

The Port of Vancouver and Sailors' Welfare Work

(An Article of Interest to all Concerned in Vancouver's Growth—and in Social Service—Ed. B. C. M.)

What changes do the years bring about! In less than 40 years Vancouver has grown from a few bedraggled Indian and squatter settlements to a city of over 100,000 population. Burrard Inlet has been transformed from a forest containing a few scattered and unkempt villages to a waterfront lined with great and modern docks and warehouses, factories and mills, dry-docks and grain elevators. The harbour is admittedly one of the finest in the world.

Steamship lines regularly operating in and out of Vancouver have increased from twelve to forty-two since 1921. 18,387 ships passed under Prospect Signal Station into the harbour during 1924. The registered tonnage leaped from 5,605,015 tons in 1920, to 8,957,489 tons in 1924. It does not begin to dawn upon the mind of the average citizen what an asset the various shipping interests are to Vancouver.

Take away the marine offices and engineers, the sailors and firemen, the longshoremen and stevedores—with the wives and mothers, the children and other dependants, of those who have homes and are paying taxes—and Vancouver would suffer irretrievable loss. Remove those employed in connection with the ship-yards, the machine shops, the fishery fleets, the tow-boats, the brokerages, the shipping agencies, the insurance and government offices, the piers and docks, the harbour board, and the telegraph and wireless forces required by the business of the port, and the population of the city would be very appreciably affected. If it were not for the shipping, half of the citizens engaged in business, would go bankrupt in six months.

Not long after Captain George Vancouver discovered for the British in 1792, what has since become the modern city of Vancouver, the great Missionary Society known all over the world as THE BRITISH AND FOREIGN SAILORS' SOCIETY came into existence. It was founded by a band of earnest, God-fearing men in London, in the year 1818. In the period between the Battle of Trafalgar and the beginnings of this Society many good men were moved to compassion for the sailors whose lot was so unenviable both at sea and ashore. Nelson himself made it a cause of complaint, when he saw how sadly many of his messmates fared, that in time of war the sailor, as the soldier, was regarded as a hero, but that once the danger was passed he was forgotten.

In Vancouver, perhaps, we do not all fall under the same sweeping condemnation, as those to whom Nelson referred over a century ago, yet we constantly need to be reminded of our debt to the sufferers from the Great War who ventured their all, both on land and sea, for our security. Even in times of peace our obligation to the seaman is one which cannot be so readily discharged as many of us seem to think. His life is one of more than ordinary risks. Engaged in an endless fight against uncontrollable forces, he spends a large part of his time out of sight of his fellows, serving them in loneliness and hardship. His career on board ship is pleasanter than it once was and he is better paid, perhaps, but wherever he goes over the face of the world he wants "a home away from home" in his "wanderings on many a foreign strand." Yes, even in our home ports there are too many evil-disposed and under-world human jackals for whom the unsus-

pecting seaman is easy pickings. It was to help meet this need that the British and Foreign Sailors' Society was established and has laboured on throughout all these years. It considers itself as one of the chief agencies raised up by God through which the Empire may discharge a measure of its debt to the men who "go down to the sea in ships."

This Society is the mother of all the naval and mercantile organizations working for the physical and for the spiritual well-being of all seafarers. It has now some 120 Homes, Rests, Institutes and Naval Clubs in the principal ports of the world. The patronage and recent active interest of His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales is an evidence of the faith and long-continued thought which the Royal Family have shown on behalf of the work of the Society. It has a host of noble and self-sacrificing friends in every port, where it is represented, who lend it their patronage or who actively interest themselves as honorary workers. Its Chaplains, Port Missionaries and other agents everywhere—no small army of paid workers—carry on the more immediate and direct missionary activities in touch with the men themselves. It is interdenominational as well as international both in its scope and in its appeal. It has for its basis simple evangelical principles and thus provides a platform on which friends of all scriptural creeds can unite "in service for the sailor."

VANCOUVER SAILORS' HOME

Some eighteen years ago a branch of the work was started in Vancouver. At first it was carried on under the name of "The Vancouver Sailors' and Loggers' Society" in a rented building at the foot of what is now Main Street but which, at that time, was known as Westminster Avenue. It was thought that both these classes of men could be ministered to through the same agency. In 1916, however, it was felt that the work should be narrowed down so as to include the seamen only and early in that year steps were taken to have it incorporated under the name of "The Sailors' Home, Vancouver." In 1918-19 the Parent Society in London, England, purchased the now inadequate, but substantial and comfortable brick building at 500 Alexander Street for the sum of approximately \$20,000. This insured the Home more permanence and enabled the Management to keep the flag flying during the lean years which succeeded the war. In 1920 it was incorporated, finally, under the Societies' Act, as "The Vancouver Sailors' Home, British Columbia"—the charter under which it is now operating.

Mr. J. Wheeler was the Port Missionary and Superintendent of the Home from the beginning in 1907, until the middle of January, 1917. He, and those associated with him, amidst many ups and downs, carried on the work until the Great War was well on its way. At the request of and encouraged by the General Ministerial Association of Vancouver, in a way that the records do not make clear to the writer, the Society was started on its career and the Ministers of all City evangelical churches are still regarded as ex-officio vice-presidents. Its honorary Chaplain for many years has been Rev. Principal Walter Ellis, M.A.

At a valedictory service in one of the Toronto churches on the second Sunday of January, 1917, Rev. D. J. Rowland who had received his parchment as a