



WHARF AND BUILDINGS OF SKIDEGATE OIL COMPANY.

latching," quarrels broke out between families or tribes. In feuds, originating at their heathen orgies, whole families, and sometimes whole villages, were wiped out. Indeed, it was in this way that a large number of people were driven off the Queen Charlotte Islands altogether, and sought refuge on the neighbouring islands of Alaska, where the Haida race has ever since maintained a precarious hold.

From that country came in return the earliest and worst epidemics of smallpox among the Haidas. Later, again and again, it came from the south with the people fleeing home from its dreaded outbreak in Victoria and other cities of the Province. Without any knowledge of the nature of the contagion, ignorant of the most elementary laws of hygiene, the people were simply swept away.

Francis Poole, C.E., describes such an epidemic when he was on the islands in 1863. He narrates that some of the victims were strangled to death by their friends in their frantic efforts to check the contagion. Not a few were shot at their own urgent entreaty. In some instances entire settlements were so nearly depopulated that

the few people remaining alive fired their homes and fled in terror to the woods, eventually, if spared by the scourge, to join some other community which had survived.

Large bands of Indians were driven out from Victoria and adjacent cities after they had contracted the dread disease at these places. Closely crowded in the canoes on their long journey of six hundred miles to their northern homes, they could not possibly avoid the contagion. As the infection developed, the patient would be placed in the bow of the canoe until they came to their next camping-place. There, in the morning, beside a stream of water, with a little store of provisions and a few sticks for his fire, the unhappy creature would be left to his fate. For long years after, thickly along the coast lay scattered the remains of the victims of such inhuman treatment. On one such occasion forty large canoes left Victoria for these islands, carrying from ten to fifteen people or more each. Of these only three canoes reached their destination, bringing with them six people.

But deadly weapons and more deadly epidemics can only partly account for the sudden decline of