

LIFE IN A BRITISH COLUMBIA MINING TOWN

(By Mrs. James Hood, Cumberland, B. C.)

"Twenty-three years ago, when I first came to Cumberland," said an old resident, "we drove in a wagon from the wharf, and on account of the bad roads we were two weeks in getting our clothes. There were two mines open at that time, both disused now. The town consisted of a few shacks, two boarding houses, and there were only four women in the camp, and where the city now stands was a dense wood."

Now we have a progressive mining city of over 1500 people, while outside the limits are Chinese, Japanese and Italian towns. Four hotels, beside numerous boarding houses, afford accommodation for the men who are not fortunate enough to have homes of their own.

On coming into this city on a rainy day, as it was my lot to do, one will at once exclaim, "Oh, what a dirty place!" The reddish brown mud underfoot and the black coal smoke from the chimneys settling over all in a greasy black pall makes everything look black and gloomy, and even the men are black as they return from the mines.

But the next day the sun shone, and a wonderful change appears. The grass is green as it only can be in a climate like ours. The mountains, with snow-capped heads, catch the rays of the sun and reflect their brightness. One forgets the blackness of yesterday, and the whole town seems cleaner. And yet a mining town is not, and never can be, bright, although a good many people have beautified their grounds with green grass, flowers and climbing roses.

The houses, when built by the company, are exactly alike. Walking down

the middle of the street seems like walking down the middle of a pod of peas; and yet no one makes the mistake of entering a neighbor's house, and inside the individuality of each housewife is seen. Here we have the home tastefully and comfortably furnished; then one clean and homelike, and then, perhaps, the next one occupied by an overburdened mother, who, seemingly, has given up the struggle with dirt and it runs rampant over all. But women who have never lived in a mining town cannot realize the difficulties with which these women have to contend.

What "Three Shifts" Involves.

There are three shifts in the mines, and the men have a week in each shift. The husband may go out to work one week at half-past six in the morning, if his work is at a distance, necessitating a very early breakfast; returning on the half-past three train, he at once wants his hot dinner. The next week he goes at two-thirty in the afternoon, having dinner just before he goes; returning at half-past ten he must have something to eat before going to bed. The following week he goes at eleven at night, comes home in the early morning, when breakfast must be ready. And one woman may have husband and one or two sons, each in a different shift. So imagine, if you can, how that household can be run systematically. In addition to this, the men's buckets, which contain their lunch, must be filled. This is a granite can, or rather two, one fitting into the other, with a tight cover. In the bottom one is the tea, milk or whatever he drinks, and in the upper the bread, cake and pie. "Meals ready at all hours" can truly be said of these