

"Come over and help us."

CHAPTER IV.

FORT SIMPSON.

HAVING completed this wonderful trip by land and sea, with its cities and prairies, with its forests and snow-capped mountains, with its islands and long, narrow stretches of waterway, we landed from the canoe in front of the Hudson's Bay Company's fort, and there shook hands with hundreds of people, some fairly well dressed, some in meagre clothing, others rigged out in gay-colored blankets and shawls, and some with painted faces.

Our work here lay before us. We were welcomed by Mr. Charles F. Morrison, the kind English gentleman who was in charge of the fort, and also by Mr. Charles M. Tate, our missionary teacher from Nanaimo, who had been holding the ground for a few months until our arrival.

At that time the fort was well walled in with a fence of solid posts about eighteen feet high. There was a tower at each corner, with very heavy gateways nearly always under lock and key. Outside the gates stood a number of large cannon, ready to fire a salute of welcome to friendly visitors or a blast of warning to hostile Indians. Inside was a little trading store, which was only large enough to allow for one customer at a time. Long rows of heavy log buildings stood on the east and west sides of the enclosure. The building to the east was where the Company's goods were kept; those to the west were for men's quarters, workshops, etc. On both sides of the fort gates were officers' quarters. To the rear, on the south side, was the house of the governor or chief factor. This arrangement of the buildings left an open square in the middle of the enclosure.

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The old cannon in front of the fort were now put in use to fire a salute on the arrival of the missionary and his wife. As we had no house, we were kindly allowed to use part of the officers' quarters within the fort until the lumber should come from Victoria and we could build a home.

A day or two was now spent in going around to see the general condition of things. It was clear that at once we must have a place built in which to worship. The people themselves also talked much about the building of a church, as the only place available at present was a large heathen house, fifty or sixty feet square. Nearly all the houses in the village were of a similar character, having a low, flat roof covered with slabs and bark, a fire in the centre of the floor and a hole in the roof to allow the smoke to escape. There was but one shingled house outside the fort.

We were permitted to use Chief Scow-gate's house on the island, where part of the village was built, for school and church purposes. There were no roads or bridges, and we had to walk out to the island on the beach when the tide was out. We at once called a meeting in the chief's house to decide about building a church. This was necessary in order to secure supplies, as the steamer was going south in a day or two. Some of the people at the fort said:

"You are not going to ask these poor people to help you build a church, are you? They have no money, they have heard that you have been in Canada and collected lots of money; and indeed they have heard that you would not only build a church for them, but also build them little houses to live in."

I said, "How do you purchase those beautiful furs?"

They said, "We trade blankets, muskets and ammunition."

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"Well," I said, "blankets will do for us." We had learned enough about human nature to know that the more you get people to give towards places of worship the more they will value them when built.

Notice was given to everybody to meet in the chief's house. The Indians crowded in from all parts of the village. I had to speak through an interpreter, as we were now face to face with the fact that we were among another people, speaking a strange language. There seemed hardly any more similarity between the Ankomenum and the Tsimpshean than there is between the Chinese and the English. We now told them that we had come to live among them at their invitation; we hoped to learn the language, preach the Gospel and teach them, as well as we knew how, the arts of civilization; but we had met to-day to talk about church building. Through the kindness of an architect, Mr. Thomas Trounce of Victoria, we had brought along plans of a building calculated to hold about a thousand people.

I told them also that although some of our friends in Canada had contributed towards helping to start the mission, this money was all left in the hands of the missionary authorities, and that we would like to have them first do all they could towards building the church, and then help would come from the Missionary Society. I then laid down ten dollars for myself and ten dollars for my wife, to start the subscription. Some of the people seemed pleased and some otherwise, and presently the big doors flew open and most of them went out as fast as they could go. I said to the interpreter,

"What is the matter? Are they angry?"

He said, "No, I think they will come back by and by."

I said, "Let us sing, 'Shall we gather at the river,'" a hymn that they had lately learned at the revival in Vic-

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toria; and the few of us that were left around the little table sang nearly the whole hymn. Soon many of the people came back with blankets over their shoulders, some ten, some five, some two, and others one. These blankets were Hudson's Bay Company's trade blankets. The Indians had to pack them away in boxes in order to keep them clean, as they were their only cash in trade. They were worth \$1.50 each. Those who had no blankets laid down a musket or some furs, until we had over four hundred dollars donated that day towards building God's house; and before it was completed the subscription went up to one thousand dollars, with some aid from white people. Many of them gave until it was a real sacrifice, as they had given their last blanket.

After this spontaneous liberality the real welcome to the missionary began. A number of very interesting speeches were made by chiefs and leading men of the place, which left no doubt as to their hearty appreciation of our coming to them.

The converts from Victoria had carried on religious services among their friends since their return, and by the splendid help of the missionary teacher, Mr. Tate, who had left for his work in the south by the return boat, much good had been done. Our first class meeting was held in a little room inside the fort. Mrs. Crosby taught the school in the large house, while we got to work getting out timber for the Church and clearing away a foundation for the Mission House. Most of the summer was spent in this way.

The lumber arrived in November by schooner. It was all thrown overboard—as there was no wharf—rafted alongside the ship and towed ashore. Without horses, oxen or team of any kind, we had to get all the lumber and timber up the hill and, soaked as it was with salt

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water, every piece had to be packed on men's backs. As we had no carpenter, the Missionary had to lead the way in superintending the building and, with the assistance of an old French-Canadian, in showing them how to hew and whip-saw timber and make shingles. A number of the young men, however, were very anxious to work as carpenters. We had great trouble to prevent them from spoiling lumber by splitting or cutting the boards in the wrong place, but they were quite gifted mechanically, and on the whole very ready to learn. By dogged perseverance, and through a dreadful amount of wet weather, we had our little Mission House up, and got into it about a week before Christmas.

We had services nearly every night in the week and four or five times on the Lord's Day, in addition to visiting the sick and giving out medicines. Most of our services had to be carried on through an interpreter. We felt that every effort must be made to get hold of this new tongue. In this Mr. Dudoward, our interpreter, was a great help. We had many a struggle before we were able to preach and teach the people in their own tongue, but every missionary should master the language the very first thing. Our Watch Meeting was a time long to be remembered, and was followed by several weeks of special services, which were "times of refreshing." About a hundred joined the Church on trial. During the winter several died, one an old woman, who wished to have the rite of Christian baptism. On being asked whether she had given up all her heathen ways, she said, "Yes, and now I am going to die and be with Jesus, and I wish the mark before I go."

Our Sunday School was a great means of instruction and help to the people; we had from five to six hundred in attendance. Our Day School was well attended, and

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was a great source of hope for the future. We had seventy-five adults in attendance and about one hundred children. Mrs. Crosby took charge of the Day School nearly all the time with the assistance of Alfred Dudoward and Kate, his wife, who were valuable helpers.

Up to this time both Sabbath services and School were held in an old house covered with bark, but we had the Church and a good School House up before long, by the help of God and the liberality of Christian friends.

The following summer, with a first-class carpenter as superintendent, we began the building of our Church, a large frame structure with a spire at the front. During the process of building word came from the Chairman that the Missionary Society could not afford to put up the spire, as shown in the plan. So the people met to talk about it, and gave an extra donation of labor and goods for the purpose. We went to the woods to get special timber for it and also a raft of cedar blocks for shingles. For a time it was most difficult to get shingles made, but after a while we had the building all covered in, although we had not lumber to quite complete it.

The time now came for the opening of the Church and its dedication to the service of God. We found, when our accounts were all made up, that there was a balance of about four hundred dollars due on it. As we had received word from the Mission Rooms that nothing more could be expected from that quarter for the present, we talked the matter over with the leaders and some of the people, who urged that we call a public meeting. There were also present at this meeting some of the Company's servants and the owners of a sawmill, which was just being built about seven miles away. I told the people we should like to open the Church and dedicate it to the service of God, but there was a debt of about four hundred dollars on



THE FIRE BRIGADE, FORT SIMPSON.



THE CHURCH AND SCHOOL AT FORT SIMPSON.

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material, and how could we say that we gave this house to the service of Almighty God when some one else owned part of the building, in lumber, nails, paint, etc., not paid for? We must have this put right before the dedication. After a few little speeches the people brought their offerings of blankets, goods and money, enough to cover the whole deficiency. Then "Grace Church" was dedicated to the worship and service of God.

For some time after our arrival, with the assistance of Mr. and Mrs. Dudoward, Mrs. Crosby had taught the school, of about sixty or seventy adults in the afternoon and one hundred children in the morning, in the large heathen house, till it became a very serious strain upon her health, and a better room was a necessity. The frame of an old Indian house, about twenty-four by thirty-six feet, had been purchased by Mr. Tate while he was teaching. The first lumber cut at the Georgetown sawmill was secured to enclose this house, and we told the people we wanted each of them to bring a board. There were no sawed boards in the place at that time, but they brought slabs of cedar of all shapes and sizes. We spiked them down in the rough for the floor, and then with their native adzes they smoothed them off, so that we had a fairly good floor. We got poles for rafters, prepared some boards for sheeting, got out cedar blocks and cut them into shakes or long shingles to cover the roof, and thus had a better house for our school work.

We were finishing our last row of shingles when the steamboat, which had been away four months, arrived in the midst of a snowstorm. When we got hold of our mail bag we found, among the letters, a note with a cheque of fifty dollars from a friend in Quebec, saying that it was for some comfort and help for my wife, as a memento of our last visit to them. I said, "Look here, my dear, I

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am going to use this entirely for your comfort, for it is solely for your comfort that the School House is being fixed, and here is half enough to pay for the material." I wrote to our friend that I had done as he had said and spent every cent of it for my wife's comfort, explaining the whole thing. Months passed away, when another cheque came from the same friend for a like amount, and thus we got the bills for our temporary School House paid.

The people crowded the new Church with delight, but we had not worshipped in it long when, in the month of November, 1876, during a terrific south-east gale, the massive roof was swept entirely off, and for a time the danger seemed to be that the whole building would go. The wind caught in the tower and spire, and we had to chop out the front of it to let the wind through and thus save wrecking the whole building. While the storm was raging, and shingles and boards were flying, some of the poor people came running up the hill, holding up their hands and crying and praying, saying, "You have taken the roof, now spare the building. Oh, don't take all our fine Church." In the midst of this excitement, we knelt in thanksgiving to God that our lives were spared, for we saw that some of the timbers of the Church had fallen within about four feet of where we had been sitting at family prayer in the little Mission House. Had those timbers struck the house some of us might have been killed.

Some of the men then ran to the Fort to borrow ropes, and others climbed up the main rafters, which were sticking up, and got ropes hitched to the front of the tower, and thence, from one pair of rafters to another, back to the gable at the south end, and then moored them down to the stumps behind the Church.

After all was done that could be done to secure the building, and the storm had abated a little, we all met in

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the old house we had fixed up for a School Room. Some of the men began to make speeches. One old man, acting as though he were buckling his belt around him, said, "Long ago, when our canoe was split out at sea, we would buckle our belts a little tighter; and with our hair tied in a knot at the top of our heads, we would pull for the shore, get into a quiet place and sew her up. Now God's great canoe is split, and we must fix it." Then somebody said, "No more long speeches; let us get to work;" and they began to bring in their blankets, furs, muskets, earrings, finger-rings, bracelets (for they were very proud of jewellery, like some other heathen people), and everything that could be turned into money. The Hudson's Bay officer in charge acted as Secretary.

We bought a large raft of cedar logs which had been got for the Company's firewood and started with them to the sawmill to get them cut for lumber to repair the building. The canoes, each with a crew of two men towing a log, raced to the mill, a distance of seven miles. The good man at the mill came to see what he could do to help us; and, as he was a clever mechanic, we soon found out where the weakness in the first roof had been and how much lumber it would need to repair it. As soon as it was cut, he came back to help us in the work.

We had shingles made, and everybody soon became interested in fixing up the Church. While the young men were nailing shingles on the roof, even the old women would come up the hillside by the Church and tie the ropes to the shingles and say, "That is right, young men, that is good, young men, work away and fix God's house. Very good! Very good! (Sim-wil-am, sim-wil-am)."

In three weeks after the day it was blown off we had the roof on and held a thanksgiving service in the building. Great indeed was the joy of the people that November

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day when we met to give thanks to God for the restoration of our fine Church. Some spoke, some sang, and some cried for joy, while the blessed Spirit rested down with great power upon us all.

The estimated cost of putting on the roof was one thousand dollars, and when the accounts were all finally made up and the whole of the bills paid, we had sixty dollars to the good. Miners and fishermen along the coast sent donations to the Missionary when he was in trouble; special subscriptions also reached us from afar; so that what at first seemed our greatest trial became a means of grace to us all. We now had a stronger roof on the Church than ever, and all these difficulties which we had overcome only tended to make the people love and respect God's house the more.

The old patched-up Indian house served as a School House only for a time. It was now decided that we must have a new one; so, after the people had subscribed towards the new School House, we began to build, deciding to have it not too far away from the other buildings. We found, on account of the swampy condition of the land, that we could not very well get our foundation posts down to solid ground, so we put in mud-sills—large heavy cedar logs—flattening them on one side to set our posts upon. We built a large, fine building in the shape of a "T," the back part of which was partitioned off by large folding, or rather rolling, doors. This was all sealed inside and a blackboard put around the whole interior. We thus had a comfortable School Room for both adults and children. When opened up it made a good lecture-room for week-evening services. The whole of this building, even the sash and doors, was made and built by the Indians under the direction of the Missionary, as we had no carpenters.

Before the Church was completed, in answer to prayer,

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and we think in a great measure to the fact that the poor people had made such sacrifice for God's House, for in some cases they had given all their earthly goods, a mighty revival swept over the Mission. God is not slack concerning His promise, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." The story of this wonderful outpouring is the story of a modern Pentecost. Once more we were taught that it is "not by might, nor by power," but by the gracious Spirit of God, that such a work is wrought.

The Missionary had gone, with his crew of Christian helpers, about one hundred and fifty miles away to visit a heathen village, when, in our absence, the blessed Spirit came down in great power upon the people. As we were returning we met some Indians in a canoe who were coming to tell us the news. As we approached them, a man in the bow jumped up and beckoned us to stop paddling. Our first thought was that something was the matter at home, some one sick or dead. But he cried out in his own language, "Jesus has come, Jesus has come. Many of the people are converted. A great change in our village now." The young man seemed to be overjoyed, and sat down crying. The man at the stern got up and said, "My brother can't tell you all about it, sir. I will tell you. Soon after you left home the Spirit of God came down in wonderful power. Old people have been converted, young people have repented, women and children are seeking salvation. There is a great change among the Tsimpseans now." "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," we sang together on that lonely, dismal channel, with the mighty mountains on both sides of us. My boys said, "Now, sir, we would like to pull all night. We want to get home

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and get some of that blessing." They pulled all that night and all next day, Saturday, until midnight.

The Missionary's wife and the lady teacher welcomed us at the door. They said, "We can't tell you what a wonderful work God has wrought since you went away. Nearly the whole village has been moved. One night hundreds of people came up and wished to get into the Church. We advised them to go home and pray, telling them that God would hear them in their homes; but they said, 'No, no, lady; please let us into the Church. We think we shall find Jesus in His own house.' So, taking a lantern, we opened the door, and hundreds of the people crowded into the Church, where many of them fell on their faces on the floor, crying to God for mercy. For some time that scene continued and many were blessed; then we advised them to go home. On leaving the Church, as they were going down the hill, although a terrible wind and rainstorm was raging, they nearly all fell down on the ground as if they were under a strange spell and began pleading earnestly for God to have mercy upon them."

We now retired to rest, but were awakened early next morning by a crowd of people singing. They had been to the Sunday morning prayer-meeting; now here they were, crowded around the Mission House. There was the rough old conjurer; the man who said his hands were red with his brothers' blood; and the young men and women, for many of whom I had prayed by name—but so changed! Their very faces were altered. Here they stood around, with tears in their eyes, singing "Jesus paid it all." Faithfully we exhorted them to stand fast in the faith. No one could doubt the mighty change that had taken place in these hearts when he saw how earnest they were and witnessed their anxiety to carry the good news to other tribes.

SIMPSON DISTRICT.

"School-um-text"—Wee-na-lke—Hall-obe—Backsliding Over a
Stovepipe—Growth of the Work—Simpson District
Organization—Band Workers—Dr. Carman's
Opinion—Sabbath Services.