfection!" So far from lamenting that he was thus separated from his friends, without the prospect of ever seeing them again in this world, so far from expressing a wish that his condition had been in any respect ordered otherwise, he breathes out a constant feeling, not merely of submission, but of gratitude and praise.

Though he did not consider his condition hopeless, it would appear from his own description of it, to have been sufficiently alarming. He had a violent cough and fever, together with arrasthmatic affection, and his power of digestion seemed entirely gone. He was aware that his friends believed that he could not live many days; but he thought so little of death, that his mind dwelt on other subjects, and particularly on his own corruption. He was often saying, "Oh, that it were with me as in months past!" He wished he could have been taken in the midst of his usefulness, and before he had been under the necessity "of trifling away time in diversions." He was often sunk and discouraged at the reflection, though one would have thought that such diversions as he could enjoy in such a state, need not sit heavy on the soul.

Towards the end of March, 1747, he recovered strength to ride a short distance; and the first use he made of it was to visit his afflicted

people, who had lamented his absence, and relieved his mind at times by sending good accounts of their condition to cheer his sick bed. The interview, however, to which he looked forward with so much interest, was a short one, and was his last. He visited them all in their houses, and gave each one the advice which he needed. Every one was melted to tears by his affectionate language; and they sorrowed most of all for the apprehension which they felt, though he did not speak it, that they should see his face no more. It was indeed an affecting separation. They looked on him, as the man to whom they were indebted for their elevation to light and happiness in this world, and their hope of salvation in another; and they feared, as he did, that after he had left them, they should degenerate in character, become the prey of their enemies, and at last be scattered to the winds.

He had some satisfaction in the circumstance that, at this time, his brother stepped forward to fill the place which he had left vacant, and to enter into his labors. No successor could have been so acceptable to him; and the Indians received him, not as a stranger, but a familiar friend. For some years he continued in the station, and the interests of the mission prospered under his care.

Though it was evident to all that Brainerd's work was done, he continued to accuse himself of inaction. He was very much depressed on account of his misimprovement of time. He longed to spend time in fasting and prayer, but "alas!" he says, "I had not strength for these things." He says, "March 28th; was taken this morning with violent pains. They were extreme and constant for several hours, so that it seemed impossible for me, without a miracle, to live for twenty-four hours in such distress. I lay confined to my bed the whole day, and in distressing pain all the former part of it; but it pleased God to bless means for the abatement of my distress. I was exceedingly weakened by this pain, and continued so for several days following; being exercised with a cough, fever, and nocturnal sweats. In this distressed case, death appeared agreeable to me. I looked on it as the end of toils, and an entrance into the place where the weary rest."

Though he could no longer go forth, as in former times, to meditate in the woods, and pray where there was no roof above him, the changes of nature still seemed to affect him as before. The beams of daybreak seemed to shine into his soul. "One morning, in secret meditation and prayer, the excellency and beauty of holiness, as a likeness to the glorious God, was so revealed to me, that I began to long earnestly to be in that world where holiness dwells in perfection." He rejoiced, that, in all his preaching, he had insisted, first and last, on that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"; for he saw, that "such a Godlike temper, in which the soul acts in a kind of concert with the Most High," and desires to be and to do every thing that is pleasing to Him, "this, and this only, will stand by the soul in a dying hour." In fact, through all his ministry, regeneration, progressive sanctification, supreme love to God, and living entirely to his glory, were the burden of his instructions; and, in this respect, he sees nothing that he would

alter, when he looks back from the borders of the grave.

In the month of April, he proceeded by slow stages toward New England, but was not able to reach Northampton, which appears to have been the chief place of his destination, till the 28th of May. Here, he was fortunate enough to enjoy the hospitality of President Edwards, who at that time was minister of the town. He had been acquainted with that eminent divine several years before, and had taken counsel from him in reference to his difficulty with the college at New Haven. Mr. Edwards had formed a high opinion of his excellence from his deportment on that occasion, and a more intimate acquaintance with him fully confirmed his former impressions. He bears emphatic testimony to Brainerd's domestic, social, and religious character. He found him remarkably instructive and improving, and at the same time singularly free, social, and entertaining in his conversation; thoroughly meek and unpretending, but manly and independent in giving his opinion.

So far from having any thing morose, demure, or superstitious about him, he seemed to hold such things in contempt; and, instead of having those peculiarities of manner which might have been expected in one who had lived apart from civilized men, he became at once an easy and familiar member of the household, and of every company of which he was able to form a part. He was sometimes able to lead in the family devotions; and his manner of prayer was such as none could witness without being profoundly impressed; he had no studied eloquence of expression, and no excited warmth or boldness; he addressed the throne of grace, not with long, but with earnest supplications, such as became a creature of the dust addressing the Most High. In his prayers, he always had one petition, which showed his prevailing feeling; it was, that "we might not outlive our usefulness in this world." In short, Mr. Edwards assures us, that he never knew him even to ask a blessing at table, without something in the matter and manner of the performance which powerfully arrested the attention. He and his family considered it a privilege to have one so excellent and holy among them; and certainly Brainerd was indebted to them for such kind and generous attentions, as did much to relieve the sorrows and sufferings of his few remaining days.

He had come to Northampton for the purpose of consulting Dr. Mather concerning his disorder; who told him, that there were many evidences of his being in a confirmed consumption, and that he could not conscientiously give him the least encouragement that he would ever recover. He advised him, however, to ride as much as possible, as the only means of prolonging his life. The communication did not make the least impression upon him. He heard it with composure, and spoke of it with cheerfulness, as if it were what he expected and desired. In his Diary he does not even allude to it; he had been "dying daily" for years, and was not startled when he came so near the grave as to feel its gathering chill.

He was in doubt, when he received this advice, in what direction to go; but the family, to which he was indebted for so much kindness, did not leave their work undone. It was determined that he should go to Boston; and a daughter of Dr. Edwards, a girl of eighteen, who was an enthusiastic admirer of his character, and resembled him in self-devotion and the warmth of her religious affections, offered to go with him, to pay him those attentions which were essential to his comfort, and which no sister was near him to give. She was a person of fine mind and character. Brainerd often expressed to her parents his confidence in her piety, saying that she was more spiritual, self-denying, and earnest to do good, than any young person he ever knew. He said that he should meet her in Heaven; and that meeting was nearer than he imagined; for it was but three months after his death, before she too was called to follow. She said, when dying, that for years, she had not seen the time when she had the least desire to live a moment longer, except for the sake of doing good, and filling up the measure of her duty. Such a being, though no warmer sentiment mingled with her admiration of his character and her delight in his conversation, was the fit companion of his dying hours.

He arrived in Boston after a journey of four days, and was welcomed with great respect by all the ministers of the town; for by this time, his fame had spread, not only throughout his own country, but in foreign lands. A week after his arrival, he was suddenly reduced so low, that for much of the time he was speechless, not having strength to utter a word. His friends would often gather round his bed, expecting every moment to see him breathe his last. At first, his disorder was so violent that he had not the use of his reason; but after a day or two, he had more clearness of mind, and more perfect serenity of feeling, than in the happiest days of his life. He employed these bright moments in looking over the history of his life. Fully convinced that the "conformity of the soul to God" was the chief thing in religion, he examined himself, to know whether he had acted in the spirit of this love; and, though he could discover much selfishness, pride, and corruption in himself, he trusted that he had not been wholly enslaved by self-love, but that he had at times considered it his highest happiness to glorify and please his God. This feeling removed all apprehensions, set his heart at rest, and made him willing to depart.

At some of these times, when he had not strength to speak, he was able to sit up and write. Some of his letters, written at the time, are expressed with great energy, particularly one to his brother, who had succeeded him in his mission. To him he says, "I fear you are not sufficiently sensible how much false religion there is in the world. Many serious Christians and valuable ministers are too easily imposed upon by this false blaze. I likewise fear, that you are not sufficiently sensible of the dreadful effects and consequences of this false religion. Let me tell you, it is the Devil transformed into an angel of light. It always springs up with every revival of religion, and stabs and murders the cause of God, while it passes current with well-meaning

multitudes for the height of religion. Set yourself, my brother, to crush all appearances of this nature among the Indians, and never encourage any degrees of heat without light. Charge my people, in the name of their dying minister, yea, in the name of Him who was dead and is alive, to live and walk as becomes the gospel. Tell them how great the expectations of God and his people are from them, and how awfully they will wound God's cause, if they fall into vice; as well as fatally prejudice other poor Indians. Always insist, that their experiences are worthless, that their joys are delusive, though they may have been rapt into the third heaven in their own conceit by them, unless the main tenor of their lives be spiritual, watchful, and holy. In pressing these things, 'thou shalt both save thyself and those that hear thee.'"

As he had once been a victim of those delusions with which the land was then overspread, he made a point of testifying against them with his dying voice. Whenever he was able to speak, he wanted not hearers. Being constantly visited by men of eminence in Boston, who were very desirous to see and converse with one of whom they had heard so much; he also took the opportunity to urge upon them the claims of the mission in which he had been engaged. Nor was it without effect; every thing, which he suggested to them as likely to serve that purpose, was readily and cheerfully done. One tribute of honor, that was paid him, was appropriate and graceful. The Commissioners of the Society in London for propagating the Gospel in New England, having had a legacy intrusted to them for the support of two missionaries, waited upon him to ask his advice respecting a mission to the Six Nations; and, such was their confidence in him, that they submitted entirely to his direction the measures that should be adopted, and the men who should be employed.

His restoration from his weak state, so far as to be able to travel once more, was unexpected and surprising to himself and his friends. Several times his young companion wrote, that he had been delirious with extreme pain, and the family sat up with him, supposing him to be in the agonies of death. He had hardly strength to draw his breath, and said he had no conception that any creature could retain life in a state so utterly exhausted. At this time he was visited by his brother, a student of Yale College, who came without expectation of finding him alive. He brought the intelligence that his favorite sister was dead, though he had never heard of her illness. Instead of receiving the news with sorrow, his whole feeling was, that he should soon be with her in Heaven. Soon after he began to revive, the astonishment of all about him, he made preparation to return to Northampton. Those who were less acquainted with the changes of consumption, that destroyer that tortures its victims by inspiring false hopes and then dashing them to pieces, began to entertain some expectation that he might live to be useful to mankind. But he knew better; he told them, that it was but a momentary restoration, and that he was as certainly a dead man, as if he had been shot through the heart.

One reason of his desire to leave Boston was, that he had heard of

their intention to bury him with the respect due to the memory of one so distinguished. When he was leaving town, many gentlemen were prepared to show their respect to him by attending him upon the way; but he was so troubled with the thought of receiving such honors, that they were obliged to abandon the design. He bade his friends an affectionate and last farewell, and went forward on his return to Northampton, which he reached after a journey of five days. For some time after, he was able to ride out two or three miles a day, and to pray in the family; he spent much of his time in writing and instructive conversation, seeming never happy without the consciousness of being usefully employed. He continued thus till the middle of August, when he was no longer able to attend church, to ride out, nor to engage in the family prayers.

He continued to decline till the middle of September, when he felt as if he must make one more effort in behalf of his poor Indians, who were brought home to his mind by a visit from his brother, their pastor, who was come to bid him farewell. He wrote to those gentlemen in Boston, whom he had interested in behalf of the Indians, telling them of the growth of the school at Crossweeksung, and the need of another teacher to instruct them in it. As soon as they received his letter, they met, and cheerfully offered the sum of two hundred pounds for that purpose, beside contributing seventy-five pounds, also according to Brainerd's suggestion, to aid the mission to the Six Nations. At the same time, he selected two young men for that mission, according to the request of the commissioners. He was not able to finish these letters with his own hand; but, when they were completed, he felt that his work was done.

So long as he was able to speak, he conversed with every member of the family, entreating each one to make preparation for that condition, and that hour, to which they saw that he was come. He had made himself dear to the younger children, and he used his influence with them, to induce them to prepare for what was before them; saying, "I shall die here, and here shall I be buried; you will see my grave, and then remember what I have said to you. I am going into eternity; it is sweet to me to think of eternity; the endlessness of it makes it sweet. But oh, what shall I say to the eternity of the wicked? I cannot speak of it, nor think of it; the thought is too dreadful. When you see my grave, then remember what I said to you while I was alive; then think within yourself, how the man, who lies in that grave, counselled me and warned me to prepare for death." "And this," said he to those around him, "is the last sermon you will ever hear me preach."

Shortly after he was thought to be dying, by all about him, and he himself had the same impression. He seemed happy to think that his end was so nigh. He could not speak distinctly, but his lips appeared to move, and the person who sat nearest to him could hear him say "Come, Lord Jesus! come quickly. Oh, why is his chariot so long in coming?" After a time he recovered, and blamed himself for being too earnest to go.

On the morning of the Sabbath, when Miss Edwards came into the room, he looked on her with a smile, and said to her, "Are you willing to part with me? I am willing to part with you, though, if I thought I could not see you and be happy with you in another world, I could not bear to part. I am willing to leave all my friends; I am willing to leave my brother, though I love him better than any creature living; I have committed him and all my friends to God, and can leave them with God." Seeing her with a Bible in her hands, he said "Oh, that dear book! The mysteries that are in it, and all the mysteries of God's providence, will be unfolded soon."

He died in extreme suffering, which he said was such, that the thought of enduring it a moment longer was insupportable. He entreated others to pray for him, that he might not be impatient under his torture. His brother having arrived, he conversed much with him respecting his people, showing, that in death their welfare was near his heart. His pain kept on increasing, and he said to those about him, that none could conceive the agony which the dying undergo. After suffering through the night, at the first beams of daybreak, he was released and permitted to depart in peace. It was his favorite hour, when his spirit had always risen in his morning devotions, and therefore the fittest time for its last ascension to its God.

Brainerd died on the 9th of October, 1747, in the thirtieth year of his age, leaving a memory which time will not soon destroy. He was, as we are assured by one whose authority is decisive, a man of distinguished natural ability; and his energy of mind was far exceeded by his strength of heart. Wherever he preached he made a very deep impression; even in the most helpless days of his disease, when he was hardly able to arise to address an audience, his spirit kindled with his subject, his frame grew strong as he proceeded, the eloquence of his warm feeling inspired his tongue, and carried the hearts of hearers captive at his will.

His life is chiefly valuable as a record of what may be done by a man of feeble frame and melancholy temperament, when animated in his labor by a prevailing sense of duty. His object seemed the most hopeless that could be imagined; even to undertake it seemed to require the full strength of a hardy frame, and the powerful impulse of sanguine expectation of success. He had neither of these to sustain him; his frame was dying daily from the time when he first went forth to his enterprise, and weariness, exhaustion, and exposure combined to press him down to the grave. As for success, he felt that the conversion of the Indians was not to be accomplished by any thing that man can do, but all depended on the divine blessing; and, instead of being sure of receiving that blessing, he was often tempted to believe that the hour was not yet come. But he persevered under every discouragement and against all resistance, and produced results, which no one can reflect upon without surprise. He had that faith, which could remove mountains of opposition. Thus supported, his progress was a triumphal

march; he was able to overcome the world while living, and to bid defiance to the grave when dying. To all, whose hearts beat with similar aspirations, his example says, "Never despair."

---

Copied for [www.WholesomeWords.org](http://www.WholesomeWords.org) from *The Library of American Biography*, Vol. VIII. Boston: Hilliard, Gray and Co., 1837.