

Life at Bella Bella

DR. G. E. DARBY.

THE following very interesting description of life at the Bella Bella Mission in Northern British Columbia, is given in a recent letter received from Dr. Darby, at the Forward Movement office. It will be read with profit by many of our young folk.

"We are on an island and face the channel which all the boats use going to Prince Rupert and Alaskan ports. We see many ships going up and down, and as I am writing this, the *Prince George* is going past at the rate of 21 miles per hour. With her mast and side lights lit, and all her windows shining, she looks very beautiful. Of course the big boats never stop here, but there are smaller ones that bring our supplies and mail, and when we were without a wharf we were like a small town in Ontario with a railway running through it, but no station. Our mail and supplies were put off at Old Town or the Cannery, and if the weather was bad, had to be brought to us by launch or rowboat. We had a wharf, but a steamer pulled it down about two

wharf is not an unmixed blessing, for, as a rule, our weekly boat arrives at three a.m. on Sundays. Fortunately the wharf is at the foot of the mission property, so it is no great distance to go.

"This leads me to tell you about a little Lord's Day Alliance work I had to do. There were three stores in the village this winter. When there was no wharf here the Indians would go over to the Cannery, Sunday morning for their supplies, and after returning would unpack the stuff and sell it, and I could not get them to close their stores on Sunday. However, when the wharf was built, the freight was put in the warehouse and kept there until Monday morning. One of the storekeepers objected to this, and was angry for a while; but he decided that it was better that way than for him to have to go to the other side for it all the time. In this way I have been able to help them keep the stores shut to a large extent, and hope they will get back their former reverence for the Sabbath before long. The Indians cannot be



THE NANAIMO RIVER AND FALLS.

Amateur photo. Negative by Thomas Jemson, Nanaimo, B.C.

years ago. You can imagine how glad we were when the work on a new one was really started. You who have always lived in the interior will hardly appreciate the difficulties of building a wharf here where there is a 23 foot tide. That means it has to be high enough so it won't be submerged at high tide, and in deep enough water so that a steamer will be able to tie up when the tide is out. At low tide the wharf always reminds me of a tall, rawboned youth with his pants rolled up, in wading. You can see how easy it is for it to sway when a big steamer comes at low water. By a coincidence, our Mission boat, the *Thomas Crosby*, was the first steamer to tie up to our new wharf. About three o'clock the next morning the *Venture*, our mail boat, whistled, and I had to get dressed and go down to take her lines and see that all our freight was put off. On account of the possibility of liquors being landed, it has been the custom for the Doctor to be on the wharf for each boat to examine any suspicious boxes. This

blamed very much as the Cannery and other stores kept by white men, are open on Sundays. As the reader probably knows there have been several doctors in charge here in the last four years, and the Indians have drifted backwards for lack of an unwavering hand to guide them. However, not only in Sabbath observance, but in many other ways, it is remarkable how well they live up to the Gospel, seeing they have only had it for some thirty years, while we whites have had it three centuries.

"Some of our Indians have made an active use of our new wharf. During the winter months, they are engaged in hunting, fishing halibut, and trapping. On account of the war, there is no market for furs this year, so that most of them have been fishing halibut. For this they use a line about the size of an ordinary clothes-line, from two to three hundred fathoms long, with from one to three hundred hooks attached, and all baited with herring. Sometimes they get as many as thirty halibut on the line in

one haul. At other times they fish for a week and only get four or five altogether. The fish average from three to sixty pounds. Hitherto, they have always sold their fish directly to the canneries, but this year one young fellow went to Vancouver, and made arrangements with a buyer, shipped in some ice, packed the fish and shipped it himself. This isn't a very big thing to do, but it means more or less bookkeeping, and is a step in the right direction for the Indian. One day they shipped about three tons of halibut, and realized two or three cents a pound more for it than if they sold it from their boats.

"After considerable prolonged agitation, the Dominion Government appropriated money to buy the pipe and install a waterworks system on the condition that the Indians perform the necessary labor. The Indians were quite willing to do this provided that a small amount of provisions were furnished them for the time they were working. From our standpoint, this provision seems unreasonable, but it serves to show the Indian's point of view, namely, that the Government owes them money for all the land they have taken, and they want to get as much of it back as possible. Well, in January the pipe arrived and was unloaded at our new wharf. The men of the village held a meeting, and after passing a resolution that any one who was able to work and did not, must pay three dollars a day, they appointed certain ones to clear a trail to the dam site, others to build the dam, while the rest were to pack the pipe and lay it. The next morning we were awakened by one of the Indians who was going up and down the street calling "Breakfast is ready," and ringing a bell. The chief cook with his helpers, had breakfast prepared in the big town hall, and after all eating together, they started at their several jobs. At noon, they had lunch together in the hall. They got their suppers in their homes. Having their breakfast and lunch together was a good thing, for it kept them all together and very little time was lost at meals. All worked hard and cheerfully and the work progressed rapidly. The dam site, about a mile from the village, was an ideal one, and they soon had a good dam made by placing half a dozen logs across a narrow gorge and nailing a double row of planks to these. As there is quite a basin above this we have lots of water in reserve. Although it is lake water, it is very good, and beats rain water from tanks, for both quantity and quality. As it is very tedious work to dig trenches in this rough country, the four-inch pipe, made of wood staves and wound with wire, is simply laid on the ground, and as it winds along among the trees in and out, up and down hill, it reminds one of a huge serpent. After circling around the base of a mountain it enters the village at one end and runs along one edge of the sidewalk. A short vertical pipe with a tap was erected opposite each house, and next fall I expect nearly all will extend the pipes into their houses. We have always had a water supply, at least the plumbing for it, in the Mission house and Hospital, so that it was not hard for me to connect our systems with the big pipe. You may be sure I did not lose any time about it, and now we have any quantity of water, and can take a tub bath even on wash-day.

"This last year has been the best one for the hospital for some time and shows the necessity of having a permanent doctor in charge. In the year ending March 31, 1914, there were 41 patients, with some six hundred hospital days, while for the eleven months ending February 28, 1915, there were 80 patients with some twelve hundred hospital days. We have to double this to equal the attendance during Dr. Large's last year, but it will not be the