

Along the Line.

THE MEDICAL MISSION AT PORT SIMPSON.

Letter from DR. A. E. BOLTON, dated PORT SIMPSON, B.C., August 15th, 1891.

THE readers of the OUTLOOK, as well as yourself, may be interested by reading a few notes of our Medical Missionary work during the past three months.

I went to Port Essington, on the Skeena River, on May 9th, intending to spend a few days there preparing for my summer's work before going on to Conference; but two days after my arrival "La Grippe" made its appearance, and I soon concluded to give up my prospective trip to Victoria.

During the salmon season there gather at each of the seven canneries on the Skeena about 200 natives, and at the four canneries at and near Essington the majority of these come from the Upper Skeena. These had not been subject to the epidemic when it prevailed along the Coast last year, and so nearly every man, woman and child among them fell a prey in some degree to the scourge. Nearly all those affected were heathens, and their ignorance, superstition and uncleanness added to their misery. The houses, too, were only built for summer use, and were uncomfortably small and cold. Often we would find all the inmates of a house lying sick, rolled up in blankets and covering nearly all the floor excepting the space where the fire should be; with no fire and no one to get wood; very little food and no one to cook it.

Here was a field for philanthropic effort—a chance to teach practical Christianity. To understand the situation you must remember that there had lately been what may be called a heathen revival amongst these tribes. An effort had been made to draw back the converts to Christianity into the heathen feasts and abominations, and to keep the children away from school. It seemed like a desperate effort of Satan to enslave the poor people in final darkness. Nor were there lacking a few apostles from Christianity to help, and they had been apparently successful. Some were led backward, and all the heathens were inflamed with a hatred to the Gospel. The dances and potlaches prevailed all winter, until they came down the river, impoverished, in the spring. When the sickness came upon them like a sudden stroke from the Almighty, the majority accepted it as such and acknowledged that they were suffering a just rebuke and punishment. Some immediately evidenced repentance and besought mercy from our offended God, but the greater part at first were ashamed to ask our help or were afraid to trust their cases in our hands. The old people especially were prejudiced against my medicines, and sometimes when administering doses I have heard an old woman behind me muttering in her own tongue, "The white man's medicine is not good for us." Some cases fled to the woods, either to escape the contagion or to find freer scope for shaking the medicine man's rattle, and other heathen practices, and made a fatal result more certain by lying on the damp ground. However, kindness soon penetrated the hard walls of prejudice that surrounded their hearts, and in general they

became willing to follow my directions and join us in imploring Divine blessing and forgiveness. There was little use in asking them to send to the dispensary for medicine, or to have food for themselves to prepare, all this had to be done for them; poultices prepared and put on; and some houses had to be visited as frequently as it was required to administer the medicine. Many of the cases were at the Balmoral cannery, two miles away; these I tried to visit twice a week, and brought the worst cases to Essington; others were at Aberdeen, five miles away, which I also visited frequently, and the resident C. M. S. missionary seconded my efforts. This entailed a great deal of work, but I had a noble assistant in Mr. Spencer, who has spent two years at the Upper Skeena mission, and whose knowledge of the language and untiring zeal and patience were very essential at this time. He usually made a round of the worst cases before breakfast, and for weeks we seldom stopped work before 11 p.m. During the worst of the epidemic the rest of the brethren were away to Conference, and Mr. Spencer and I held three or four services each on Sundays. Beef tea was supplied to the worst cases, and hot gruel to nearly all twice a day. In this line we had the assistance of Miss Franter, the teacher, and Miss Beavis who came to help us a while in our hospital work. The Indian Agent put \$30 in our hands to buy food, and a pleasing incident in that connection was a collection of \$7.50 which a few of the Christian Indians made and gave to Mrs. Bolton, saying, "We see you constantly giving food to the sick, and we wish to help." The amount was not large, but we appreciated it as coming from a people who are generally said to always take and never give.

The aged suffered most, both because they had little vitality to resist the disease and because their friends cared less for their recovery. Among the heathen Indians, when a patient's case is regarded hopeless, the relatives take a very practical view and make no more effort to ward off death, but wash the body and make the coffin in preparation for the burial. In the case of old people the prognosis is often more unfavorable than need be. We had a marked instance of this in an old man of Kish-pi-ax, named Wil-ba-lox. For several days his friends said he was dying, and we found out he got no food or medicine, only what we put in his mouth. He was certainly very weak and failing, but I saw no reason why he should die if he were cared for, and repeatedly told them so, but they laughed at the absurdity of my opinion. I saw that they were bound to have their prophecies fulfilled unless I got him away, so we took him in as our first hospital patient. His friends watched him very closely, and for a time it seemed as if we would fail, but his strength gradually gained, at which they marvelled greatly and acknowledged that we had power in ourselves or in our God, and they promised "If Wil-ba-lox lives we will all be school people," i.e., they would give up their heathen practices, listen to the missionary's teachings, and send their children to school. Wil-ba-lox lives, and, I trust, is alive spiritually. As for their promises, it remains for the winter's temptations to test their strength; but we should all pray for them, and for Brother Spencer and Brother and Sister Pierce, that the Angel